

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS,  
JOB RELEVANCE, AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE TRAINING CONTEXT

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Renee S. Koval

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by

Renee S. Koval, M.A.  
Southwest Texas State University  
May 1999

Supervising Professor: Dr. Steven A. Beebe

U.S. companies spend billions on training employees each year, yet there is relatively little research investigating what makes this training effective. In order to investigate this relatively unexplored area, several variables will be borrowed from instructional communication and adult learning theory. Subjects consisted of 188 United States Automobile Association employees who participated in a variety of training sessions offered by the Leadership and Organizational Development department. Using stepwise multiple regression analysis, job relevance and active participation were found to be predictors of affective learning than verbal and nonverbal immediacy. Job relevance was the only significant predictor of behavioral learning. Additional support was found for emotional response theory. Results suggest that communicating job relevance and encouraging active participation are important trainer behaviors.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

United States companies spend billions of dollars on training each year. In 1995, for example, the private and public sectors combined spent 55.3 billion dollars on formal employer-provided training (U. S. Department of Labor, 1997). In addition, all industries noted an increase in training efforts in the last three years (Benson, 1996). Training employees is obviously a priority in today's companies, but how do we evaluate the impact of this training?

Much research has focused on the different levels of training evaluation. Kirkpatrick (1994) identifies four levels as reaction, learning, behavior and results. It is important to evaluate all four levels to gain the most comprehensive understanding of the effect of the program. However, it is common for reaction questionnaires, also called happy sheets and smile sheets, to be the primary, if not only, method of evaluation (Jones, 1990). Although criticized for their limited usefulness in determining if transfer will occur, reaction questionnaires are used because they are simple and economical (Newby, 1992). These reaction questionnaires often impact the internal trainer's performance review and the external trainer's contract renewal (Dixon, 1990a).

### Key Terms

Borrowing concepts from both adult learning theory and instructional communication, this study considers the following variables: verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, affinity seeking, participation in learning, job relevance, affective learning and behavioral intent. Emotional response theory is also employed to explain the relationship between the predictor variables listed above and two learning outcomes,

affective learning and behavioral intent. While each of these concepts will be reviewed more fully in chapter two, a brief definition of each follows.

Teacher immediacy behaviors have been studied at length in instructional communication literature, and these behaviors have been linked with emotional response theory (Butland & Beebe, 1992). Mehrabian (1969) defines immediacy as communication behaviors that enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another. In other words, immediacy behaviors are behaviors that reduce the distance between people (Anderson, 1979). These behaviors include both verbal and nonverbal components. Verbal immediacy includes elements such as using personal examples, asking questions, addressing participants by name, and praising contributions. Nonverbal immediacy includes behaviors such as direct body orientation, positive head nods, vocal expressiveness, touch, and eye contact (Gorham, 1988). Verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy have been positively correlated with student affective, cognitive and behavioral learning in the classroom, and it seems plausible that immediacy will also be shown to influence the evaluations in the training environment (e.g., Anderson, 1979; Gorham, 1998; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Moore, Masterson, Christophel & Shea, 1996; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey & Richmond, 1986; Richmond, Gorham & McCroskey, 1987).

Affinity seeking is another area in instructional communication literature that has been studied extensively. Affinity seeking refers to the “active social-communicative process by which individuals attempt to get others to like and feel positive toward them” (Bell & Daly, 1984, p. 91). Affinity-seeking strategies are the things we do to get others to like us. Bell and Daly identify twenty-five such behaviors including assuming

equality, conceding control, and noting similarities. There is considerable overlap between affinity-seeking behaviors and immediacy behaviors. For example, nonverbal immediacy and dynamism are included as two affinity-seeking strategies (Bell & Daly, 1984). While data in this investigation will not be gathered on the relationship between affinity-seeking and affective learning, it will be reviewed in the second chapter. Future research should address this relationship.

Thus far, possible predictors of participant evaluations in training situations have been borrowed from instructional communication literature. There are also several possible predictors of training evaluations expressed in adult learning theory (Knowles, 1990). These include content relevance and participation in learning. Content relevance has been defined in instructional communication literature as communication that makes a link between content and student's interests and goals (Frymier & Shulman, 1995). Because trainers and organizations are concerned primarily with how training influences job performance, job relevance will be considered in this study. Relevance between training content and the applicability of this content on the job is considered. Andragogical (adult learning) models lend support to the importance of job relevance. These theories suggest that adults are more life-centered, task-centered or problem-centered rather than subject-centered (Knowles, 1990). Adult learners are more concerned with the timely application of learned skills than are children. The idea of adult participation in learning is widely accepted in training, yet it has received minimal attention in adult learning research (Thoms & Kline, 1990).

Each of these factors, verbal and nonverbal immediacy, affinity-seeking behaviors, job relevance, and participation in learning, may have an impact on the



affective responses of participants and behavioral intent. Affective learning has generally been considered attitudes toward the course content, behaviors recommended, and the course instructor (Gorham, 1988). Behavioral intent refers to the likelihood of students of actually engaging in the behaviors recommended in the course (Gorham, 1988). After considering the relationship between these various factors and learning outcomes the question becomes, why do these factors influence affective learning and behavioral intent?

There has been little effort in education literature to explain why various teacher behaviors are effective. Both student motivation (e.g., Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Richmond, 1990) and emotional responses of students (e.g., Beebe & Ivy, 1994) have been suggested as the underlying factors which influence learning outcomes. While the connection between student motivation and learning outcomes has been supported in recent literature, measuring emotional states may be “a more direct way to assess student responses to learning” (Beebe & Ivy, 1994, p. 7). Emotional response theory is one theory that has been employed to explain both teacher immediacy (Butland & Beebe, 1992) and affinity seeking. This theory suggests that students (and training participants) learn more when they like the teacher and the subject. Liking is measured based on the amount of pleasure, arousal and dominance an individual feels (Beebe & Biggers, 1986). *Pleasure* refers to whether the participant likes or dislikes the course, *arousal* determines the intensity of the liking or disliking, and *dominance* refers to the amount of freedom the participant has to decide if she likes or dislikes the learning event.

## Problem Definition and Significance

While there is an abundance of research in education literature focusing on teacher effectiveness and student ratings of teachers, there is little such research in the training environment. Several questions seem relevant:

- 1) Are the teacher communicative behaviors that are effective in the classroom also effective in the training environment?
- 2) Do trainer communicative behaviors affect the reaction questionnaire ratings (also called affective learning or affective response) and behavioral intent of participants?
- 3) Are there other factors that contribute more significantly to the reaction questionnaire ratings?

Several factors may contribute to the affective responses of training participants.

In education literature, many factors have been correlated with affective learning including verbal and nonverbal immediacy (e.g., Anderson, 1979; Gorham, 1988; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990), affinity seeking (e.g., Frymier, 1994; Gorham, Kelley & McCroskey, 1989), argumentativeness (Roach, 1995), behavior alteration techniques (McCroskey, Richmond, Plax & Kearney, 1985), teacher caring (Teven & McCroskey, 1996), teacher self-disclosure (Sorensen, 1989), and teacher socio-communicative style (Wanzer & McCroskey, 1998). While many of these factors have been correlated with affective learning, verbal and nonverbal immediacy and affinity-seeking behaviors have received the most attention in past and present research.

Teacher immediacy and affinity-seeking behaviors have received considerable attention in research of classroom settings, but little research has been done on trainer

behaviors. This study will begin to determine the importance of several trainer behaviors studied extensively in classrooms. Two other factors that are implied by adult learning theory are participation in learning and job relevance. Since trainers influence the amount of active participation during their sessions and have various means to make content relevant to participants' jobs, both these variables can be manipulated by the trainer.

Research in this area is important for several reasons. First, it may give trainers an indication of what skills to develop in order to improve the affective learning and behavioral intent of their participants. This could improve a trainer's overall ratings and allow him or her to achieve higher performance reviews or a long-term contract. For those who consider the usefulness of these affective measures, it may help explain the behaviors that influence these evaluations. In addition, if we can learn ways to improve the affective learning and behavioral intent of participants, we may also make learning and transfer to their jobs more likely. Finally, it will provide an empirical study of the training context.

### Methods

This study was completed using a survey instrument. Subjects completed paper and pencil measures of immediacy, job relevance, participation, affective learning, behavioral intent, and the pleasure, dominance and arousal scales. A sample survey is shown in Appendix A.

United Services Automobile Association (USAA) employees served as the participants for this study. The participants in nine different trainer's sessions were asked

to complete the survey so that there are a range of answers referring to different trainers.

Several sessions conducted by the same trainer were used.

After gathering data from 188 participants, the responses for verbal and nonverbal immediacy, job relevance, and participation in learning were subjected to regression analyses to determine which factors best predict affective learning and behavioral intent. In addition, the relationship between each of these factors and emotional response theory were analyzed.

### Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter has served as an overview and justification for the present research. The second chapter will provide a more detailed literature review of teacher immediacy, affinity seeking, job relevance, participation, and affective and behavioral learning. The third chapter will describe the methods employed in this study including the subjects, instruments, and data collection techniques. Results of the data analysis and a discussion of reliability are included in chapter four. The final chapter, chapter five, concludes the thesis with a discussion of the results, limitations of the study, directions for future research, and a conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is an abundance of literature investigating effective teacher behaviors in the classroom (e.g., Anderson, 1979; Anderson, Norton & Nussbaum, 1981; Byra & Jenkins, 1997; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1994b; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). There is little research, however, investigating effective trainer behaviors. There are at least three possible reasons for this lack of research. First, researchers are often academicians who have college students readily available, while access to other subject pools is limited. Second, companies interested in determining effective trainer behaviors would need to devote time and money to the effort. Third, it is possible that training programs seem to be going well overall, so investigating these issues is not a priority. It is also possible that the information various companies have gathered on effective trainer behaviors is locked within the company. Sharing too many secrets to success is a concern of many highly successful companies.

Even with all of the possible reasons for overlooking this area of study, the lack of research is surprising given the huge expenditures on training each year. In 1995, for example, the private and public sectors combined spent 55.3 billion dollars on formal employer-provided training (U. S. Department of Labor, 1997). While there are many factors that contribute to this cost including the facilities, supplies and trainers, it is likely that trainers account for a large portion of this cost. Why, then, are we not investigating effective trainer behaviors?

Despite this huge expenditure on training, not many companies systematically track the impact of training on the bottom line. This may be because more resources would need to be allocated to assess the impact of training. Or, if companies are using

outside vendors, it is likely that they have chosen to have fewer internal resources available to track the impact of training. In addition, some training programs are written in terms of attaining knowledge rather than developing skills. It is difficult to assess whether this knowledge is actually used when training participants return to their jobs. This is especially true for “soft skills” topics such as negotiation, conflict management, and decision making. While someone could be observed performing a daily routine taught in training, such as using a computer application, it is more difficult to observe “soft skills” topics. For a variety of reasons, training is more often evaluated based on the affective responses of participants. An in-house trainer’s promotion and an external trainer’s contract renewal are dependent on these affective responses of participants.

Several factors may contribute to the affective responses of training participants. Affective learning refers to the degree of liking the participant feels toward the course subject, the practices suggested in the course and the instructor (Anderson, 1979). Behavioral intent, the degree to which participants intend to use content from the training session, is another important outcome measure as well. O’Keefe (1990) reviews relevant literature on behavioral intent and notes that it has been shown to be a good predictor of actual behavior across a wide variety of activities including voting (Bowman & Fishbein, 1978; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1981), seat belt use (Budd, North & Spencer, 1984), and seeking dental care (Hoogstraten, de Haan & ter Horst, 1985), to name a few. If behavioral intent is a good measure of actual behavior, this variable may be highly correlated with actual transfer of training.

As noted in the previous chapter, many factors have been correlated with affective learning and behavioral intent. While many of these factors have been positively

correlated with affective learning, verbal and nonverbal immediacy and affinity-seeking behaviors have received the most attention in past and present research. In addition to these two variables, active participation and job relevance will also be considered as possible correlates of affective learning and behavioral intent.

Determining what makes a teacher effective has been difficult for researchers (Richmond, Gorham & McCroskey, 1987; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Student cognitive learning is what is generally considered the indication of an effective teacher. There are a variety of teacher variables, including teacher style, behavior alteration techniques, and affinity-seeking behaviors, that have been investigated which all seem to point to increased student learning. It is possible that all of these behaviors are effective because they function in the same way. Emotional response theory may provide an explanation for the effectiveness of various teacher behaviors. Anderson (1979) defined an effective teacher as one who produces positive outcomes in all three domains of learning: positive student affect, behavioral commitment to the course content, and student cognitive learning. There is an abundance of research examining the relationship between verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy and these three learning outcomes. Before considering this abundance of research, each of these variables will be defined.

This chapter will review the literature relevant to this study. The chapter is organized in five parts: teacher immediacy, affinity seeking, participation in learning, job relevance, and emotional response theory. In each of these five sections, special attention will be given to explaining how these concepts are relevant in training environments. Each section will also consider how each variable relates specifically to affective learning and behavioral intent, the criterion variables in the present study.

## Teacher Immediacy

The principle of immediacy was originally used by Mehrabian (1971) to explain the influence of nonverbal cues on interpersonal attraction. The immediacy principle suggests “people are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer” (p. 1). Mehrabian’s conceptualization of immediacy is based on an approach-avoidance metaphor. Because “liking encourages greater immediacy and immediacy encourages more liking” (Mehrabian, 1971, p. 7), early researchers of teacher immediacy believed high teacher immediacy should produce greater student affect.

Early research on verbal immediacy considered immediacy a language variable. Bradac, Bowers and Courtright (1979) reviewed the research conducted in the 1960s and 1970s on verbal immediacy as a language variable and posited six generalizations:

1. Positive affect on the part of a source toward the topics of a message is directly related to verbal immediacy.
2. Cognitive stress on the part of a source is inversely related to verbal immediacy.
3. Verbal immediacy is directly related to receiver attributions of source affect.
4. Verbal immediacy is directly related to receiver judgments of source competence.
5. Verbal immediacy is directly related to receiver judgments of source character.
6. Verbal immediacy interacts with initial receiver agreement with the proposition of the message in the production of receiver attributions in such a



way that immediacy in congruent messages enhances, but in discrepant messages inhibits attributions of source similarity. (pp. 262-263)

These generalizations in interpersonal contexts were also supported to some extent in later research in the classroom (e.g., Anderson et. al, 1981; Christensen & Menzel, 1998). The most relevant generalization reviewed thus far is that, in interpersonal situations, verbal immediacy was related to positive affect toward the source and toward the topic discussed.

### Immediacy Defined

As Mehrabian's (1969) approach-avoidance metaphor suggests, both verbal and nonverbal immediacy are behaviors which "enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another" (p. 203) and involve an "increase in sensory stimulation between two persons" (p. 3). Anderson (1979) explains that immediacy behaviors reduce the distance between people, either by reducing physical proximity or by reducing the psychological distance. Nonverbal immediacy, as defined in the classroom studies, includes vocal expressiveness, smiling at the class, and having a relaxed body position. The nonverbal non-immediate behaviors include using a monotone voice, not smiling, and a rigid body position. Verbal immediacy includes the words a person uses to signal approach or openness for communication as well as avoidance. Words that include both the sender and the receiver in the same category such as "we" and "our," use of humor, and use of self disclosure are several examples of verbal immediacy (Anderson, Norton & Nussbaum, 1981).

### Immediacy, Affective Learning and Behavioral Intent

The outcome variables in many of the studies involving immediacy behaviors included affective learning, behavioral intent and cognitive learning. Affective learning was typically determined by using bi-polar scales to measure student attitudes toward the course content, the behaviors recommended and the course instructor (Gorham, 1988). Behavioral intent was commonly measured by bi-polar scales indicating the likelihood of the student to actually attempt to engage in the behaviors recommended in the class, the likelihood of actually enrolling in another course of related content if choice and schedule permitted, and the likelihood of actually taking another course with the same instructor if choice and schedule permitted (e.g., Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Gorham, 1988; McCroskey, Richmond, Plax & Kearney, 1985; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Various methods of measuring cognitive learning were used in this literature. Some studies used student scores on exams as the measure of cognitive learning (Anderson, 1979; Anderson & Withrow, 1981). Other studies asked the students for their perception of how much they learned in the course (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Gorham, 1988; Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987; Rodriguez, Plax & Kearney, 1996; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

Various studies in this line of research investigated the relationship between verbal and nonverbal immediacy and student affective learning, behavioral intent and cognitive learning. These studies suggest a strong relationship between verbal and nonverbal immediacy and two of the outcome measures: affective learning and behavioral intent (e.g., Gorham, 1998; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey & Richmond, 1986). Gorham (1998) found that both verbal immediacy and nonverbal immediacy were

significantly correlated with affective learning and behavioral intent. Verbal and nonverbal immediacy accounted for more variance in affective learning and behavioral intent as class size increased (Gorham, 1998). Plax, Kearney, Richmond and McCroskey (1986) found that verbal and nonverbal immediacy are positively and significantly related to all measures of affective learning and behavioral intent. In the two studies published in this article, they found that there were significant relationships between verbal and nonverbal immediacy and affect toward course content ( $r = .58$  and  $r = .47$ ), affect toward the instructor ( $r = .65$  and  $r = .74$ ) and affect toward the behaviors recommended in the course ( $r = .54$  and  $r = .57$ ). Verbal and nonverbal immediacy were related to intent to engage in behaviors recommended ( $r = .45$  and  $r = .35$ ) and intent to enroll in a similar course ( $r = .36$  and  $r = .35$ ) to a lesser degree. One study, conducted by Moore, Masterson, Christophel and Shea (1996), provided only modest support for the research suggesting a strong correlation between affective learning and immediacy. This study, however, only contained a one-item measure of affective learning ( $r = .49$ ).

Several studies examined the relationship between nonverbal immediacy and did not consider verbal immediacy. Anderson (1979) found that nonverbal teacher immediacy accounted for 46% of the variance in student affect toward the instructor, about 20% of the variance in student affect toward the course content, and about 18% of the variance in behavioral commitment. Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey (1987) found that vocal expressiveness, smiling at the class and having a relaxed body position appear to be the most important nonverbal behaviors. Looking at the class and moving around the classroom were also seen as rather important predictors of perceived cognitive learning (Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey, 1987).

### Immediacy and Cognitive Learning

While studies have consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between immediacy and affective learning, the link to cognitive learning has not been as clear (Sanders and Wiseman, 1979). This discrepancy in results may be because of the operationalization of cognitive learning. In the studies where test scores were used as the measure of cognitive learning, there was not a significant relationship between immediacy and cognitive learning (Anderson, 1979). However, when student perception of learning was used to measure cognitive learning, there was a significant relationship found between immediacy and cognitive learning (Christensen and Menzel, 1998; Gorham, 1988; Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey, 1987; Sanders and Wiseman, 1990). Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey (1987) admitted using perceived learning as their measure of cognitive learning confounds the measure to an unknown extent with affective learning. In fact, in the studies which used perceived learning as their measure of cognitive learning, the correlation between immediacy and affective learning and immediacy and cognitive learning were quite close. It is possible, indeed, that perceived cognitive learning is another measure of affective learning. Because of the difficulty associated with operationalizing cognitive learning, it will not be included as a criterion variable in this study.

In addition to the research investigating verbal and nonverbal immediacy as a multi-dimensional construct, some researchers have studied portions of the overall construct. These studies examined immediacy and verbal control strategies (Plax, Kearney, McCroskey and Richmond, 1986), teacher misbehaviors (Thweatt and McCroskey, 1998), teacher clarity (Powell and Harville, 1990), interaction outside the

classroom (Fusani, 1994), use of humor (Gorham and Christophel, 1990), and nonverbal expressiveness (Anderson and Withrow, 1981). These studies investigated either one particular dimension of teacher immediacy or teacher immediacy in conjunction with other variables. Because these studies did not focus specifically on the relationship between teacher immediacy and affective, behavioral and cognitive learning, their results are not discussed.

### Theoretical Explanations of Immediacy

While many studies investigated the strength of the relationship between teacher immediacy and affective learning, behavioral intent, and cognitive learning, other studies examined how these various variables were related. One major issue was the nature of the relationship between teacher immediacy and learning outcomes. Some researchers argue that the relationship between immediacy and learning outcomes is linear, while others suggest that the relationship is curvilinear. Comstock, Rowell and Bowers (1995) found that moderately high nonverbal immediacy is better than excessively high or excessively low nonverbal immediacy in producing affective learning, behavioral intent, and cognitive learning. Christensen and Menzel's (1998) finding of a positive linear relationship between verbal and nonverbal immediacy and student affective learning, behavioral intent and cognitive learning contrasted the curvilinear relationship posited by Comstock and colleagues. The reason for the contradictory findings may lie in the nature of how immediacy was measured. In the Comstock et. al. (1995) study, nonverbal immediacy was manipulated by researchers where excessively high and low immediacy were truly extreme cases. In the Christensen and Menzel (1998) study, however, the categories of high, medium and low immediacy were determined by comparing teachers

in actual classrooms. It is possible none or few of the teachers used in this study fell in the extremes of excessively high and excessively low immediacy. It is likely that most teachers and trainers do not fall in the extreme categories of immediacy.

Several articles considered how affective learning fits into the overall picture of learning. Christophel (1990) found that a portion of teacher immediacy behaviors first modify student state motivation before immediacy becomes an effective predictor of affective learning, behavioral intent, and perceived cognitive learning. In short, Christophel (1990) suggests that teacher immediacy influences student motivation which then influences the three learning outcomes. Rodriguez, Plax and Kearney (1996) offer an alternate explanation of this relationship. They suggest that teacher communicative behaviors, such as immediacy, disclosure, assertiveness, homophily, attractiveness and others, are likely to create an affectively based relationship with students which then influences time on task and ultimately cognitive learning. With several different explanations of the relationship, it is difficult to know the precise ordering of these variables. A third possible explanation for the relationship between immediacy and affective learning and behavioral intent, emotional response theory, will be offered later in this chapter.

### Immediacy Across Cultures

The present study investigates the importance of immediacy behaviors in an environment different from the typical U.S. classroom. While the training context generally does not contain only one culture, research confirming the relationship between immediacy and learning outcomes is relevant to this study. If immediacy behaviors influence learning outcomes in a variety of cultures, it is possible that there will also be a

relationship between immediacy behaviors and learning outcomes in a multi-cultural training environment.

McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer and Barraclough (1995) found that while different cultures reported different amounts of nonverbal teacher immediacy, the positive significant relationship held across cultures. United States and Puerto Rican students reported that their teachers were significantly more immediate than Australian and Finland students. The correlation between nonverbal teacher immediacy and positive teacher evaluations held across cultures, with shared variance between 27 and 48 percent (McCroskey et al., 1995). While nonverbal immediacy seemed to be more important in some cultures than in others, it still was significantly related to positive evaluations of instructors in each of the cultures studied. In a study of the multicultural classroom, significant positive relationships were found between verbal and nonverbal immediacy and affective learning, behavioral intent, and perceived cognitive learning (Sanders and Wiseman, 1990). The strength of the relationship between immediacy and the learning outcomes varied slightly among the various groups of White, Asian, Hispanic and Black students. Individuals from different cultures differ in the amount of immediacy they perceive and in the relative importance they attach to immediacy behaviors. However, immediacy behaviors are significantly related to learning outcomes, regardless of culture. It is possible that members of the multi-cultural workforce will also demonstrate a link between trainer verbal and nonverbal immediacy and two learning outcomes: affect and behavioral intent.

### Training and Immediacy Behaviors

Thus far, teacher immediacy in the classroom environment has been reviewed. However, the focus of this research is the training environment. Will the relationship between teacher immediacy and affective learning and behavioral intent also be evident in the training environment? Knowles (1984) states that an adult learning approach requires a psychological climate of mutual respect, collaboration, trust, support, openness and pleasure. Those goals seem to be what teacher immediacy strives to attain.

### Affinity Seeking

As with teacher immediacy, affinity-seeking behaviors of teachers have received much interest in recent literature. By definition, both immediacy and affinity-seeking behaviors seem to be teacher behaviors intended to enhance liking. Although this study does not measure and report results regarding affinity-seeking behaviors, it is another important variable to investigate in future research. Affinity-seeking was eliminated as a variable to be measured in this study when considering the length of the survey. Ideally, both variables would have been included on the survey instrument. Because affinity-seeking was originally included as a variable of interest to this study, a brief review of relevant literature follows.

Early research on affinity seeking focused on two different areas (Bell & Daly, 1984). Some researchers considered affinity-seeking behaviors static characteristics which affect people's likability, and others considered the social skills associated with generating affinity (Bell & Daly, 1984). Static characteristics include physical attractiveness and background similarity. Bell and Daly (1984) helped redefine affinity



seeking in behavioral terms. They developed a list of behavioral options available to individuals seeking affinity.

### Affinity-Seeking Defined

Bell and Daly (1984), early researchers of affinity seeking, define affinity-seeking as “the active social-communicative process by which individuals attempt to get others to like and to feel positive toward them” (p. 91). Bell and Daly (1984) used twenty-two small brainstorming groups to develop a typology of affinity seeking. The groups were asked to “produce a list of things people can say or do to get others to like them” (Bell & Daly, 1984). Another group produced a list of things they could say or do to get others to dislike them. A typology of twenty-five strategies was developed. A list of these strategies is shown in Table 2.1 (Bell & Daly, 1984). The strategies described by Bell and Daly are important because much of the recent affinity-seeking research describes affinity seeking in terms of these twenty-five strategies.

Table 2.1

Affinity-Seeking Strategies	
1. Altruism	14. Openness
2. Assume Control	15. Optimism
3. Assume Equality	16. Personal Autonomy
4. Comfortable Self	17. Physical Attractiveness
5. Concede Control	18. Present Interesting Self
6. Conversational Rule-Keeping	19. Reward Association
7. Dynamism	20. Self-Concept Confirmation
8. Elicit Other's Disclosures	21. Self-Inclusion
9. Facilitate Enjoyment	22. Sensitivity
10. Inclusion of Other	23. Similarity
11. Influence Perceptions of Closeness	24. Supportiveness
12. Listening	25. Trustworthiness
13. Nonverbal Immediacy	

Some researchers have considered which of these behaviors are most utilized by classroom teachers. McCroskey and McCroskey (1986) investigated this question and

found that teachers used the strategies of physical attractiveness, sensitivity, eliciting other's disclosure, trustworthiness, nonverbal immediacy, conversational rule-keeping, dynamism and listening. Less used strategies included inclusion of other, self-inclusion, reward association, concede control, influence perceptions of closeness, similarity, openness, present interesting self, and supportiveness. In a like manner, another question to consider is which of these twenty-five strategies are important in a training environment? While McCroskey and McCroskey (1986) examined which strategies are used most often, they did not consider which strategies are related to positive learning outcomes.

#### Affinity-Seeking and Learning Outcomes

Several researchers have examined the relationship between affinity-seeking strategies and learning outcomes (Beebe et al., 1998; Frymier, 1994b; Roach, 1991). Beebe et al. (1998) and Roach (1991) found that affinity-seeking behaviors are positively related to both affective learning and perceived cognitive learning. Frymier (1994b) found a positive relationship between many of the affinity-seeking behaviors and a general measure of liking, which is similar to measures of affect toward the instructor and affect toward the course content.

Other researchers have considered affinity seeking in ways not directly connected to learning outcomes, and therefore, are not relevant to this review. These studies have covered topics such as the affinity-seeking behaviors employed by students (Wanzer, 1998), teacher liking (Frymier, 1992), and teacher credibility (Frymier & Thompson, 1992). Another study developed a shortened version of the affinity-seeking measurement which was only applicable in studies relating to teacher credibility (Dolin, 1995).

### Theoretical Explanations of Affinity-Seeking

There are several reasons affinity-seeking behaviors may positively relate with learning and liking outcomes. Frymier (1994b) tested the motivation model and the direct effect model of affinity seeking. Frymier found that the motivation model offered a better fit to the data. Affinity-seeking behaviors influenced student liking which then influenced cognitive learning. Trait and state motivation were separate factors which influenced liking and perceived cognitive learning (Frymier, 1994b).

Beebe et al. (1998) offer a different explanation for the effectiveness of affinity-seeking behaviors. They suggest that emotional response theory, which will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, explains how affinity-seeking behaviors function. In this study, increases in student pleasure and arousal (two measures of emotional response) were positively related to affective learning and perceived cognitive learning in both U.S. and Japanese samples. Emotional response theory may offer a better explanation for how affinity seeking functions because it offers a “more direct and precise way of investigating the effects of specific variables on learning” (Beebe et al., 1998).

### Affinity-Seeking Across Cultures

As discussed in the immediacy review, considering the impact of affinity-seeking behaviors across cultures is relevant to this study because training sessions are often multi-cultural collections of individuals. Support from Beebe et al. (1998) indicates that affinity-seeking behaviors are also found to be correlated with learning outcomes in the Japanese culture. However, results regarding learning loss did not transfer to the

Japanese culture. This may be because Japanese students are rarely asked to evaluate their professors (Beebe et al., 1998).

### Training and Affinity-Seeking Behaviors

Frymier (1994b) notes that not all of the affinity-seeking behaviors listed by Bell and Daly are appropriate in the classroom. She excludes some of them, such as assume control and reward association, may not be good predictors of liking because they refer to the legitimate power the teacher or trainer already has. Strategies such as assume equality and concede control seem well suited to the learner-directed adult learning environment. Other strategies, such as assume control and self-concept confirmation, seem less important in the training context. Before affinity seeking is studied in the training context, researchers must first determine which strategies would be appropriate in that environment.

### Participation in Learning

Verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, and affinity-seeking behaviors are all constructs present in communication education literature. It is possible, however, that there are other correlates of affective learning and behavioral intent in training contexts. In a training environment, a trainer's immediacy behaviors may be less important than a trainee's perceived involvement in the session. Two factors discussed in adult education literature, participation in learning and perceived job relevance, may correlate with affective learning and behavioral intent. The next two sections of this chapter define and discuss these two factors.

The value of participation in learning is implied by both some of the teacher immediacy and affinity-seeking questionnaire items. Both teacher immediacy behaviors

and participation or involvement in the learning process result in increased sensory awareness. Teacher immediacy behaviors such as encouraging participants to talk, initiating conversations, and calling on participants to answer questions imply participation in learning. Affinity seeking items such as conversational rule-keeping, eliciting other's disclosure, and listening imply participation in learning. Adult learning theory also suggests the importance of learner involvement in learning.

### Adult Learning Theory and Participation

The first systematic investigation of adult learning theory was published by Thorndike, Bregman, Tilton and Woodyard in their 1928 book entitled *Adult Learning*. They conducted experiments to determine adults' capacity to memorize information. After early research on adult learning confirmed that adults can learn new information, later research investigated the differences between teaching children (also called pedagogy or teacher-directed learning) and teaching adults (called andragogy or learner-directed learning). Malcolm Knowles (1990) has produced a great deal of theory on the differences between andragogy and pedagogy.

While there is a great deal of empirical evidence on teacher immediacy and affinity seeking behaviors in classrooms, there is little empirical research investigating trainer behaviors that are effective with adult learners. Adult learning theory and popular publications offer pragmatic advice, but this advice has little empirical support. Thoms and Klein (1994), who wrote one of the few articles testing the impact of active participation, justify their publication by saying, "there is little empirical evidence, however, that participation does contribute to the value of training" (p. 27). Thoms and Klein (1994) also admit that there is little empirical information about which training

methods are best. Adult learning theory suggests that adult learners have a more task-centered approach to learning rather than a subject-centered approach (Knowles, 1990). That is, adults learn more on a need-to-know basis and less on a nice-to-know basis. They are more likely to learn when the material can be directly applied to their lives. Andragogical models also suggest that adult learners prefer to be self-directed rather than teacher directed (Knowles, 1990). Based on these two assumptions of adult learning theory, job relevance and participation in learning are included in this study as possible correlates of affective learning and behavioral intent.

Knowles (1984) described seven elements of the andragogical process design. They are: (1) climate setting, (2) involving the learners in mutual planning, (3) involving the participants in diagnosing their own needs for learning, (4) involving learners in formulating their learning objectives, (5) involving learners in designing learning plans, (6) helping learners carry out their learning plans, and (7) involving learners in evaluating their learning. It is clear that these seven elements of the andragogical process stress learner participation throughout the learning process.

In addition to the prescriptions made by Knowles to utilize a heavy learner-directed focus, other authors also offer prescriptions related to invoking learner participation. Wlodkowski (1985) suggests that trainers should provide equal and frequent response opportunities to all learners. He also discusses tips for developing involvement. He defines involvement as when participants are “doing something mentally or physically with the information and learning materials at their disposal” (p. 40). Wlodkowski offers four tips for encouraging participation:

1. Use disequilibrium to stimulate learner involvement.

2. Selectively use application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation tasks to stimulate involvement.
3. Make learner reaction and active participation an essential part of the learning process.
4. Make challenges an active part of instruction.

Without considering the implications of each of these tips, it is clear that involving participants in learning needs to be a central focus of the trainer. Most of the information available on participation in learning, or active participation, provides tips like Wlodkowski's on how to encourage active participation (Stalheim-Smith, 1998). They also discuss benefits of active learning such as reaching the weakest students (Carver, Howard & Lane, 1996) and ensuring deeper, more meaningful learning (Jones, 1993; Smith; 1995). Searching ERIC, PsychLit, SocioFile and several bibliographies for information on participation in learning and job relevance yielded very few empirical studies of these topics.

### Participation and Learning

Several studies have investigated the relationship of participation on instructional outcomes. The first study, by Pratton and Hales (1986), considers active and nonactive participation in fifth grade classes. Again, research is borrowed from education literature. In these fifth grade classes, an experimental design was employed where active and nonactive participation was manipulated and the effect on a test score was recorded. Class means for active participation ranged from 78.4% to 87.2%, while means for the non-active participation classes ranged from 71.3% to 77.0%. Participation in

learning was clearly correlated with more learning as indicated by test scores. This study seems to support the idea that increased participation results in increased learning.

In another study that utilized an adult sample of middle managers, the positive effect of participation was not supported. Thoms and Klein (1994) manipulated a training session such that there was a participation group and a control group. Both groups heard a three minute presentation on the value of participation at the beginning of the training session. The participation group also heard an additional fifteen minute presentation on various types of participation behaviors. This presentation was intended to give participants a sense of how to participate during the session. The results indicated that being part of the participation condition did not result in higher reactions to the training, learning, or transfer of learning. On the surface, this study seems to negate the impact of the Pratton and Hales study. Consider, though, the manipulation of participation. The “participation” group was involved initially with more lecture activities. It is possible that the level of participation was not effectively manipulated. Additional limitations of this study include the small sample size and cultural differences that may influence an individual’s willingness to participate. There also needs to be congruity between the value of participation in the organization and the value of participation in the training environment (Thoms & Klein, 1994).

A study by Anaya (1996) investigated active learning in a different way. She examined various student variables including involvement in extracurricular activities, course load, types of courses enrolled in, and number of content hours. She related these student variables with what she considered a learning measure, student GRE scores. While extracurricular activities did not have a positive relationship with GRE scores,



there was a positive relationship between tutoring students and participation in independent research projects and GRE scores. While these results are interesting, because these results are based on a very general learning measure, a GRE score, the results of this study seem less applicable to the training context.

The final study, conducted by Byra and Jenkins (1997), investigated the inclusion style of teaching, which is where learners make decisions about the level of task difficulty they prefer to practice. Results of this study do indicate that learners can make appropriate decisions about the level of skill difficulty. Because the participant can choose the level of difficulty, greater task time is spent productively. Previous research discussed by Byra and Jenkins (1997) found that greater amounts of appropriate level practice have been related with greater gains in skill performance. Since not all training sessions have skills that are practiced in the training session, and not many are practiced repeatedly, the usefulness of this study is limited.

The Pratton and Hales' (1986) study seems to suggest a positive relationship between participation and cognitive learning. While this study did find a positive relationship between participation and cognitive learning, Anderson's (1979) study did not. Anderson (1979) operationalized cognitive learning by an exam score and did not find a significant relationship. While several studies have examined the usefulness of participation in terms of various learning outcomes, no distinct conclusions have been drawn regarding the relationship between participation and learning outcomes. In order to address this issue, the present study addresses the following question: Is there also a relationship between participation and the other two domains, affect and behavioral

intent? If there is a relationship, does emotional response theory explain the effectiveness of trainee participation?

### Job Relevance

Many of the practical advice articles mentioned in the previous section also suggest using simulations, games, case studies and other activities in order to encourage active learning. While some of these activities are “fluff” rather than important content, some of these methods are employed to help create realistic scenarios and activities that link training content to job functions. After searching databases including ERIC, PsychLit, SocioFile, and several bibliographies, this researcher is confident asserting that there is also little research investigating the importance of making training content applicable to participants’ work or lives. Frymier and Shulman (1995) also recognize that “there has been little empirical research on the impact of relevance on students” (p. 43). Job or content relevance is also referred to as teaching for transfer. Adult learning theory and popular training publications offer advice on how to make content relevant (Dumas & Wile, 1992). Several authors also suggest a positive relationship between relevance and motivation (Newby, 1991; Sass, 1989; Weaver & Cottrell, 1988).

### Adult Learning Theory and Job Relevance

As with participation in learning, andragogical models of learning recognize the importance of making content of training relevant to participants’ jobs and/or lives. Knowles (1990) suggests that adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy. Adults’ orientation to learning is life-centered, not subject centered. Therefore, if training can solve a real-life problem that the learner feels needs to be addressed, the training will be more effective. Trainers play a role in this

because they can use examples and scenarios that help demonstrate the relevance of training activities to the participants' jobs.

### Job Relevance and Learning

There are two key studies that investigate job relevance from education literature, and the results may not be consistent for adult populations. Hoover and Achilles (1996) tested the notion that problem-based learning (PBL) would be an effective alternative to lecture based learning. Problem-based learning uses adult learning theory to structure the instructional process around the presentation of a problem. This study was conducted with middle school and high school students. PBL was found ineffective with these students because of the lack of trust between students, lack of cooperation, and a “we” versus “them” attitude. Teachers had to spend more time managing interpersonal conflict than assisting with learning tasks. This PBL approach may not have been appropriate with this age group, however. Results may be different for adult learners.

The second study on job or content relevance examined the relationship between immediacy and relevance and the outcome variables of learning and motivation. Frymier and Houser (1996) found that immediacy had a significant impact on motivation and learning while relevance did not. Relevance, in their study, is defined as a student perception of whether the course/instruction/content satisfies personal needs, personal goals, and/or career goals (Frymier & Houser, 1996). The lack of significance with relevance may have been due to problems with how relevance was manipulated. In the high relevance condition, examples were familiar and linked to local events. In the low relevance condition, examples were more abstract and less familiar. Examples were used in both conditions to make the conditions similar in length and content. It is possible that

the use of examples in both conditions made them quite similar to one another, despite the intended difference in abstraction.

In another study Frymier and Shulman (1995) investigated the relationship between relevance and motivation, a relationship suggested, but not tested, by other researchers. They found a positive relationship between perceived relevance and state motivation to learn. They also found a rather high correlation between relevance and verbal and nonverbal immediacy.

The final study in this area studied the correlation between relevance strategies and the percent of on-task behaviors (Newby, 1991). This study was conducted with elementary school children, and Newby (1991) found that there is a positive relationship between relevance strategies and time on task.

Due to the manipulation and operationalization problems with the two key studies, the question of the relationship between content relevance and learning is still unanswered. It is also likely that adults in a training environment would not have the same kinds of trust problems discussed in Hoover and Achilles' (1996) study.

Based on the literature reviewed, verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, and affinity seeking are positively related to affective learning and behavioral intent in the classroom environment. Verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy and affinity seeking are also related to perceived cognitive learning, but not cognitive learning as operationalized by an exam score. The conclusions for participation in learning and job relevance are less clear. Based on the few, flawed studies reviewed, there does not seem to be evidence that participation in learning or job relevance are positively related with learning outcomes. The research in these two areas is limited, however, and questions

regarding the relationship between relevance and learning outcomes remain largely unanswered. In order to examine this area further, this study will investigate the relationship between job relevance and participation in learning and two learning outcomes, affective learning and behavioral intent.

After considering previous literature on verbal and nonverbal immediacy, participation in learning, and job relevance, two hypotheses emerged. Affinity-seeking is not included in these hypotheses in order to keep the survey a manageable length. The first two hypotheses are:

- H<sub>1</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with affective learning.
- H<sub>2</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with behavioral intent.

Based on previous research, it is likely that verbal and nonverbal immediacy will be more highly correlated with both affective learning and behavioral intent than will job relevance and participation in learning. Verbal and nonverbal immediacy are the research areas that have been most supported by previous research. Participation in learning and job relevance have received passing attention in the literature, and most of this attention has been in middle school and high school environments. While these studies did not support participation in learning and job relevance as good predictors of learning outcomes, it is possible that these factors are more important in the adult-learning environment of the training session. Also suggested by previous research, it is likely that teacher immediacy will be more highly correlated with affective learning than with behavioral intent.

## Emotional Response Theory

There are several possible theories offered in the literature that explain why teacher immediacy behaviors, and other teacher behaviors, are effective. Student motivation is one possible explanation offered for why teacher immediacy behaviors and other teacher behaviors relate to more learning (Christophel, 1990). Christophel (1990) suggests that immediacy behaviors increase both trait and state motivation to learn and this motivation results in higher affective learning, behavioral intent and perceived cognitive learning.

Burgoon's expectancy violation theory may also be used to explain the impact of teacher behaviors in the classroom (Burgoon, 1993; Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Burgoon, Dillard, & Doran, 1983). This theory posits that our evaluations are based on whether our expectations were met or whether our expectations were positively or negatively violated. So, if we expect a trainer to be relatively friendly, and the trainer is even friendlier than expected, then she has positively violated our expectations. We would then evaluate her highly. A third theory that may be used to explain immediacy and other teacher behaviors is emotional response theory.

### Emotional Response Theory Defined

Emotional response theory originated from Mehrabian's study of nonverbal communication in interpersonal relationships. Mehrabian (1971) discusses the role of nonverbal behaviors such as closeness, self-disclosure, and communication channel on the perceived intimacy of the relationship. These behaviors give the receiver implicit cues regarding their underlying emotions. Teacher immediacy behaviors, especially nonverbal immediacy cues, are quite similar to the unintentional cues that help us figure

out the kind of relationships others want to have with us. Nonverbal immediacy behaviors such as smiling, nodding, and walking near students seem to indicate closeness between the teacher and the students.

Mehrabian and other researchers have determined that human emotional response can be described in terms of three dimensions: (1) pleasure-displeasure, (2) arousal-nonarousal, and (3) dominance-submissiveness (e.g., Beebe & Biggers, 1986; Beebe & Butland, 1994; Mehrabian, 1969; Vinson & Biggers, 1993). When describing their level of each of these emotional responses, respondents use semantic differential scales. These scales display the continuous nature of each dimension. There is also a neutral point for each dimension.

The pleasure-displeasure dimension is defined by adjective pairs such as happy-unhappy, unsatisfied-satisfied, pleased-displeased, and insecure-secure. Mehrabian's (1971) earlier work described this dimension as the liking dimension. This dimension measures the degree of approach or avoidance the respondent feels toward the teacher or trainer.

The arousal-nonarousal dimension was referred to as the responsiveness metaphor (Mehrabian, 1971). This dimension measures arousal based on adjective pairs such as unaroused-aroused, alert-not alert, excited-unexcited, and wide awake-sleepy. This dimension helps determine an individual's emotional response by determining the degree or intensity of liking or disliking.

The dominance-submissiveness dimension, formerly referred to as the power metaphor, is probably the most difficult dimension to grasp. It is defined by adjective pairs such as controlled-in control, important-unimportant, daring-submissive, and

powerful-powerless. If participants are high in dominance, then the participants are more likely to feel in control of the learning situation, and are more likely to have more relaxed body positions.

### Emotional Response Theory Applications

Emotional response theory has been employed to explain a variety of situations including television program viewing (Beebe & Biggers, 1986; Christ & Biggers, 1984; Christ & Medoff, 1984) communication apprehension (Biggers, 1986; Biggers & Masterson, 1984), distinguishing anger and anxiety (Russell & Mehrabian, 1974), and compliance-gaining (Vinson & Biggers, 1993). This theory has also been utilized to help explain teacher immediacy (Butland & Beebe, 1992) and affinity-seeking (Beebe & Butland, 1994).

In these two studies of teacher behavior, students who felt more pleasure and arousal also reported more cognitive and affective learning (Beebe & Butland, 1994; Butland & Beebe, 1992). Dominance was not significant in either of these studies. This theory is useful because it helps explain how teacher behaviors, such as immediacy and affinity-seeking, can be explained by variations in student emotion (Butland & Beebe, 1992).

While the previous sections of this chapter examined the predictor variables relevant to the present study (i.e., verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, participation in learning, and job relevance), this section examined one theory that explains why these predictor variables are effective. The literature reviewed suggests that, if students experience higher degrees of pleasure, arousal, and dominance they also experience greater cognitive and affective learning. In many of these studies, behavioral intent was



considered a component of affective learning rather than a separate learning outcome variable . While this theory does help explain effective teacher behaviors in the classroom, it may also explain effective trainer behaviors. Based on the findings of the emotional response studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with a linear combination of pleasure, arousal and dominance.

It is likely that pleasure and arousal will explain more of the variance than will dominance. In several of the previous studies, the results for dominance did not reach significance (Beebe & Butland, 1994; Butland & Beebe, 1992).

#### Summary

This chapter has summarized the research in the five areas relevant to the present study: verbal and nonverbal immediacy, affinity seeking, job relevance, participation in learning, and emotional response theory. Special attention to how these variables may function in training environments and how each variable relates to affective learning and behavioral intent is considered. The research summarized seems to suggest that verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy and affinity-seeking behaviors are positively related with both affective learning and behavioral intent (e.g., Beebe et al., 1998; Frymier, 1994b; Gorham, 1998; Plax et al., 1986). With far less research on job relevance and active participation, the relationship between these variables and affective learning and behavioral intent is less clear.

This literature review has lead to three hypotheses. These hypotheses are:

- H<sub>1</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with affective learning.
- H<sub>2</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with behavioral intent. .
- H<sub>3</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with a linear combination of pleasure, arousal and dominance.

It is expected that verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy, participation in learning, and job relevance will together correlate with measures of affective learning and behavioral intent. Likewise, it is expected that verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy, participation in learning, and job relevance will correlate with the three dimensions of emotional response theory: pleasure, arousal and dominance. The next chapter will describe the methods utilized to test each hypothesis.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This chapter addresses the methods that were utilized in answering the research questions and those hypotheses presented in the previous chapter. The present chapter consists of the following five sections: subjects, administration of the questionnaire, measures, data analysis, and criteria for significance. In chapter four, results will be reported.

### Subjects

The subjects in this study were participants in various United Services Automobile Association (USAA) training sessions conducted by the Leadership and Organizational Development (L&OD) Department. One-hundred and eighty-eight usable surveys across a total of thirteen training sessions were completed between January 14 and March 11, 1999. A total of nine different trainers were evaluated in these thirteen sessions. Topics covered in these training sessions included a wide range of “soft skills” topics such as negotiation, conflict management, creative thinking, assertiveness, time management, stress management, diversity, and leadership. The number of respondents in each session ranged from two to twenty-five. Participants in these sessions ranged from senior managers to front line workers.

### Administration of the Questionnaire

The trainers for each session were responsible for distributing the surveys, providing the verbal instructions, and collecting the surveys. Guidelines regarding distribution, instructions and collection were provided to all participating trainers in a brief memo. Since the survey was administered by various instructors, not the researcher, the exact wording of the directions given to participants varied somewhat. In general,

trainers were asked to inform participants that their participation was voluntary, that their responses would remain anonymous, and thanked for participating. This information was also included in a letter than introduced the study (See Appendix A).

Some of the sessions had one instructor, while other sessions had several instructors. If the session was conducted by more than one instructor, the instructor who presented more of the session was asked to give the directions on how to complete the survey. Most trainers who assisted with this study reserved ten minutes near the close of the training session for participants to complete the survey. Surveys were completed near the close of the training session so that participants had enough time to observe the instructor and form opinions. Several trainers instructed participants to return the survey via interoffice mail.

Written instructions were included throughout the survey with each set of items. Directions at the beginning of the survey read, "Presented below are behaviors some instructors have been observed doing or saying during training sessions. Please respond to each of the following items for this course based on the instructor you were asked to consider." The phrase "based on the instructor you were asked to consider" was included in case there was more than one instructor for the course. This first set of instructions applied to the verbal and nonverbal immediacy items. Additional directions were included for the other variables: job relevance, participation in learning, pleasure, arousal, dominance, affective learning and behavioral intent. Participants were also asked to indicate the course title, date, their gender, and their instructor's gender.

## Measures

This survey included measures of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, participation in learning, job relevance, pleasure, arousal, dominance, affective learning and behavioral intent. The impact of participant and instructor gender was considered as a possible extraneous variable. The survey items associated with each of these constructs serve as their operational definitions. Each will be briefly discussed.

### Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy

Immediacy behaviors were operationalized as both verbal and nonverbal immediacy. A shortened version of the verbal and nonverbal immediacy scale was used (Sanders & Wiseman, 1992). Several of the items included on the Sanders and Wiseman (1992) scale were excluded or revised due to their limited relevance in training contexts. For example, the item regarding student assignments was changed to, “Asks how participants feel about topics discussed in the training session.” The item regarding touching participants was eliminated. Many workplaces advise that the only “safe” touch is a handshake.

The answer options for the verbal and nonverbal immediacy items ranged from 0 to 4 where 0 = Never, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Often, and 4 = Very Often. For the positively worded items, “Never” indicated the lowest possible score while “Very Often” indicated the highest possible score. Items 9, 16 and 19 were recoded so that “Never” indicated the most favorable response.

Table 3.1

Immediacy Scale Items	
<u>Verbal Immediacy</u>	
1.	Uses personal examples or talks about experiences she/he has had outside of this session.
2.	Asks questions or encourages participants to talk.
3.	Gets into discussions based on something a participant brings up even when this doesn't seem to be part of his/her agenda.
4.	Uses humor in the session.
5.	Addresses participants by name.
6.	Addresses me by name.
7.	Has initiated conversations with me before, after, or outside of the session.
8.	Refers to the session as "our" session or what "we" are doing.
9.	Calls on participants to answer questions even if they have not indicated that they want to talk.
10.	Asks how participants feel about topics discussed in the training session.
11.	Asks questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions.
12.	Praises participant's work, actions or comments.
13.	Has discussions about things unrelated to the session with individual participants or the group as a whole.
14.	Is addressed by his/her first name by the participants.
 NONVERBAL IMMEDIACY	
15.	Gestures while talking to the group.
16.	Uses a monotone/dull voice when talking to the group.
17.	Looks at the group while talking.
18.	Smiles at the group while talking.
19.	Has a very tense body position while talking to the group.
20.	Moves around the room while instructing.

After slight revisions, the immediacy scale consisted of fourteen verbal and six nonverbal items. Items regarding touch, comments on participant assignments, and some duplicate items were excluded. The possible range for the verbal immediacy scale is between 0 and 56, with a midpoint of 28. The possible range for the nonverbal immediacy scale is between 0 and 24, with a midpoint of 12. While the exact combination of items utilized in this study were not validated in previous research, the overall reliability of the verbal and nonverbal immediacy scales is good. Various versions of the verbal immediacy scale have yielded reliability scores between .80

(Christophel, 1990) and .94 (Gorham, 1988). The nonverbal immediacy scale has demonstrated reliability between .69 and .89 (McCroskey et al., 1995). The immediacy items utilized in this study are presented in Table 3.1.

### Participation in Learning

Adult learning theory suggests that, in order for adults to learn effectively, they should be engaged in the learning process (Knowles, 1990). As previously discussed, there is little research investigating the validity of this assumption. Because there has been a lack of research, this study included several items to investigate the relationship between trainee perceptions of participation and their perceptions of affective and behavioral intent. Since previous research operationalized participation in learning through manipulation of lecture or discussion format (Thoms & Klein, 1994) or through measures of attendance (Pratton & Hales, 1986), a self-report of participation in learning was created for this study. These four items that were developed for this study were measured using a Likert scale where response choices were as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The lowest possible and least favorable score was 1 (Strongly Disagree) while the highest and most favorable score was 5 (Strongly Agree). The possible range of this scale is between 4 and 20, with a midpoint of 12. The items used to measure participation in learning are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Participation in Learning Items
21. The instructor encouraged us to participate.
22. I felt comfortable participating.
23. There was a good mix between participation in discussions/activities and the instructor's presentations of information.
24. I actively participated in the session's discussions and activities.

### Job Relevance

As with participation in learning, adult learning theory suggests that adults learn more effectively when the content they are learning is relevant to their lives (Knowles, 1990). Since there has been little empirical research substantiating this claim, two items were developed to investigate the relationship between job relevance and affective learning and behavioral intent. These items were adaptations of a self report measure of content relevance included in a study by Frymier and Shulman's (1995). Items on this scale addressed a wide range of relevance items in the classroom setting as well as students' personal lives.

In the present investigation, the response options for job relevance and participation in learning were the same. Answer options ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This scale's range of scores is between 2 and 10, with a midpoint of 6. The two items used to measure job relevance are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Job Relevance Items
26. This session will improve my performance on the job.
27. The instructor used examples and scenarios that helped link the content of this training to my job.

### Emotional Response

Emotional response theory is operationalized by three scales: pleasure, arousal, and dominance (Beebe & Butland, 1994; Butland & Beebe, 1992). Together these scales provide an operational definition of emotional response. These scales combine to create an operational definition that helps explain why immediacy behaviors and other teacher behaviors are effective. The pairs of adjectives displayed in Table 3.4 were measured



through participants' responses on five-point semantic differential scales. Although the exact adjectives used change slightly over time, similar semantic differential scales have been used in prior research (Butland & Beebe, 1992; Christ & Medoff, 1984; Vinson & Biggers, 1993). Between each set of adjectives, participants marked one letter ranging from A to E (where A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4 and E=5). Each letter had no inherent meaning; it simply represented a range of emotions from which the participants could choose. Approximately half of the items recoded. Scores were computed separately for pleasure, arousal and dominance. For each of these dimensions, the scales ranged from 5 to 25, with a midpoint of 15.

In prior studies investigating emotional response reliability values between .80 and .85 have been obtained for the pleasure dimension (Beebe & Butland, 1994; Butland & Beebe, 1992). For the arousal dimension, reliability values in teacher behavior research have been between .72 and .85 (Beebe & Butland, 1994; Butland & Beebe, 1992). In the same line of research, however, dominance has often not reached acceptable reliability, between .36 and .65 (Beebe & Butland, 1994; Butland & Beebe, 1992). In research areas such as television viewing and communication apprehension, all three dimensions have reached acceptable reliability (Beebe & Biggers, 1986; Biggers & Masterson, 1984; Christ & Biggers, 1984; Vinson & Biggers, 1993). Possible explanations for the inadequate reliability of the dominance dimension in classroom research will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 3.4

Emotional Response Items						
<u>Pleasure Items</u>						
27. Happy	A	B	C	D	E	Unhappy*
28. Unsatisfied	A	B	C	D	E	Satisfied
29. Pleased	A	B	C	D	E	Displeased*
30. Insecure	A	B	C	D	E	Secure
31. Comfortable	A	B	C	D	E	Uncomfortable*
<u>Arousal Items</u>						
32. Unaroused	A	B	C	D	E	Aroused
33. Alert	A	B	C	D	E	Not alert*
34. Excited	A	B	C	D	E	Unexcited*
35. Uninterested	A	B	C	D	E	Interested
36. Sleepy	A	B	C	D	E	Wide awake
<u>Dominance Items</u>						
37. Controlled	A	B	C	D	E	In control
38. Important	A	B	C	D	E	Unimportant*
39. Daring	A	B	C	D	E	Submissive*
40. Powerful	A	B	C	D	E	Powerless*
41. Influenced	A	B	C	D	E	Influential

\* Indicates reverse scoring

### Affective Learning

Much of the research on learning outcomes examines three dimensions of learning: affective, cognitive and behavioral. This study, however, examines only two of these areas: affective learning and behavioral intent. Cognitive learning has been operationalized by asking students to estimate how much they think they learned during a particular course. Because this self perception of learning is likely to be a more accurate measure of affective learning, cognitive learning is not examined in the present study.

The scales examining affective learning were taken from existing literature (e.g., Butland, 1991; Gorham, 1988; McCroskey et al., 1985). Participants rated their attitudes toward course content, behaviors recommended in the course, and the instructor based on five-point semantic differential scales (See Appendix A). Answer options ranged from A to E (where A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4 and E=5), and participants indicated their attitude

based on the letter they indicated on this continuum. Some of the items were recoded so that the highest number indicated the most favorable response. This scales total score could range from 9 to 45, with a midpoint of 27.

### Behavioral Intent

Behavioral intent is operationalized by three items. Participants indicated their likelihood of using the techniques recommended in the course, attending another training session with related content, and taking additional training with the same instructor (See Appendix A). Answer options also ranged from A to E for this variable. This scale's possible range is also from 9 to 45, with a midpoint of 36. The items utilized are consistent with previous research (e.g., Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Gorham, 1988; McCroskey et al., 1985; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

### Other Measures

Subjects were also asked to indicate the course title, date, their gender, and their instructor's gender. The course title and date were used to determine the number of different instructors evaluated over the course of the study. The gender of the participant and instructor were included as possible extraneous variables.

## Data Analysis

### Hypothesis 1: Affective Learning

**H<sub>1</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with affective learning.

To determine the relationship between these variables, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The predictor variables were verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning. The criterion variable was

affective learning (affect toward course content, behaviors recommended, and the instructor). It was expected that the strongest relationship would exist between immediacy, both verbal and nonverbal, and affective learning due to the strength of this relationship reported in past research (e.g., Anderson, 1979; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Moore, Masterson, Christophel & Shea, 1996; Gorham, 1998; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey & Richmond, 1986).

### Hypothesis 2: Behavioral Intent

**H<sub>2</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with behavioral intent.

Multiple regression analysis was also conducted to determine the relationship between the same predictor variables with the criterion variable of behavioral intent. As with the first hypothesis, it was expected that verbal and nonverbal immediacy would demonstrate a stronger relationship with behavioral intent than job relevance and participation in learning. This was because the relationship between immediacy and behavioral intent has received considerable attention in past instructional communication research, and it is likely that this relationship is also strong in training environments ((e.g., Anderson, 1979; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Moore, Masterson, Christophel & Shea, 1996; Gorham, 1998).

### Hypothesis 3: Emotional Response Theory

**H<sub>3</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with a linear combination of pleasure, arousal and dominance.

A canonical correlation was employed to determine the relationship between these two sets of variables. It was expected that while pleasure and arousal would be significantly correlated with verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance, and participation in learning, the results for dominance may not reach acceptable reliability.

In addition to the statistics analyzed to respond to the stated hypotheses, t-tests were conducted to determine the impact of participant gender and instructor gender. No significant differences are expected.

#### Criteria for Significance

The probability level was set at .05, an acceptable standard for social science research. The probability level attained for each relationship is reported in the following chapter. The next chapter reports the results of this study.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In the first chapter, the scope and rationale for this study were introduced. The importance of understanding the relationship between teacher immediacy, participation in learning, and job relevance and learning outcomes, specifically affective learning and behavioral intent, were outlined. By understanding the relationship among these variables and learning outcomes, trainers may gain insight on how to improve their training evaluations. In addition, if these affective evaluations and measures of behavioral intent are necessary for transfer of training to occur, trainers may also learn how to make transfer of training more likely.

The second chapter further explained each of the variables investigated in this study and outlined emotional response theory. Emotional response theory provides one explanation of how teacher behaviors impact learning outcomes. Affinity seeking behaviors, a teacher behavior that is not included in the hypotheses or results, was also outlined in the second chapter. While affinity seeking is an important concept in communication research, it was not included as a variable in this study in order to ensure a manageable survey length. The third chapter described the survey instrument utilized in this study and how that survey was administered.

This chapter describes the results for each of the three hypotheses outlined in the previous chapter as well as the obtained reliabilities for each of the variables in this study. Chapter five will discuss the implications for each of these findings, limitations of this study, and directions for future research.

## Reliability of Measures

As discussed in the previous chapter, the reliability of many of these scales is documented in previous research. Table 4.1 lists the reliability for each scale used in this study. With reliability alphas of .70 or higher, the following scales achieved strong reliability: verbal immediacy, participation in learning, job relevance, affective learning, behavioral intent, pleasure and arousal. The scale for nonverbal immediacy approached an acceptable level of reliability with an alpha of .61. Previous research on nonverbal immediacy has yielded reliability estimates between .69 and .89 for nonverbal immediacy (McCroskey et al., 1995). Possible reasons for nonverbal immediacy's low reliability will be discussed in the next chapter.

Consistent with previous research using emotional response theory to explain teacher behaviors (Beebe & Butland, 1994; Butland & Beebe, 1992), the dominance scale did not achieve a strong level of reliability. With an alpha of .63, the dominance scale approached an acceptable reliability. With the exception of nonverbal immediacy, all of the measures in this study reached reliability levels comparable to previous research.

Table 4.1

Reliabilities for Measures	
<u>Predictor Variables</u>	
Verbal Immediacy	.75
Nonverbal Immediacy	.61
Participation in Learning	.79
Job Relevance	.79
<u>Criterion Variables</u>	
Affective Learning	.91
Behavioral Intent	.91
<u>Emotional Response Theory</u>	
Pleasure	.74
Arousal	.80
Dominance	.63

## Hypotheses and Results

This section is organized by the hypotheses examined in this study. Each of the three hypotheses is listed, followed by the results.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related to affective learning.

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 provide information regarding the first hypothesis. Each of the predictor variables is strongly correlated with affective learning ( $p < .001$ ). Job relevance ( $r = .57$ ) and participation in learning ( $r = .42$ ) were most strongly correlated with affective learning.

Table 4.2  
Correlation Between Predictor Variables and Affective Learning

Predictor Variables	r	r <sup>2</sup>
Verbal Immediacy	.28	.08
Nonverbal Immediacy	.30	.09
Participation	.42	.18
Job Relevance	.57	.32

All variables are significant at  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 186$

Results of stepwise multiple regression analysis confirmed the first hypothesis. As shown in Table 4.3, the two best predictors of affective learning were job relevance ( $F = 89.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 \text{ Change} = .32$ ) and participation in learning ( $F = 48.88$ ,  $p < .02$ ,  $R^2 \text{ Change} = .02$ ). Job relevance explained 32% of the variance with affective learning and participation in learning explained an additional 2% of the variance. The other predictor variables, verbal immediacy and nonverbal immediacy, were positively related to affective learning, but did not explain a significant amount of additional variance in the regression equation. Combined, job relevance and participation in learning explain 34% of the variance in affective learning.



Table 4.3  
Multiple Regression Analysis for Predictor Variables on Affective Learning

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	p
Affective Learning	Job Relevance	.57	.32	.32	.001
	Participation	.69	.34	.02	.02

**H<sub>2</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related to behavioral intent.

The second hypothesis was also confirmed, as shown in Tables 4.4 and 4.5. It is clear from the correlation matrix presented in Table 4.4 that each of the predictor variables is positively and significantly correlated with behavioral intent. Job relevance ( $r = .68$ ) had the highest correlation with behavioral intent.

Table 4.4  
Correlation Between Predictor Variables and Behavioral Intent

Predictor Variables	r	r <sup>2</sup>
Verbal Immediacy	.32	.10
Nonverbal Immediacy	.27	.07
Participation	.36	.13
Job Relevance	.67	.45

All variables are significant  $p < .001$ ,  $df = 186$

Stepwise multiple regression analysis confirmed the second hypothesis. The single best predictor of behavioral intent was job relevance ( $F = 148.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .44$ ) (See Table 4.5). Explaining 44% of the variance in behavioral intent, no other variables explained a significant amount of the remaining variance.

Table 4.5  
Multiple Regression Analysis for Predictor Variables on Behavioral Intent

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	p
Behavioral Intent	Job Relevance	.67	.44	.44	.001

**H<sub>3</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related to a linear combination of pleasure, arousal and dominance.

The first two hypotheses, which examine the relationship between predictor variables and learning outcomes, were confirmed. The third hypothesis examined how these variable set of immediacy, participation in learning and job relevance, are related to the variable set of pleasure, arousal and dominance (i.e., emotional response variables).

The strong relationship between the variables can be seen by examining the correlation of these scales in these two sets (See Table 4.6). All of these variables were significantly correlated with each other.

Table 4.6  
Correlations Among Predictor and Criterion Variables

Predictor Variables	Pleasure r	Arousal r	Dominance r
Verbal Immediacy	.26**	.29**	.23**
Nonverbal Immediacy	.32**	.19**	.15*
Participation	.47**	.38**	.48**
Job Relevance	.59**	.55**	.33**

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.001

Canonical correlation analysis were performed to obtain additional insight into the association between these two sets of variables. Canonical correlation measures the association between two sets of variables. This analysis supported the third hypothesis and yielded two significant roots. Only the first two will be discussed since the third root was not significant.

Root 1 was statistically significant (Wilk's lambda = .461,  $F = 13.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and revealed a substantial correlation ( $R_c = .69$ ). The loadings for the first root are summarized in Table 4.7. Set 1 of the canonical component loadings was dominated primarily by job relevance and secondarily by participation in learning. In Set 2, the pleasure dimension of emotional response theory exhibited a high positive loading, and arousal showed a secondary loading. Root 1 indicates that those who perceived a high degree of job relevance during the training session (and to a somewhat lesser degree, those who actively participated in the session) were likely to feel more pleasure during the session (as well as some degree of arousal).

Table 4.7  
Canonical Component Loadings for the First Root

Set 1		Set 2	
Verbal Immediacy	-.047	Pleasure	.637
Nonverbal Immediacy	.083	Arousal	.373
Participation	.386	Dominance	.194
Job Relevance	.734		

The second root, which explained an additional 10% ( $R_c^2$ ) of the variance, was also significant (Wilk's lambda = .880,  $F = 3.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The loadings for the second root are presented in Table 4.8. The Set 1 loadings were dominated by high positive loadings for participation in learning and high negative loadings for job relevance. In Set 2, dominance had a high positive loading while arousal had a moderate negative loading. This suggests that if individuals participated but did not perceive much job relevance, then they had higher feelings of dominance but lower feelings of arousal.

Table 4.8  
Canonical Component Loadings for the Second Root

Set 1		Set 2	
Verbal Immediacy	-.016	Pleasure	-.207
Nonverbal Immediacy	-.175	Arousal	-.638
Participation	1.133	Dominance	1.125
Job Relevance	-.838		

As mentioned previously, a third root was not statistically significant. Therefore, it is not reported in this chapter or discussed in chapter five.

### Summary

This chapter has discussed the results related to each hypothesis investigated in this study and summarized the reliability of each variable. All three hypotheses were confirmed. Nonverbal immediacy (alpha reliability = .61) and dominance (alpha reliability = .63) approached an acceptable reliability standard, while all other measures exhibited strong reliability with alphas of .70 or higher. The subsequent chapter discusses the low reliability of several measures and the implications of the findings reported. In addition, the next chapter cites limitations of this study and directions for future research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

While U.S. companies spending billions on training each year, the most common, if not only, method of evaluation is participant reaction questionnaires (Jones, 1990). Given the prevalence of reaction questionnaires, it is important to consider how trainers may be able to alter their behaviors to achieve higher ratings. These ratings often impact the promotion of in-house trainers and the repeat business of external trainers.

On reaction questionnaires it is not uncommon to see questions asking the participants whether or not they believe they will use the skills and material learned during the training session. In chapter two, this was introduced as behavioral intent. Both affective learning and behavioral intent impact the reactionnaire ratings of training sessions. It is also possible that affective learning and behavioral intent are necessary in order for prolonged learning and transfer to occur (Clement, 1982; Noe, 1986).

In chapter two, several factors that may be related to affective learning and behavioral intent were reviewed. In chapter three, the results for each hypothesis were discussed. This chapter will provide rationales and explanations for the reliability, regression and canonical correlation results presented in the previous chapter. Then, implications of the results, limitations of the present study and directions for future research will be discussed. This chapter, and thesis, will then close with a conclusion.

### Reliability of Measures

Before considering the implications of the results outlined in the previous chapter, it is important to consider the reliability of each variable in this study. As mentioned in the previous chapter, all of the measures in this study reached acceptable reliability

except nonverbal immediacy ( $\alpha = .61$ ) and dominance ( $\alpha = .63$ ). There are several explanations for the lower reliability of these variables.

When compiling the survey items, a variation of the verbal and nonverbal immediacy scale was borrowed and modified from Sanders and Wiseman's (1990) study. This version was selected because it was a shorter version but still reliable. Their version contained 22 items, 14 verbal and 8 nonverbal, items drawn from modified versions of Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey's (1987) nonverbal behavior index and Gorham's (1988) verbal immediacy behavior scale. Sanders and Wiseman (1990) reported a combined verbal and nonverbal reliability of .91.

Sanders and Wiseman's (1990) scale was modified so that the two items that are less relevant in the training context were eliminated. Both of these items fell on the nonverbal immediacy portion of the scale. In this analysis the reliability of verbal and nonverbal immediacy combined was .79. However, since the study of verbal and nonverbal immediacy originated at different times and they often studied as separate variables, they were considered separate variables in this study. While Sanders and Wiseman (1990), and other researchers as well, report a combined reliability for both verbal and nonverbal immediacy, these scores were separate in this study. The smaller number of items on this scale probably contributed to its lower reliability. It is also possible that there are other items on this scale that are less relevant to the training context than the classroom environment. This would cause a lower reliability score as well.

The second variable, which did not achieve acceptable reliability, was the dominance dimension of emotional response theory. This dimension has been reliable in

most studies involving topics such as television viewing preferences, communication apprehension, and compliance-gaining. Reliability levels for the dominance dimension in these studies generally range from .73 to .86 (Beebe & Biggers, 1986, Biggers & Masterson, 1984; Vinson & Biggers, 1993). There have been several studies in the television viewing genre where dominance has achieved lower reliability scores of .63 (Christ & Biggers, 1984). In studies of teacher behaviors, the reliability for dominance has been between .36 and .65 (Beebe & Butland, 1994; Butland & Beebe, 1992). Given these rather large differences in reported reliability, what is the reason for this large fluctuation?

It seems that, for studies on television viewing preferences, communication apprehension and compliance-gaining, dominance is a somewhat more reliable measure. There is some question regarding the reliability of the dominance dimension in studies on teacher behaviors. It is possible that the directions included for how to evaluate the adjective pairs need to be clearer. Respondents need to understand clearly that they are responding based on how they felt *during* the session, not how they felt *about* the session. Because it is necessary for the respondents to make this distinction, it is important that they carefully read and follow the directions. A final possible reason for the lower reliability of dominance lies in the emotional response the words themselves cause. One of the trainers who administered surveys noted that there was some quiet laughing regarding the word “arousal.” To the extent people begin to respond to the connotation of the word rather than giving a true representation of emotional state at the time, the instrument loses reliability.

## Hypotheses

In the previous chapter, the results were outlined. Each hypothesis was confirmed. An explanation of these results is followed by a discussion of the practical implications of these results. Nonverbal immediacy and dominance are included in the discussion despite the somewhat low reliability scores. This discussion is organized by the hypotheses presented in chapter two.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related to affective learning.

As stated in the previous chapter, the two best predictors of affective learning were job relevance ( $F=89.26$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $R^2$  Change=.32) and participation in learning ( $F=48.88$ ,  $p<.02$ ,  $R^2$  Change=.02). While verbal and nonverbal immediacy were expected to have the strongest relationship with affect, they did not. There are several possible explanations as to why immediacy did not have the strongest relationship with affective learning.

Frymier and Shulman (1995) suggest that a minimum level of teacher immediacy may be required before students respond to content relevance. They note, "Immediacy may be a necessary condition for relevance. Nonimmediate teachers may go unnoticed by students because they are not paying attention" (p. 49). Frymier and Shulman (1995) found a significant, positive correlation between relevance and immediacy. Applied to the current study, this might mean that, even though immediacy was not the best predictor of affective learning or behavioral intent, it still influenced whether or not students perceived the content relevant to their jobs. If a trainer was highly non-



immediate, attempts to link content to participants' jobs made in a monotone voice with no eye contact would have gone unnoticed. That is, in order for a participant to perceive job relevance and be willing to actively participate in the training session, the trainer must first exhibit at least moderate levels of immediacy. It is likely that, given the level of experience the trainers who volunteered to participate, they all displayed at least moderate levels of immediacy behaviors. A moderate level of immediacy may allow what the instructor does in terms of relating content and encouraging participation to impact affective learning and behavioral intent. It is possible that moderate levels of verbal and nonverbal immediacy are necessary, but not sufficient conditions for affective learning and behavioral intent. In this way, immediacy behaviors may have an important, but indirect, impact on affective learning and behavioral intent.

It may also be possible that having a perception of physical and psychological closeness with the instructor is less important for adults than it is for children. Children may be more concerned with feeling close to and liked by others. Adults are more independent rather than dependent in their self-concepts (Knowles, 1990; Sisco & Hiemstra, 1991). It is possible that this increased independence makes adult learners less concerned about a physical or psychological closeness with their instructor. However, Knowles (1980) also notes that "the psychological climate should be one which causes adults to feel accepted, respected, and supported; in which there exists a mutuality between teachers and students" (p. 47). He says that they should be in a friendly and informal environment where they are known by name and valued as unique individuals. These characteristics of a preferable adult learning climate sound very similar to the verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. The relevance of immediacy behaviors in

the training context is still unclear. The question concerning whether trainer immediacy has a significant influence on learning outcomes is not fully answered.

Job relevance and participation in learning were the two variables that significantly explained the variance in affective learning. Knowles (1990) identified several characteristics of adult learners:

1. Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
2. Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions and own lives.
3. Adults come into an educational activity with a greater volume and different quality of experience.
4. Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations.
5. Adults have a life-centered (or task-centered or problem-centered) approach to learning rather than a subject-centered approach.
6. While adults are responsive to some external motivators, the most potent motivators are internal pressures. (59-63)

Many of the principles Knowles describes are related to the ideas of job relevance and participation in learning. Job relevance takes into account the first, fourth and fifth characteristics listed above. Adults desire to know why they must learn something, it must be life-centered rather than subject-centered, and it must help them cope with real-life situations. Job relevance as operationalized in this study was very outcome-oriented. One item was, "This session will improve my performance on the job." This item

addresses the life-centered approach which encompasses real-life situations. The other item was, “The instructor used examples and scenarios that helped me link the content of this training to my job.” This item encompasses the same life-centered approach as the previous item, but also accounts for the instructor’s role in helping communicate relevance to participants. Given adults’ affinity toward life-centeredness, it is not surprising that, when participants indicated higher levels of job relevance, they also indicated higher degrees of affective learning.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related to behavioral intent

This hypothesis was also confirmed. As shown in Table 4.4, each of the predictor variables was significantly correlated with behavioral intent ( $p < .001$ ). Job relevance had the strongest correlation ( $r = .67$ ) with behavioral intent and was the only variable which emerged in regression analysis. Job relevance explained 44% of the variance in behavioral intent. While the other predictor variables were significantly correlated with behavioral intent, the best predictor of behavioral intent was job relevance ( $F = 148.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .44$ ).

The results of this regression analysis make sense intuitively. This result suggests that if participants see a clear link between training content and how it would be useful on the job, then they are more likely to say that they will use the training content. From this, trainers get a clear indication of how to increase the likelihood of transfer, since behavioral intent is strongly related to actual behavior. In this way, making content

relevant to participants' jobs may increase both the measures of behavioral intent and transfer of training.

As with affective learning, it is possible that immediacy behaviors indirectly influence behavioral intent because a minimal level may be required before participants perceive job relevance. It is possible that participants in training programs expect a higher degree of immediacy, so its presence is not a benefit, it is expected. It is also possible that these variables (verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, and participation) are too inter-correlated to explain a significant amount of additional variance in behavioral intent. A final possibility is that immediacy behaviors are simply far less important than content relevance in a training context.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related to a linear combination of pleasure, arousal and dominance.

The first two hypotheses focus on the relationship between predictor variables and learning outcomes. This hypothesis addresses how and why verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning are related to learning outcomes. This hypothesis was also confirmed. As shown in Table 4.6 in the previous chapter, all but one relationship in the correlation matrix is significant at the  $p < .001$ . The relationship between nonverbal immediacy and dominance was significant at the  $p < .05$  level. The canonical correlation provided additional insight on the association between the two sets of variables. Two roots explained a total of 58% of the variance.

The first root indicated that those who perceive a high degree of job relevance and were somewhat actively involved were likely to feel more pleasure and somewhat more arousal during the session. This also falls in line with adult learning theory and the idea that adults enjoy learning when the content is task-centered (Knowles, 1990). If participants are involved with tasks that help link training content to their jobs (case studies, activities, small group discussions, etc.), then they are more likely to feel pleasure, and to a lesser degree arousal.

The second root suggested that individuals who did participate but did not perceive much job relevance dominated the material but were not highly aroused. This result suggests that getting participants to go through the motions is not enough. In other words, it is not sufficient to just participate. They must also recognize the importance of what they are doing for the organization before their task has any real meaning.

### Implications

The results of this study provide useful information for trainers and communication researchers alike. Because of this study applies instructional communication concepts and adult education theory to a training context, there are several different audiences.

#### Insight for Trainers

Trainers gain insight regarding what seems to most influence affective learning and behavioral intent. It seems, at least if trainers display moderate levels of immediacy behaviors, that job relevance is that factor that most significantly contributes to affective learning and behavioral intent. If trainers seek to improve affective and behavioral learning in their participants, they should strive to make content relevant to participants'

jobs. This can be done through the use of case studies, examples, discussion, and by asking participants to apply the concepts to job events.

The results for emotional response theory also may benefit trainers. Increased levels of pleasure and arousal, and to a lesser degree dominance, were related to both learning measures. Since the direct causes of these feelings are unknown, the causes could be related or unrelated to the immediate training environment. The advice to trainers is less clear. It seems that trainers would want to make the session enjoyable, vary the stimuli to keep participants aroused, and allow participants to direct their learning activities. An audience-centered approach is necessary such that the trainer consciously monitors the nonverbal feedback of participants for clues regarding their pleasure, arousal and dominance.

#### Insight for Researchers

For communication researchers, this study offers an investigation of a relatively unexplored context, borrowing from instructional communication literature. This allows us to examine how classroom and training communication contexts may differ. The audiences in these two environments may have somewhat different goals, and therefore, expect different competencies in their instructors. Immediacy behaviors may be more important in the classroom and discussion of job relevance may be more appropriate in the training context. Since many communication researchers also play dual roles as trainers, they may also be interested in the practical implications for trainers. These individuals may need to utilize somewhat different skills in the training room and in the classroom.

The three dimensions of emotional response theory, pleasure, arousal and dominance, help explain how the predictor variables in this study affect learning outcomes. Another common explanation for why immediacy and other teacher behaviors influence learning outcomes is motivation (Christophel, 1990). Emotional response may be a better way to measure the same student reaction because measuring emotional response offers “a more direct way to assess student responses to learning” (Beebe & Ivy, 1994, p. 7).

This study also includes another test of the utility of emotional response theory. Helping test a theory which explains how teacher behaviors function gives us insight into the teaching-learning process. By understanding both which teacher behaviors are effective and how they operate, we can gain a better understanding of student learning. It is also possible that we would find that similar teacher behaviors, such as teacher immediacy and affinity-seeking, function in the same manner. Emotional response theory did help explain variance in the two learning outcomes studied: affective learning and behavioral intent. While additional research is still necessary, another useful application of emotional response theory suggests the importance of continued research.

#### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with any study, there are several limitations that bear special attention. First, many inferences were made from adult learning theory to support two of the variables in this study: participation in learning and job relevance. These variables have received minimal attention in educational and popular publications, and additional studies are needed to investigate the validity and reliability of these concepts. By filling in gaps in the literature between classroom and training room processes, we benefit both trainers

and speech communication researchers. Trainers gain insight on what factors most impact their evaluations and speech communication researchers learn about the similarities and differences required when communicating to classroom and corporate environments.

Because of the manner in which the survey was administered, readers should take care in generalizing the results of this study. The 188 participants who completed the survey viewed one of nine different instructors. Because so few instructors were observed, the generalizability of the results across a variety of instructors is difficult. It is also possible that the trainers at USAA possess more experience than the general pool of trainers. Because of this, the importance of immediacy may be underestimated in the present study. If all of the USAA trainers display at least moderate levels of immediacy, this may skew the results such that immediacy does not appear to be as important in the regression equation as job relevance. Additional research is necessary across a pool of trainers with a wide range of knowledge skills and abilities. It may also be desirable to conduct an experimental study similar to this correlational study so that causal relationships can be determined.

Another potential problem with the manner in which the survey was administered was that the verbal directions on how to complete the survey were left to the trainers. There may have been some variance in the clarity of instructions provided by various trainers. Some classes had several unusable surveys while other classes had no unusable surveys. In order to offset this problem, future researchers should consider attending the close of each training session to control for this variance.



As discussed earlier, the weak reliability of nonverbal immediacy and dominance make the results for those variables somewhat suspect. Additional research is needed on emotional response theory to determine the best possible way to measure emotions. It seemed that several participants responded to the connotation of the words used in the scale. Effort should be made to increase the reliability of the dominance dimension. Determining different adjective pairs to use for the three dimensions, exploring physiological measures, and considering thought-listing are three possibilities for the future measurement of emotional response theory. Research is also needed to examine the relationship between emotional response theory and motivation. Are these separate theories that measure the same phenomena?

While the nonverbal immediacy portion of the scale has been quite reliable in other studies, it was not in this study. Other researchers should try the shorter version of this scale to determine its overall reliability. Deleting duplicate items may have jeopardized the integrity of the instrument. Perhaps several duplicate items are necessary.

Fishbein's theory of reasoned action suggests another dimension that should be added to the measure of behavioral intent (O'Keefe, 1990). As mentioned in chapter two, behavioral intention is what an individual plans to do. The theory of reasoned action proposes that a person's intention is comprised of two factors: his/her attitude toward the behavior in question and his/her subjective norm. A subjective norm is a person's "general perception of whether important others desire performance or nonperformance of the behavior" (O'Keefe, 1990, p. 80). Determining who the appropriate significant

other is in a complex organizational setting is difficult. It could be the boss, a co-worker, subordinates, or the organizational culture itself.

Fishbein's conception of behavioral intention has shown to be predictive of behavior across a wide variety of contexts (Bowman & Fishbein, 1978; Budd, North & Spencer, 1984; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1981; Hoogstraten, de Haan & ter Horst, 1985). If research in this area moves from correlational to causal studies, employing Fishbein's notion of behavioral intent would be useful. Additional research should also be conducted then to see if behavioral intention did accurately predict transfer of training.

A final area of concern is the overlap of constructs. Given the high correlation between affective learning and pleasure, are they truly measuring different constructs? The same question holds for job relevance and behavioral intent. Additional research should be conducted to determine which variables are distinct and attempt to put these variables in a meaningful framework.

### Conclusion

Considering the 55.3 billion dollars spent on formal training in the US in 1997, the lack of research in training contexts is surprising (U. S. Department of Labor, 1997). In order to complete one study on this topic, this thesis began with an introduction and review of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, affinity seeking, job relevance and active participation. Near the end of the second chapter, three hypotheses were posited:

- H<sub>1</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with affective learning.
- H<sub>2</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with behavioral intent.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** A linear combination of verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, job relevance and participation in learning will be positively related with a linear combination of pleasure, arousal and dominance.

In the third chapter, the methods used to test these hypotheses were described. The fourth chapter reported the confirmation of each of these hypotheses, as well as the reliability of each measure.

This chapter, the final chapter of this thesis, has discussed the results in more detail, considered the implications of these findings and suggested limitations and directions for future research. There is no doubt that there is plenty to research in this area. Further investigations of job relevance and participation in learning in both training and classroom contexts would help researchers, teachers and trainers learn if these contexts are different. Additional research on emotional response theory and the shortened version of the nonverbal immediacy scale would provide more solid measures to use in subsequent research. Including subjective norms in the measurement of behavioral intent may make studying and determining a good measure of transfer of training possible. Therefore, while several questions have been answered, many more arise.

# Appendix A

The Communication Research Center in the Department of Speech Communication at Southwest Texas State University, along with the Leadership and Organizational Development Department is sponsoring a study investigating trainer behaviors and perceptions of training programs. Your voluntary cooperation in completing the attached survey is greatly appreciated.

Please DO NOT put your name anywhere on this survey. Your answers will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. Please answer each question honestly. There are no right or wrong answers.

A general summary of the findings will be provided to the Leadership and Organizational Development Department. This survey should take less than ten minutes. Please put the survey in the envelope at the front of the room when you have finished.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

The Communication Research Center  
Department of Speech Communication  
Southwest Texas State University  
San Marcos, Texas 78666  
(512) 353-0712

Title of the course: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

Presented below are behaviors some instructors have been observed doing or saying during training sessions. Please respond to each of the following items for this course based on the instructor you were asked to consider.

***For each item below, circle the number 0-4 that indicates the behavior of the instructor in this session.***

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

1. Uses personal examples or talks about experiences she/he has had outside of this session.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Asks questions or encourages participants to talk.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Gets into discussions based on something a participant brings up even when this doesn't seem to be part of his/her agenda.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Uses humor in the session.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Addresses participants by name.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Addresses me by name.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Has initiated conversations with me before, after, or outside of the session.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Refers to the session as "our" session or what "we" are doing.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Calls on participants to answer questions even if they have not indicated that they want to talk.	0	1	2	3	4
10. Asks how participants feel about topics discussed in the training session.	0	1	2	3	4
11. Asks questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions.	0	1	2	3	4
12. Praises participant's work, actions or comments.	0	1	2	3	4
13. Has discussions about things unrelated to the session with individual participants or the group as a whole.	0	1	2	3	4
14. Is addressed by his/her first name by the participants.	0	1	2	3	4
15. Gestures while talking to the group.	0	1	2	3	4
16. Uses a monotone/dull voice when talking to the group.	0	1	2	3	4
17. Looks at the group while talking.	0	1	2	3	4
18. Smiles at the group while talking.	0	1	2	3	4
19. Has a very tense body position while talking to the group.	0	1	2	3	4
20. Moves around the room while instructing.	0	1	2	3	4

*Please circle letters indicating the degree with which you agree with the following statements.*

Strongly Disagree SD	Disagree D	Neutral N	Agree A	Strongly Agree SA
-------------------------	---------------	--------------	------------	----------------------

21. The instructor encouraged us to participate.	SD	D	N	A	SA
22. I felt comfortable participating.	SD	D	N	A	SA
23. There was a good mix between participation in discussions/activities and the instructor's presentations of information.	SD	D	N	A	SA
24. I actively participated in the session's discussions and activities.	SD	D	N	A	SA
25. This session will improve my performance on the job.	SD	D	N	A	SA
26. The instructor used examples and scenarios that helped link the content of this training to my job.	SD	D	N	A	SA

*Please circle the response that best indicates your overall feeling during this session.  
(Please note that in some cases the most positive score is "A" while in other cases it is "E")*

In this session I usually felt \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                 |   |   |   |   |   |               |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------|
| 27. Happy       | A | B | C | D | E | Unhappy       |
| 28. Unsatisfied | A | B | C | D | E | Satisfied     |
| 29. Pleased     | A | B | C | D | E | Displeased    |
| 30. Insecure    | A | B | C | D | E | Secure        |
| 31. Comfortable | A | B | C | D | E | Uncomfortable |

In this session, I usually felt \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                  |   |   |   |   |   |            |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| 32. Unaroused    | A | B | C | D | E | Aroused    |
| 33. Alert        | A | B | C | D | E | Not alert  |
| 34. Excited      | A | B | C | D | E | Unexcited  |
| 35. Uninterested | A | B | C | D | E | Interested |
| 36. Sleepy       | A | B | C | D | E | Wide awake |

In this session, I usually felt \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                |   |   |   |   |   |             |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| 37. Controlled | A | B | C | D | E | In control  |
| 38. Important  | A | B | C | D | E | Unimportant |
| 39. Daring     | A | B | C | D | E | Submissive  |
| 40. Powerful   | A | B | C | D | E | Powerless   |
| 41. Influenced | A | B | C | D | E | Influential |

***Please circle the letter for each item which best represents your feelings concerning this session.***

My attitude about the content of this session:

- |               |   |   |   |   |   |          |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| 42. Good      | A | B | C | D | E | Bad      |
| 43. Worthless | A | B | C | D | E | Valuable |
| 44. Positive  | A | B | C | D | E | Negative |

My attitude about the behaviors recommended in this session:

- |               |   |   |   |   |   |          |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| 45. Good      | A | B | C | D | E | Bad      |
| 46. Worthless | A | B | C | D | E | Valuable |
| 47. Positive  | A | B | C | D | E | Negative |

My attitude about the instructor of this session:

- |               |   |   |   |   |   |          |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| 48. Good      | A | B | C | D | E | Bad      |
| 49. Worthless | A | B | C | D | E | Valuable |
| 50. Positive  | A | B | C | D | E | Negative |

My likelihood of attempting to use the techniques recommended in this session:

- |                |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 51. Likely     | A | B | C | D | E | Unlikely  |
| 52. Impossible | A | B | C | D | E | Possible  |
| 53. Would      | A | B | C | D | E | Would not |

My likelihood of attending another training session with related content, if I had a choice:

- |              |   |   |   |   |   |            |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| 54. Likely   | A | B | C | D | E | Unlikely   |
| 55. Probable | A | B | C | D | E | Improbable |
| 56. Would    | A | B | C | D | E | Would not  |

The likelihood of my taking additional training with this instructor, if I had a choice:

- |              |   |   |   |   |   |            |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| 57. Likely   | A | B | C | D | E | Unlikely   |
| 58. Probable | A | B | C | D | E | Improbable |
| 59. Would    | A | B | C | D | E | Would not  |

Your gender:                      Male    Female

Your instructor's gender:    Male    Female

**Thank you for your participation!**



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