

HOW DO WE “DIS” STUDENTS?: A MODEL OF (DIS)RESPECTFUL BUSINESS INSTRUCTOR BEHAVIOR

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Abstract:

This study summarizes undergraduate business students’ reports of respectful and disrespectful instructor behaviors. Consistent with the theory of interactional justice, respectful behavior was exemplified by recognition of students’ perspectives and by the treatment of students, including showing concern and sensitivity to students’ situations. Disrespectful instructor behavior was noted in terms of poor treatment of students and unwillingness to provide class-related help. Male students commented on being recognized, on instructor responsiveness to their concerns, and on classroom integrity issues more often than their female counterparts. Female students were more sensitive to treatment issues and affirmative instructor behaviors. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: respectful instructor behavior; disrespectful instructor behavior; interactional justice; student accounts; undergraduate classroom climate

Article:

In the business education literature, there has been recent research on the influence of undergraduate business instructors’ attitude and behavior on student perceptions of the instructor’s classroom effectiveness (e.g. McKone, 1999). One dimension of instructor behavior is demonstrating respect for students. For example, Kim, Damewood, and Hodge (2000) developed a set of recommendations for faculty to enhance their effectiveness, focusing on exhibiting a respectful behavior toward students. Kim et al.’s findings suggest that respectful instructional behavior is an important component in the student-instructor relationship. This article reports on a study of student accounts of (dis)respectful instructor behavior in the undergraduate business classroom.

Today’s students and faculty may have different expectations about appropriate behavior in the classroom. Levine and Cureton (1998) found that students’ values and aspirations have shifted since the 1970s when many of today’s faculty were in college. The American Council on Education (Choy, 2002) reported that today’s college students are markedly more diverse than the traditional model of earlier decades. Payne and Holmes (1998) wrote about communication challenges faced by faculty from the baby-boomer generation teaching students from a different generation, Generation X. Students reported that a common communication challenge was faculty attitudes toward students. Based on interviews with faculty, employers, and students, the authors recommended that instructors be careful about assuming students and faculty share the same values and priorities. Payne and Holmes (1998) recommended that faculty seek to earn the

respect of their students rather than relying on their legitimate source of power as an instructor (French & Raven, 1959). How do today's undergraduate business students define respectful instructor behavior? Addressing this question was a purpose of the present study. Understanding students' definition of respectful instructor behavior may help management and organizational behavior faculty cultivate a more effective classroom climate for learning and student performance.

Understanding how students define respectful instructor behavior is important because students who feel respected by their instructor may be more motivated and committed to their study in that course. Research on interactional justice in organizational contexts has shown that employees who feel that they have been treated with respect demonstrate higher performance on a number of measures. Interactional justice is defined as the extent to which organizational agents treat organizational members in a way that conveys respect, sensitivity, compassion, and dignity (Bies & Moag, 1986; Folger & Bies, 1989; Lomo-David & Hulbert, 1992). In organizations, interactional justice has been found to be positively related to affective commitment, trust in management, and satisfaction and to be negatively related to turnover intentions (Beugre, 1997). Findings from studies by Barling and Phillips (1993) and Williams (1999) show that business students are sensitive to issues of organizational justice, including interactional justice.

A second purpose of the present study was to explore the possibility that although male and female students may share some common conceptions about (dis)respectful instructor behavior, they also may have some differences. Research has suggested that women are more sensitive to interpersonal relationships and interactions (Fisher, 1999; Helgeson, 1990; Rosener, 1995) and therefore may pay closer attention to their interactions with instructors than men. Miller (1986) developed relational theory that posits that healthy psychological development can occur in the context of relationships rather than autonomy. This theory was developed based on women's developmental experiences, suggesting that for women, connection with others may be important whereas other research suggests that autonomy and independence are important for many men (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982). Related to the business classroom context, Roulis, Brookfield, and Preskill (1999) and Tannen (1990) noted that in discussion, men tend to use a report form of speech as a way to preserve independence whereas women use conversation to develop and sustain relationships. So men and women may have different expectations about how instructors convey respect in interactions in the business classroom.

In a related vein, women and men appear to have different emphases in justice concerns. Justice research suggests that women may be more sensitive to interpersonal treatment in their interactions with others. Tata and Bowes-Sperry (1996) found that women were more likely than men to consider interactional justice, that is, treatment issues such as respect, when making decisions about pay raises whereas men were more likely to consider distributive justice where the focus is on the outcomes. Similarly, Sweeney and McFarlin (1997) and Armstrong-Stassen (1998) found that the perceived fairness of a given process had a greater impact on women's evaluations of their experiences than on men's. Wethington, McLeod, and Kessler (1987) suggested that women may be more sensitive to events that happen to people around them, such as coworkers or classmates, because the women feel obligated, due to socialization, to respond to

others' needs. The justice research also suggests that there may be different concerns for men and women students in their relationships with their instructors.

Past research on effective instructor behavior has focused on data collected primarily through student evaluation instruments developed by educational researchers (see Cashin, 1996; Feldman, 1989; Kim et al., 2000; Marsh, 1984; McKone, 1999 for examples and reviews). As such, the items on these instruments reflect the dimensions of teaching the instruments' developers determined to contribute to effective college teaching, thus assuming a deductive approach based on the investigators' knowledge. However, there has been little research that highlights students' voices regarding their perceptions of effective instructor behavior and attitudes.

This study presents students' voices through a content analysis of their written accounts of respectful and disrespectful instructor behaviors. I used an inductive approach in which I analyzed the accounts for emergent themes and then developed a model of the themes in the accounts. I looked for emergent themes through which the students' voices would determine the issues relevant to them regarding respectful and disrespectful instructor behaviors. I also examined the accounts of male and female students to determine whether the emergent themes differed by respondent sex.

Method

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

Demographic data on the study participants is presented in Table 1. Participants' average age was 23.5 years (median = 22 years). Instructors in seven management classes in a large southeastern state university invited their students to complete a questionnaire on instructional classroom behaviors during class time. Questionnaires were distributed by the course instructor who informed the students that the instrument was part of an ongoing study of effective instructor performance, that participation was voluntary and anonymous, and would not affect grades in any way. Written instructions repeated this information. Students placed the completed instruments in a large envelope that was circulated throughout the class. The instructor sealed the envelope at this time and, after class, returned the packet to me. Of the 252 surveys distributed, 228 forms were completed, for a response rate of 90.5%.

Because previous research has studied student perspectives using instruments developed by faculty, I wanted to use a qualitative methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that would permit me to hear the students' voice. Accordingly, I posed several written open-ended questions to students. The prompts for soliciting students' perceptions about respectful instructor behavior were the following: "Tell us about a time when an instructor behaved toward you or another student in a way that you thought showed respect. What did the instructor do?" For student perceptions about disrespectful instructor behavior, the open-ended prompt was the following: "Now tell us about a time when an instructor behaved toward you or another student in a way that you thought was disrespectful. What did the instructor do?" Items inquiring about the participant's age, sex, and year in college completed the instrument.

TABLE 1
Demographics of the Study Participants

<i>Sex of the Respondents</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male	99	43.4
Female	127	55.7
Not reported	2	0.9
Total	228	100.0

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Sophomore	10	4.4
Junior	82	36.0
Senior	132	57.9
Not reported	4	1.7
Total	228	100.0

Content analysis. Students' written responses to the prompts for examples of respectful and disrespectful instructor behaviors were entered into the computer program, Ethnograph, version 5.0 (Seidel, 1998). In other research, evaluation of computer-aided qualitative analysis versus human-coded content analysis has indicated that the two methods are equally effective (Morris, 1993). In the present study, the accounts were sorted into two separate subfiles, one for respectful and one for disrespectful instructor behaviors. I analyzed each subfile separately to determine whether respectful and disrespectful behaviors were perceived to be ends of a continuum or two different concepts. For respectful instructor behavior, I read through the responses several times to identify general themes. Then I closely read the first 15 pages of responses and identified specific themes. Next, I analyzed the entire subfile using Ethnograph and coded responses into the thematic categories. Some responses contained more than one theme, and each part of the response that pertained to a specific theme was coded. No part of a response was coded into more than one theme. I repeated this multistep process for the subfile containing accounts about disrespectful instructor behaviors. Test-retest reliability calculations indicated that with a time lapse of 3 weeks, reliability for the two subfiles combined was 96.7%. Finally, to address the secondary purpose of the study, I also examined the accounts for differences in themes or in emphasis as a function of students' sex.

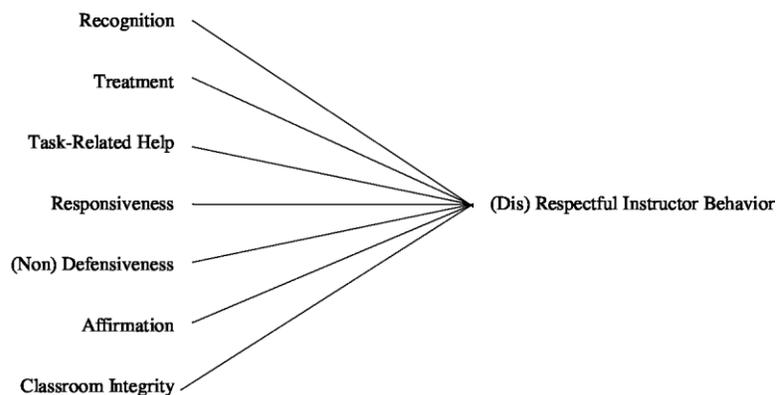


Figure 1: A Model of (Dis)Respectful Instructor Behavior

Results

Overall, there were 476 coded items in students' descriptions of respectful and disrespectful instructor behaviors. The category labeled instructors' treatment of students was mentioned most frequently, constituting 35.7% of the coded items. Second most often cited was recognition of students at 20%. Task-related help was third (14.9%). Being responsive to student concerns was fourth most frequently described, at 9.2%. (Non)defensiveness was fifth most often mentioned (8.8%). Affirmation was sixth most frequently mentioned at 5.9%, whereas classroom integrity was the last category of accounts (5.5%). A model of the emergent themes is presented in Figure 1.

EMERGENT THEMES DESCRIBING RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

There were a total of 274 coded items describing respectful instructor behaviors. Recognition of students' perspectives was the most frequently mentioned emergent theme (81 accounts, 29.6% of the coded responses) by the participants. Recognition was demonstrated by asking for students' opinions and taking their responses into account in making decisions, listening to students' concerns, getting to know students individually, and thanking students for their input. One female student wrote about her instructor:

Made a point to get to know me—by that I mean she treated each of the students almost like colleagues in our discussions and by knowing me personally really made me feel like my opinion counted—I never miss this class and look forward to it every day because of the great environment.

Another student commented that his instructor “genuinely listened to my comments, questions, and concerns then acted upon them.” He reported that these instructional behaviors “made me feel important.”

The second emergent theme was the nature of treatment of the student(s) by the instructor (63 items, 23% of responses), including demonstrating kindness and concern for the student and showing sensitivity to the students' situations. Words used by student participants included “kind, understanding, polite, sympathetic.” Instructor behaviors were particularly salient for the students when they were encountering difficulties either in the class or in their personal lives that affected their class performance. A student having difficulties in a class reported that, “The professor informed me that my quiz grades were exceptionally low, but did it in a respectful and courteous way. I felt motivated to improve them as a result and I raised them to a B average.”

The third emergent theme, in terms of frequency of accounts, was task-related help (38 accounts, 13.9% of the responses). Accounts in this category concerned responding to questions and providing help for students having difficulties. Students wrote about faculty who listened with patience to questions, encouraged questions, answered them fully, and checked to see if students then understood the concept being presented. Even answering basic questions can influence students' perceptions of the classroom climate as one student wrote, “I knew I could ask her for any help. When she answered other people's ‘dumb’ questions, a positive atmosphere of trust was created.” Another student commented that faculty responsiveness to questions “lets you know that they really care about their students and want them to do well.”

Fourth, students described instructors' responsiveness to the students' unusual situations (33 accounts, 12%). Responsiveness to unusual situations included making exceptions for students with special needs, such as family emergencies or illness, personal problems, and changing

employment schedules. One student wrote of a professor who allowed him to take a final exam with another section because of a heavy exam schedule. The instructor's decision "showed that the professor cared and understood the pressure of exams and was willing to compromise."

For the fifth emergent theme, students commented on the instructors' affirmation of the student(s) (28 responses, 10.2%). Affirmation of students confirmed the value of students' contributions to class discussions and other class activities, hence, in the students' minds confirming their own value. One student wrote, "When a teacher acknowledges you and treats you and your question as if they are important, it shows respect." Affirmation was particularly salient when students were experiencing difficulties in a class. One student in a business communications course wrote,

When we were practicing for presentations, Professor—gave me some good pointers and self-confidence. I am terrified of giving presentations and she said, "If anything, I will give you an A+ for courage." That really meant a lot. I felt like I could get in front of this class and present anything.

How an instructor responded to incorrect responses also mattered. A student wrote, "He never made a student feel as if the answer was wrong or unthoughtful (sic). He took control of the class and initiated participation through thoughtful interaction. I felt my classroom participation was genuinely appreciated and sought after." Another student commented on the inclusiveness conveyed by her instructor, "When there is an open discussion in class he makes sure everyone is heard who wanted to speak. I felt good because everyone's thoughts mattered." Students also noted when instructors responded nondefensively to questions and challenges as indicative of respect, the sixth emergent theme. Nineteen students (7%) commented on this behavior. One student described a situation, "The teacher was willing to listen and change his standpoint after listening to a student point of view.... Nice to know we matter." Another student wrote of an instructor who went further: "When a student asked a question or challenged the teacher, the teacher took interest in the student and took time to evaluate an answer." The student continued that she was "Happy to see that teachers and students can challenge each other in a learning environment—made me feel more confident in class and not afraid."

Class integrity was the least frequently mentioned emergent theme. This category included concerns about honesty and truthfulness on the part of the instructor, demonstrating trust in students, fair and impartial treatment, concern for students' rights, and providing justification for decisions (12 accounts, 4.4% of the accounts). A student appreciated that her instructor trusted her regarding a homework assignment: "At one point, I had left a section of my homework undone because I overlooked it. I explained what happened and she let me turn it in that evening. She respected me enough to believe me." Sometimes the instructor had to weigh the various concerns among students in a class. A student recounted, "Instructor had received complaint during office hours that there was too much talking going on in a section of the class. Instructor brought it up at next class with no finger pointing. Talking was diminished in later classes. It was done in a professional manner."

In summary, the accounts about respectful instructor behavior fell into seven categories: recognition, treatment, task-related help, responsiveness, affirmation, nondefensiveness, and class integrity, respectively.

EMERGENT THEMES REGARDING DISRESPECTFUL INSTRUCTOR BEHAVIORS

Overall, the themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis for the respectful instructor behaviors also emerged in the accounts of disrespectful instructor behaviors with one exception. However, the themes shifted in relative importance, as indicated by the frequency with which they were mentioned. In total, there were 202 coded accounts about perceived disrespectful instructor behaviors.

The participants most often described insensitive treatment as examples of disrespectful instructor behavior. Numerous students cited instances of instructor rudeness, arrogance, condescension, ridiculing, sarcasm, cutting students off, and putting students down in front of classmates that were embarrassing and humiliating. Citations about these behaviors constituted 107 (53%) of the coded accounts. These behaviors had a chilling effect on some students' motivation. In one student's account, after a professor told a classmate he was stupid, she wrote, "It makes you feel as though you don't matter. I was embarrassed for the student." Students reported that after being embarrassed or seeing other students embarrassed, they felt inadequate and lacked confidence to speak in class. Some students seemed to generalize instructors' comments about their (students') questions to be comments about the students themselves. A student reported that a professor's sarcastic response to a question "makes you feel not so important and that your question was dumb just as yourself." This was a common comment in students' reports of how they felt in classes where they perceived the instructor to be belittling.

Instructors' responses to questions influenced the subsequent classroom climate and student performance. When an instructor called a student's answer stupid, the student reported, "This type of behavior created an atmosphere where no one wanted to say a word the rest of the semester." Another student reported he rarely participated in and often missed a class where he found the instructor's behavior to be condescending. A third student reported that she dropped a class in which the instructor embarrassed another student and wrote that she was waiting for a different teacher before reregistering for the course.

The second emergent theme received considerably fewer accounts (33, 16.3%) and concerned lack of help in class-related activities. Students complained that some instructors ignored students' questions, refused to provide assistance with assignments or missed class work, were unavailable during office hours, or failed to respond to e-mails. Students reported that lack of availability or unwillingness to help conveyed "a lack of concern for students (sic) well-being and knowledge." A student reported that difficulty he had getting help from an instructor affected his performance in the class: "When I went to talk with him he made me feel rushed and got irritated when I didn't quite know what he was talking about. It made me not want to go to him again and made me quite uncomfortable. So I struggled in class."

The third emergent theme for disrespectful instructor behavior was instructors' defensiveness and reacting angrily to student questions or concerns (23 accounts, 11.4% of responses). One student recounted,

I went to an instructor with a concern over his grading of a test. There were two questions marked wrong that I felt were right. I did not necessarily expect the grade to be changed; what I did expect was an explanation of why the answers I gave were wrong. Instead he acted as if my points had no merit, and was simply trying to talk him into a higher grade. He was condemning.

This instructor's response inhibited the student's learning from test mistakes. Fourteen students (6.9%) mentioned lack of recognition of student concerns, the fourth theme to emerge from the qualitative analysis. Comments included ignoring students' perspectives and failure to learn names in this category. A student wrote, "When I talk in class and have reiterated my name a number of times, it bothers me when it is not remembered."

Classroom integrity issues were noted in 14 accounts (6.9%). Students were concerned about being treated unfairly, lack of truthfulness on the part of their instructor, and a lack of justification for instructional decisions that would affect them. Instructors lost credibility when they broke promises. About an instructor a student said, "He would give a study guide.... He would promise everything on the test would be on the sheet. Half the test was stuff we had never seen." The student continued, "I ... didn't believe anything he would say."

Falling sixth in frequency of accounts was instructors' failure to respond to students' class concerns including making exceptions (11 accounts, 5.4%), particularly to alter assignments.

DIFFERENCES IN MALE AND FEMALE STUDENT ACCOUNTS

When the accounts of respectful instructor behaviors were examined by student gender, some similarities and some differences in emphases of themes emerged. Male and female students made similar comments about their treatment by faculty and about instructors' capacity to respond non-defensively to questions. However, male students reported on recognition, responsiveness, and classroom integrity issues more often (48% of accounts) than was the case for the women students (41% of accounts). Female students, on the other hand, were relatively more concerned about task-relevant help and affirmation that constituted 29% of their accounts versus 15% of the men's accounts.

In answers to the query about disrespectful instructor behaviors, female students were more concerned about treatment issues (58% of the women's accounts) than were male participants (42% of their accounts). Male students seemed to be more concerned with lack of recognition, responsiveness, or task-related help, instructor defensiveness, and classroom integrity issues (58% of the accounts for men vs. 42% for women).

Discussion

The primary purpose of this research was to identify themes described in students' accounts of respectful and disrespectful instructor behaviors. Overall, interpersonal treatment of students emerged as the most frequently described behavior, particularly when students were describing disrespectful behavior. The findings of the present study regarding the importance of interpersonal treatment in interactions between business instructors and their students are consistent with the evolving literature on interactional justice. Students' reports of their subsequent behavior suggested that their attendance, performance, or both in the class were negatively affected after the instructor exhibited disrespectful behavior. Indeed, several students' accounts indicated that their self-esteem suffered and their behavior changed as a result of disrespectful instructor behavior; the students subsequently declined to participate in class discussions, missed classes, dropped the class, or all three. Other students reported higher motivation and performance as a result of respectful instructor behavior. Future research could determine more definitively the impact of perceived (dis)respectful instructor behavior on such outcomes as

attendance/absenteeism from class, participation in class discussions, students' grades, and satisfaction with the instructor and with learning in the class.

Several unexpected findings emerged from the analysis of student accounts. One such finding was that some behaviors did not lie on a respect- disrespect continuum. For example, affirmation emerged as a theme indicating respect, but (lack of) affirmation was not mentioned in accounts of disrespectful instructor behaviors. A second surprise was that a number of different behaviors were seen as conveying respect; however, one theme, treatment issues, was the paramount theme in accounts of disrespectful instructor behavior.

The present study examined student accounts of perceived (dis)respectful instructor behaviors. Students and faculty may share common conceptions of respectful instructor behaviors but may differ in some ways as well. If we assume that faculty want to create a classroom environment conducive to learning, then instances in which students perceive disrespect may occur because of a lack of awareness on the part of their instructors or a lack of awareness on the part of students concerning the instructor's intentions or reasoning. Future research could compare faculty and student respect conceptions to identify incongruities so that instructors can more clearly communicate their intentions and reasons for engaging in potentially misconstrued behaviors.

The second purpose of the study was to examine female and male students' accounts for differences in descriptions of instructors' behaviors. The analysis of the accounts indicated that women respondents were more sensitive to treatment issues overall than men, and particularly in situations where they perceived the instructors' behaviors to be disrespectful. These results are consistent with earlier interactional justice research by Armstrong-Stassen (1998), Sweeney and McFarlin (1997), and Tata and Bowes-Sperry (1996) and extend those findings to the undergraduate business classroom. Although numerous students of both sexes mentioned treatment issues, the women business students in this study appear to have paid more attention to interactional justice issues than did the men. In a related vein, female and male instructors may enact and respond differently to interpersonal issues in the classroom as Roulis et al. (1999) suggested. Future research could examine whether student accounts of (dis)respectful instructor behavior vary as a function of the sex of the instructor.¹

Female students also indicated that providing course-related help was evidence of instructors' respect more often than men. Previous research has indicated that many women enter college with persistent uncertainty about their intellectual competence (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gallos, 1993). Belenky et al. wrote extensively about women's definition of development to include finding and expressing their own voice. This issue may be especially relevant for women in business school classes that have historically been taught based on the male model of development, emphasizing competition and autonomy (Gallos, 1993). The women participants' accounts suggest that they are more sensitive to affirmative instructor behaviors that encourage students to express their voice. The percentage of women citing affirmative behaviors and task-related help was more than two times greater than for the men. Instructors' encouragement of questions and care in responding thoroughly and affirmatively as well as encouragement of students to integrate their experiences into their learning through sharing and discussion may help women students, in particular, gain confidence in their course-related performance.

What are the implications of the different emphasis in emergent themes for female and male students? Women are being socialized for the work of work. If they learn in business classrooms, the training ground for future work, that their voice is not welcome, they may carry this message with them into employment. With almost one half the working population comprised of women in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2001), we may be creating expectations for them about an inhospitable environment for their voice. Cultivating a classroom climate that affirms women's as well as men's voices through conveyance of respect also sends a message to male students about the importance of including all voices in organizational work.

The results for respectful instructor behaviors provide additional support for Kim et al.'s (2000) findings that showing respect can enhance instructors' effectiveness in the classroom. There was support for several of the themes identified in previous research: recognition of students' viewpoints, sensitivity to students' needs, providing help and answering questions about course work, and the expression of kindness and consideration for students. Of those, students in the present study most often mentioned recognition as an indicator to them that their instructor was being respectful. Classroom integrity, a category that emerged in the present study, was consistent with dimensions identified by Lomo-David and Hulbert (1992,) such as demonstrating trust, being fair, showing concern for students' rights, and being truthful. However, this category got relatively few comments in students' accounts in the present study. Students' accounts suggested that sensitivity to students' needs and concerns included talking about and responding to personal matters. The data also suggested that an important quality of the instructors' responses to questions was to do so nondefensively. New themes that emerged from the ethnographic analysis consisted of affirming students, particularly women, and making exceptions when appropriate.

For participants' accounts about disrespectful behaviors, the emphasis across categories shifted, with treatment of students, including lack of concern and kindness, insensitivity, and rude behavior being mentioned most often. Two aspects of this finding are worth noting. First, treatment was particularly salient for many of the female students.

Second, the behaviors frequently described that fell into this category bear a striking resemblance to Tepper's (2000) abusive supervisor scale. This scale includes questions about the extent to which the supervisor ridicules, tells the employee his or her thoughts are stupid, is rude, puts him or her down in front of others, and so forth. Tepper's research indicates that abusive supervisory behavior has a negative impact on job and life satisfaction, commitment, turnover intentions, and psychological distress. In future research, it may be possible to capture and measure this dimension of instructional behavior by using an adapted version of Tepper's scale.

In general, the students in this study appeared to be concerned about the relational dimensions of the behavior of their instructors in the business classroom. Relational theory is based on the notion that development occurs in the context of connection and relationships rather than separation and autonomy (Miller, 1986). This model appears to fit the accounts students made about respectful instructional behaviors. Business faculty have published a number of articles in the *Journal of Management Education* describing class approaches, techniques, and activities that are relational in nature (Buttner, 2002). These reports suggest that some instructors have

become increasingly sensitive to interpersonal treatment issues in the undergraduate business classroom.

The findings point to several strategies that may help faculty enhance students' perceptions of respectful instructor behavior in the classroom. To reduce student complaints about disrespectful behavior, the findings suggest that faculty could focus on a relatively small set of behaviors, such as demonstrating awareness of student concerns and being patient, prompt, and thorough in responding to questions and requests for help. Similarly, faculty may attenuate student complaints about disrespectful instructor behavior. Student accounts suggest that faculty avoid sarcasm and belittling comments in classroom settings. Students seemed especially sensitive to their own and others' being embarrassed in class.

Although a focus of this study was on students' accounts of disrespectful instructor behavior, students also occasionally engage in behaviors faculty may perceive to be disrespectful. Perhaps it would be useful for instructors to collaboratively develop ground rules with students at the beginning of the semester about respectful behavior for all members of the learning process, the instructor and students. This joint developmental process could help faculty and students become aware of and sensitive to behaviors that connote respect.

This study's findings are important because of their implications for the future. Today's business students will be tomorrow's business leaders. The social information-processing model suggests that behaviors exhibited by role models (instructors) may influence behaviors and attitudes of less experienced individuals (students) (Zalesny & Ford, 1990). Perhaps as instructors, we have a responsibility to teach students about respectful behavior through experience so they comport themselves accordingly in the workplace. In the meantime, listening and responding to students' voices may help us, as instructors, provide a more positive business classroom climate.

Notes

1. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

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