2019

Instructional communication in preservice education: Rapport, conflict, and classroom management

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Instructional Communication in Preservice Education: Rapport, Conflict, and Classroom

Management

by

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Thesis

Submitted to the School of Communication, Media and Theatre Arts

Eastern Michigan University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTERS OF SCIENCE

in

Communication

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February 14, 2019

Ypsilanti, Michigan

Abstract

This study examines communication as instructional classroom practice and considers its increased inclusion in teacher preparation programs. While widely recognized as an important aspect of most university degree programs, communication pedagogy is often overlooked in schools of education curricula. Data collected from six current teachers suggest that the teachers demonstrated a value for instructional communication in three distinct ways that can all be attributed to their interaction with their students and classrooms. The teachers in this study demonstrated this through their building of rapport with their students, their strategies for both avoiding and resolving conflict within the classroom, and their use of a variety of classroom management techniques. Findings from this study suggest that greater focus on instructional communication techniques should be placed within all undergraduate teacher education courses as additional preparation and that knowledge of instructional communication can be critical to teachers beginning their careers in the classroom.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Instructional communication focuses on communication occurring in instructional settings. The stakeholders in instructional communication are: teachers, facilitators, scholars, professors, and all students and learners. Researchers in the field of instructional communication explore "the role of communication in the instructional process generally, how to use communication regardless of academic discipline or instructional setting. These researchers consider the communication process in all teaching and learning contexts, public and private, and at all grade levels" (Morreale, M., Backlund, B., & Sparks, L., 2014, p. 346).

In the pursuit of developing a proposal that an instructional communication class be an offered course for the curriculum of prospective secondary education teachers, I found it paramount to examine instructional communication literature. Instructional communication is not a required, or often even offered, course for students seeking their undergraduate degree in education at most universities. Instructional communication is not recognized sufficiently in the curriculum for undergraduate college of education students. The National Communication Association (NCA, 2017) has developed instructional communication resources for teachers because "communication teaching has not been sufficiently effective in grades K-12." Although the efforts of instructional resources made by the NCA have not gone unnoticed, a greater effort needs to be made by universities to offer classes in instructional communication as well. Students in many schools of education are being deprived of a course educating them on the different techniques and styles of instructional education they could implement in the classroom.

In the field of undergraduate secondary education, much of the curriculum emphasis is placed upon knowledge of content area. Although knowledge of content is an important factor for prospective teachers, content is meaningless in education when it is not paired with strong

communication. If teachers are unable to communicate effectively the content they are teaching, students will not receive the message.

The purpose of this study was to gather data from teachers who have recently completed their student teaching experience, surrounding the topic of what aspects of instructional communication they wish they would have known, or would have overall improved their student-teacher relationship before student teaching. These data will help determine the need for instructional communications classes in undergraduate secondary education programs.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Rapport: The Threshold of Teacher-Student Relationships

Without careful consideration, rapport in teacher-student relationships may seemingly sound like a natural occurring phenomenon. Rapport may come effortlessly to some educators based on their personalities or level of immersion and experience, but for others, it does not come with ease. Research has shown that building rapport with students is imperative to the learning process, classroom connectedness, and student motivation levels. Research from instructional communication scholars, such as Cayanus (2004), Pauchaite and Zardeckaite-Matulaitiene (2015), Johnson and LaBelle (2015), and Trees, Kerssen-Griep, and Hess (2009), has encouraged building rapport through the techniques of self-disclosure, classroom connectedness, and execution of feedback.

Self-disclosure can be implemented into the classroom as an instructional tool (Cayanus, 2004). Self-disclosure is when a teacher willingly shares information about themselves or their personal philosophies with their students. Studies have shown that effective teachers use self-disclosure in the classroom as a communication tool that directly correlates with effective teaching (Cayanus, 2004; Trees et al., 2009). Cayanus (2004) explored the benefits of teacher self-disclosure, as well as instructions teachers' should follow when using self-disclosure as a communication technique. If teachers use these tools, they will develop a better classroom environment for students that promotes learning by engaging in self-disclosure that is relevant to the lesson or unit, varying the times and topics that they self-disclose, or not disclosing too much irrelevant or personal information. When teaching and lecturing, predictability can cause students to lose interest and motivation (Cayanus 2004). When self-disclosure is inserted into lessons at relevant and different times during a lecture, students will hold interest and motivation (Cayanus

2004).

Paluckaite and Zardeckaite-Matulaitiene's (2015) study pertaining to the appropriateness of disclosure found that, "according to both teachers' and students' attitudes, relevant teacher's disclosure is more appropriate than irrelevant. In the other words, personal and related with family relationships self-disclosure is less appropriate than the one including the content of the teaching material" (pp. 28-29). There is fragile balance between disclosing too much and too little. Too much disclosure can result in eliminating the level of authority and professionalism the teacher must maintain while not disclosing enough may result in students' lack of participation, motivation, and interest in a topic (Paluckaite & Zardeckaite-Matulaitiene, 2015).

Initiating and maintaining good rapport with students encourages rapport between students which increases the feeling of classroom connectedness: "Communication among students during class plays an important role in affecting various outcomes beyond learning, such as the creation of an open and supportive communication environment" (Johnson & LaBelle, 2015, p. 164). It is imperative for instructors to create an inviting classroom environment. When students are actively engaged in their learning and the classroom, the level of knowledge gained in the class rises significantly (Johnson & LaBelle, 2015).

Constructive criticism and feedback are both important components of the learning process for teachers and students alike. Providing students with feedback is an essential part of being an educator, and taking this feedback and revising or using it in future work is a crucial part of being a student. Trees et al. (2009) set out to discover how different kinds of feedback given by an instructor affects students' behavior and feelings towards the instructor, class, and content. As straightforward as providing students with feedback seems, in all actuality it is a very delicate task. Trees et. al argued that "although well-communicated feedback does indeed offer participants an

array of positive outcomes, there are many ways that teachers' attempts to convey feedback can be ineffective, or worse, counterproductive. The challenge, in part, comes from the face-threatening nature of criticism" (p. 397). Criticism, whether constructive or negative, is often hard for teachers and students to accept, but it is a necessary part of the learning process. The research suggests educators approach criticisms that are polite, inoffensive, and effective for student learning.

Building strong rapport with students is not always an easy task or one that occurs naturally without instruction. The lack of communication classes for prospective teachers in undergraduate secondary education programs implies this topic is something future teachers must develop through observations or experience.

Conflict in the Classroom: **Prevention and Resolution**

It is imperative to recognize that in any relationship, conflicts occur; it is a normal part of communication in every kind of relationship. Learning how to mold conflicts to have successful outcomes is what strengthens and builds relationships. To better conceptualize conflict in teacher-student relationships, it is necessary to explore the roots of the issues. Specifically, why do conflicts occur in teacher student relationships and what conflicts exist between teachers and their students?

Teachers and their students do not have the same views as one another; they may come from different backgrounds, generations, races, socioeconomic statuses, and more. In the area of conflicts in the classroom, the same holds true. Foster (2005) explored this matter concluding teachers and students think very differently regarding the behaviors that cause and prevent conflicts in high schools. When reviewing the literature, it becomes highly probable the beginning

of teacher-student conflict stems principally from the lack of understanding and feelings between teachers and students surrounding conflicts (Foster, 2005).

There are an incalculable amount of reasons conflict occurs in the teacher-student relationship. Osinchuk (1995) found that conflicts between teachers and students can best be classified into five different categories: "Communication failure/misunderstanding, value and fairness issues, noncompliance with the rules and policies, including lack of cooperation, authority issues, and frustration and irritability" (pp. 40-41).

Miscommunications and misunderstandings occur often in everyday life. The way we articulate and perceive feedback and misunderstandings can lead to conflict. The same holds true when observing conflict in teacher-student relationships (Holmgren & Bolkan, 2014). The research suggests that communication failures and misunderstandings can be linked directly to the display and reaction to criticism and rhetorical dissent, the speaker not being heard, believed, or trusted. Researchers Holmgren and Bolkan (2014) explored the issue of how students react to the discourse the instructor gave after the student engaged them in rhetorical dissent. Their study found "being satisfied with specific responses appears to be less important to students than the ways in which instructors handle these responses" (p. 33). Every student needs to have a voice and be encouraged to express themselves in the classroom. When teachers or students are not heard, it can create conflict. In Osinchuk's (1995) study, she examined conflict between teachers and students from the perspective of junior high school students. Many students who expressed their voices were not allowed to, or they were just simply ignored in their classrooms. When communication failures arise, voices are often not heard, and feelings of resentment and discouragement may occur. In order for communication to be effective, it is imperative that both the sender and receiver of the message comprehend the information within the message as it was intended. When the

message is altered and either party does not receive it correctly, a misunderstanding is born. Misunderstandings may be caused by an altered message, but they may also be caused by ignorance, lack of understanding, consideration, or awareness (Osinchuk, 1995).

A strong classroom and positive learning environment requires classroom expectations that are representative of the values of both teacher and student and that are maintained in a consistent and impartial manner. Unfair behaviors can be displayed by both students and teachers in classrooms. Participants from Osinchuk's (1995) study expressed that their teachers displayed unfair treatment to students and admitted that they can be unfair to their teachers as well. When students or teachers feel they are being treated unfairly or unequally, conflicts may occur.

Rules and policies are the foundation that shapes the classroom environment. This framework establishes the relationship between teachers and their students. When rules are broken and policies ignored, conflict arises in the teacher-student relationship. It is not only up to the student to abide by these guidelines; it is the teacher's duty to follow them as well. As the only adult in the room, teachers are the immediate authority figure in a classroom. Adolescents often struggle with authority, as they are in an awkward place in life between childhood and adulthood.

Conflicts in the classroom can stem from frustration and irritability. These feelings can be felt by both teacher and student if there is lack of understanding (in the content area as well as communication). Osinchuk (1995) found that conflicts often arise in the classroom for outside reasons. Even though some conflicts might not begin in the classroom if they affect students or teachers, they must be addressed.

Although students and teachers may not see "eye-to-eye" on what conflict is and the severity of conflicts in schools, one thing is certain: it exists. Conflict is not an issue that can be easily ignored, but if it is, the results can be damaging. It is imperative to the teacher-student

relationship and the classroom environment that teachers receive the training necessary to understand and handle conflicts when they arise in the classroom. The area of instructional communication offers countless strategies to, decrease the severity of conflicts, and conflict resolutions that transform the feelings that arise from conflict into a learning and growing experience for both teacher and student. Instead of ignoring conflict altogether, these strategies highlight the need for a course that will better prepare students to handle it in their student teaching experience as well as their future classrooms (Osinchuk, 1995).

Classroom Management: Educators Make a Difference

Teachers' management of their classrooms, or lack thereof, is a major factor in how students will behave. Research suggests teachers help eliminate classroom conflict by managing their own behaviors, creating a fair environment and researching and practicing classroom management strategies. Students are prone to mimic the behavior of their teachers, so it is imperative that teachers lead their students by setting a good example and maintaining a safe and open learning environment for their students. The study of instructional communication offers research on issues that lead to classroom management problems and strategies on effective classroom management.

Goodboy and Bolkan (2009) suggested that teacher misbehaviors can lead to student behavior problems. This finding implies the significance of following rules and regulations in classrooms for both teachers and students. Creating and maintaining a fair classroom environment is one of the many tasks educators face. Chory-Assad (2002) addressed and associated fairness by relating it to both motivation and, if non-existent, a conflict. The researcher also observed the affiliation between justice and aggression in the classroom to potentially be a serious issue and

argued, "Classroom fairness may be a critical factor in the elicitation, prevention, and control of school violence...it is not unreasonable to consider the possibility that classroom in-justice and physical student aggression may also be related" (p. 68). In other words, when students are not treated fairly in a classroom, verbal conflict is inevitable and physical conflict has a strong probability of occurring. Chory-Assad argued, "Thus, as long as the course procedures were just, students may have felt they would ultimately be treated fairly, and their motivation, affective learning, and aggressive tendencies were not influenced by an occasional unfair grade" (p. 70). In order for students to feel that the grade they earned was unjust, or to respond to the teacher with decreased motivation or high levels of aggression, professors must have conducted themselves or their classroom practices in an unfair way.

Osinchuk (1995) alluded that respect, power, and authority are linked together closely with fairness. When students felt they were not respected, they concluded the class and/or the teacher as being unfair. Students felt that oftentimes teachers' used their power and authority in unfair ways.

In the adolescent stage of life, students are very impressionable and often mimic the behavior of figures around them. These figures may be their peers, parents, celebrities, and even teachers. Aceves, Hinshaw, Mendoza-Denton, and Page-Gould (2010) explored the feelings that students have about how teachers respond to victimization of students in a school. The study concluded that students often start to mimic the way teachers handle and react to conflicts that occur in school. Thus, it is crucial for educators to be conscious of their behaviors, responses, and actions because not only will students be immediately impacted by the behaviors of their teachers, which was previously mentioned regarding feedback, but they may also be prone to mimic them in the future as well.

Classroom management is an important topic of instructional communication. When teachers are able to minimize conflicts, decrease the severity of the conflict, and/or grow and build the teacher-student relationship from the conflict resolution, teachers will feel more competent in their teaching capabilities. From the literature, it is clear to see students' reactions and actions have much to do with the actions and reactions of their teacher.

Through the literature reviewed, it is clear to see that as an educator, building rapport with students, becoming aware of teacher-student conflicts and resolutions, and developing classroom management skills are essential components to being an effective teacher. These aspects of instructional communication can create an open learning environment where students are more prone to learn and have exponentially more motivation to do better in the class. Conversely, lack thereof these skills may promote an unhealthy learning environment, filled with resentment, hard-feelings, and lack of motivation resulting in students' lack of knowledge and participation in the class.

Although there is currently a great amount of instructional communication research from scholars, there is a tremendous gap in the research revolving around secondary education teachers and the resources they are given prior to completion of their degree. Further research needs to be conducted to see what teachers should know about instructional communication prior to entering the field and the implications of the lack of instructional communication many education college of education students are receiving, specifically in the ways this can affect the first year of their teaching.

This study addressed the following questions:

1. How do a select sample of teachers approach issues of building student-teacher rapport, addressing conflict, and implementing classroom management?

This question explores how a select sample of teachers interact with their students, prevent or control conflicts when they arise in the classroom, and describe their classroom management practices. As documented earlier, the ways in which each of these classroom techniques can vary are vast and are often highly influenced by teachers' undergraduate education courses. Establishing the ways in which each of the teachers in this study approach these important aspects of classroom teaching is important for understanding the ways in which instructional communication courses can aid in the preservice teacher training process.

2. What elements of instructional communication do teachers believe were missing from their undergraduate teaching programs?

As mentioned earlier, inclusion of instructional communication topics is often avoided in undergraduate education programs, leaving many teachers to cite a lack of awareness, preparedness, or understanding of how to develop effective communication strategies with their students. The selection of the teachers in this study allows for the opportunity to explore how each teacher was impacted by their respective undergraduate training and the ways in which direct instruction in instructional communication pedagogy could have impacted their view of effective strategies to maintain rapport, resolve conflict, and manage a secondary classroom.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The questions presented in this study focused on the experience of teaching in the high school context and explored teachers' use of common elements of instructional communication courses and the ways they are reflected in the actions and decisions made in their respective classrooms. The research methods therefore needed to engage the lived experiences of teachers as they made choices concerning the application of instructional communication into their curricula and attempted to form an understanding of how their perceptions of instructional communication impacted their teaching. For this reason, the research methods selected for this study were qualitative in nature. This section seeks to clarify and provide a brief description of these methods by identifying the specific design of the study as well as the data collection and analysis techniques selected.

Participants

This study aimed to explore the use of instructional communication methods in secondary classrooms and to understand the instructional choices made by those teachers who have elected to tackle the challenging and sometimes controversial issues that arise when utilizing instructional communication strategies. To investigate this problem, I employed a convenience sampling strategy (Patton, 1990) in identifying a select group of six beginning teachers at the high school level who are actively engaged in the use of a variety of instructional communication strategies in their classrooms.

I recruited the participating teachers in this study after visiting their classrooms and requesting for their voluntary participation in the study. The participants were group of high and middle school teachers. The participants were three female and three male, ranging from 24 to 35

years of age. One participant identified himself as Italian-American and the five others identified themselves as White. All of the participants were current teachers that have taught from one to three years. The participants received their teaching degrees from a variety of universities in Northeast Ohio and Southeast Michigan.

Design

      This study is a qualitative, multisite case study (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003) examining the use of instructional communication techniques in secondary classrooms. A qualitative study was chosen as it "makes possible description and understanding of *both* externally observable behaviors and internal states (worldviews, opinions, values, attitudes, symbolic structures, and so on)" (Patton, 1990, p. 47). The nature of this research project lends itself to qualitative inquiry, as the research questions are framed to explore teachers' understandings and experiences from their own perspectives and within their own contexts (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Pajares, 1992). A multisite case study was chosen over a single-case study to provide variation among the teachers and their experiences with instructional communication courses in their undergraduate studies. Merriam (2009) wrote that "the more cases included in the study, and the greater the variance across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (p. 49). Additionally, Yin (2003) pointed out that in instances where context and the phenomena studied are interrelated, other research designs are not as well suited to study both in sufficient detail. Because my interest is in being able to identify the thought processes of teachers with varying degrees of background in instructional communication pedagogy in the bounded unit of particular secondary school classrooms in Ohio and Michigan, the case study design fit the purposes of this study.

Data Collection

The research began with semi-structured interviews of a convenience sample (Patton, 1990) of six beginning high school educators who have routinely engaged their students with techniques commonly found in instructional communication courses. In this instance, each of the teachers selected for this study were not only interested in the use of instructional communication techniques, but routinely utilize many of the methods contained within these courses in their respective classrooms. In order to understand these practices and the choices made in their selection, semi-structured interviews were used "with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). In semi-structured interviews, the researcher identifies a set of themes or discussion prompts, and flexibly conducts each interview guided by these issues (Merriam, 1998; DiCicco-Bloom, & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews used for this study were intended to consist of non-leading questions that would allow the interviewee to discuss topics of interest to them as they arise, while attempting to guide the conversation to the phenomena of interest. These initial semi-structured interviews were intended to establish a baseline for the two questions:

1. How do a select group of teachers approach issues of building rapport, addressing conflict, and implementing classroom management?
2. What elements of instructional communication do teachers believe were missing from their undergraduate teaching programs?

Data Analysis

This study utilized a continuous, iterative process for data analysis following the model created by Miles and Huberman (1994). This process consists of three main components: a) data

reduction, (b) data display, and; (c) the drawing and verifying of conclusions. Miles and Huberman argue that each of these components should be approached as concurrent streams or activities, interacting throughout the data analysis process. Each of these phases was integral to the study, and provided a means to analyze written individual interview transcripts across all cases.

I began by transcribing the data collected from the interviews discussed in the prior section from a limited number of the study's participants. This limited sample allowed me to begin to tease out themes, key issues, and areas from the initial data collection that would require further exploration in the proceeding stages. Upon completion of this initial data collection and transcription stage, I used the written sources to begin to reduce the data by identifying potential issues, concepts, and themes. Miles and Huberman (1994) described the data reduction stage as the process of transforming the data by way of simplifying, selecting, or focusing the written field notes and transcriptions. While initial categorization for this reduction was shaped by the pre-established research questions, this stage also allowed for inductive analysis through which new meanings from the data could become apparent. This step allowed me to arrange the codes into a set of initial, descriptive categories and later revise them into inferential, or pattern, codes during further data collection in order to form working hypotheses (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By engaging in this process, the interview texts were read in relation to one another and in relation to the broader enveloping contexts in which instructional communication techniques were used and defined. This stage ultimately resulted in a tentative cross-case thematic display from which data could be systematically analyzed.

Miles and Huberman (1994) regarded displays as essential to qualitative data analysis and encourage their use at all stages since they enable data to be organized and summarized, highlight which stage the analysis has reached, and provide a foundation for further analysis. I used an

alphanumeric system to hand-label specific items in the interview transcripts and then recorded them into data analysis software to assist in sorting the data by the assigned descriptive and inferential codes. Through this process, and as particular passages were indexed to themes, patterns amongst the data became more readily visible. The data were then displayed on a chart that captured data from individual data sources and displayed in a matrix according to ideas and themes across cases. I worked with these tentative matrices to develop a refined chart with headings and subheadings that addressed the two research questions, themes, and ideas from the emergent categories or patterns.

Throughout this process, I continually revisited the charts, matrices, and original written data sources until I was able to draw conclusions and describe the data as a whole. While conclusions may logically follow the initial data reduction and display stages of data analysis, Miles and Huberman (1994) warned that often these conclusions are vague and ill formed. The aim of the final stage of their model is to integrate what has been done into a meaningful and coherent picture of the data by looking back at earlier stages of the data analysis, including the raw data, and verifying the emergent conclusions. For this reason, I kept a running research journal detailing my thought processes, coding strategies, initial conclusions, and working hypotheses throughout the data analysis stages of this study. At the completion of this final stage, I drafted an initial narrative discussing how ideas across the cases suggest potential ways to address this study's research questions.

Chapter 4: Findings

The findings of the interviews suggest the areas of earning and maintaining credibility, addressing conflict in the classroom, and implementing classroom management strategies, and building rapport with students to be the most critical components of instructional communication. Pseudonyms were given to each of the participants, their actual names are not given in this study, but their genders are kept the same.

Earning and Maintaining Credibility

The participants reported they earn and maintain credibility through use of the following techniques: demonstrating knowledge of the subject and content area, displaying good and fair classroom management practices, and getting to know students interests both in and outside of the classroom.

The first step to building and maintaining credibility with students is by demonstrating a clear knowledge of the subject and content area in which you teach. Students expect their teachers to be an expert at what they teach. It is also important as an educator admit that sometimes they do not hold the answer to every question. When situations like this arise, it is critical to earning and maintaining credibility to admit they do not know the answer but more importantly to seek out the answer and share it with the students. Not only does this demonstrate that the educator is "human," but it shows the student the teacher is dedicated to continual learning and dedication to them for finding the answer. Mrs. Ludgate said, "I try to come to my lessons as prepared as possible, knowing my content. My students know when they come to me with a question I can answer it and if I don't know I'm honest and I can give them an answer later on." Knowing your content and finding the answers to questions students are unsure of is the first step to building and maintaining credibility with students.

The findings show the next step to earning and maintaining credibility with students is displaying democratic and fair classroom management practices. The participants reported it is crucial to have the rules and expectations clearly stated and posted at the beginning of the school year, reviewed when necessary, be democratic, and followed consistently throughout the entirety of the school year. Mr. Wyatt said,

> On day one I kind of try to line it all up in my syllabus what the rules are and what the procedures are but I don't dictate those necessarily to the students, there are some non-negotiable ones but I do ask the students ok do you want to add anything to this? Do you want to want to modify this? I leave it more open so it's more of a democratic approach. And then from there I try to stay consistent with the rules.

When students understand the rules and when students feel as though they had a say in creating the rules, and when the rules are followed across the board, students often find the instructor to be fair, which results in building and maintaining credibility with their students. Students also need to feel they are being treated with respect for the teacher to earn and maintain credibility with them. Mr. Traeger attempts to accomplish this task by talking and treating all students in a respectful manner, demonstrating fair classroom management practices: "I try to practice what a lot of teachers preach and that is talking to them on my level, and that is to say treating them with the respect that they feel they deserve." This strategy, in Mr. Traeger's opinion, has proved invaluable in achieving his own credibility with students and serves as a reminder that students need to be shown the type of respect that is expected of them from their teacher.

Lastly, the results show that it is imperative to earning and maintaining credibility with students to show interest in the students both in and outside of the classroom. When students know

that their teachers are not only there to teach but actually care about students, find their teachers to be more credible. Mr. Gergich said,

> I earn and maintain credibility with my students by maintaining relationships with them and developing and understanding of what they care about beyond my subject. I do this by asking them questions about their lives and by trying to follow up on things they tell me...I think that building relationships with students is one way to develop credibility as an educator.

When teachers show that they care about students beyond the classroom, they build and maintain credibility with those students.

To Use Self-Disclosure or Not To Use Self-Disclosure?

The results found five out of the six participants use self-disclosure to build rapport with students and to increase understanding of the lesson. The participants that use self-disclosure use it to reveal relevant-to-the-lesson life experiences, to teach life lessons, and as a tool to help students understand what they believe and how to articulate their beliefs.

Sharing relevant life experiences was found to be a wonderful tool when building rapport with students. There will always be a clear age difference and divide between teacher and student, but when the students find teachers to be relatable, it increases understanding of teachers and their lessons. Mrs. Knope shared a situation she came across while teaching a unit that required a final presentation, but some of her students were experiencing stage fright.

> We were preparing for the presentation I shared with them my first presentation experience in eighth grade. I told them that I too was threatened and expressed fear and anxiety about it. And I told them, you know, I was shaking, and cried a little bit, my eighth grade self,

and I got up there and did it and in the end I was like, hey, that wasn't so bad. I was all

stressed out and worried and it wasn't that bad. And that made them feel better seeing that

Mrs. Knope is human and she was in my shoes one time and she survived and she did just

fine, so I can too. So that's how I use self-disclosure.

The students saw that they were not alone in their fears of speaking in the front of an audience and

that they too can successfully give a presentation even if they are scared to in the moment.

When teaching, students will often need help with more than simply asking the next step in

a math problem or how to conclude a paragraph. Mr. Gergich saw situations in his classroom

where students were struggling with the feeling of just giving up because problems sometimes

seem too hard:

I try to teach them the importance of perseverance and problem solving and mathematics

and life in general by explaining a story from my college math education and how I really

struggled with a class and how I really worked hard but still didn't understand it. I try to

talk about how that involved perseverance for me and how I was also able to understand

how working really hard isn't always rewarding as you want it to be but it all pays in the

end because I graduated in the end with a degree and now I can teach.

When students see a successful person in front of them and realize it wasn't easy for them to get

where they are today, that person can be a figure of inspiration. Not only does Mr. Gergich teach

math everyday, but he also teaches his students life isn't always going to be easy, but they can

make it if they don't give up and continue putting hard work and dedication into problem areas in

math and in their lives in general.

Self-disclosure can also be used as a helpful tool to convince students to talk about their

opinions and beliefs when it comes to writing argumentative essays. Mrs. Ludgate uses an activity

each year where signs are posted on either side of the classroom saying "Agree" and "Disagree" and opinion statements are given. As the statements are given, the students must move around the room and stand next to the side on which they agree. Mrs. Ludgate participates in this activity along with her students. "During this," Ludgate explains, "I like to give my own [opinions] because it makes my students a little more comfortable when giving their opinions." In a classroom setting, students are expected to form opinions and arguments on what can sometimes be very controversial or personal topics that can be uncomfortable to share. When students see that their teachers are willing to share their beliefs, they feel more comfortable disclosing themselves.

One participant said they did not use self-disclosure to increase student understanding. Mr. Traeger found that using self-disclosure was a stylistic approach to teaching that he felt was unprofessional and irrelevant to the classroom:

I know a lot of teachers like to be completely open and transparent with their lives and past with their students and they think that it will build the relationship, and if it works for them then that's great. But for me I like to keep and maintain a certain level of professionalism and disclosing particularly personal stories that don't relate to the classroom does not help me engage them, that doesn't help me to teach any sort of lessons.

He felt that self-disclosure was unnecessary when it came to building rapport with students.

Classroom Connectedness

The participants reported they create a feeling of classroom-connectedness in a number of ways, including: creating a safe environment, being able to laugh with their classes, and engaging with students in-class and during extracurricular activities.

Educators will not always agree with their students, but it is important that they always listen. Sharing opinions in the classroom and welcoming responses from every and any side is encouraged when creating a safe environment for students in a connected classroom. Mr. Wyatt expressed, "I try to treat every class as a mini family, if you will. And so by the way I do that is getting them to share their thoughts and value others perspectives. And so far it's worked really well." Teachers must understand that everyone has different opinions and encourage students to listen to others and while being comfortable enough to express their own. In doing so, teachers can facilitate an environment where students may feel safe and connected in the classroom.

As important as a rigorous curriculum is in the classroom, it is also important that everyone enjoy themselves and laugh in order to be comfortable in their classrooms in a productive learning environment. Ms. Perkins loves to laugh and have a good time with her students by showing how not to do things:

So when we did the speech unit again we showed them what not to do during a speech and I was like completely ridiculous, I was like burping, and I was like you know, sitting on the floor, it was like completely ridiculous but those moments really help your kids connect to each other and connect to you as a person. If you can laugh together as a group that really helps.

Even during serious situations, laughter brings people together.

Lastly, the participants said that engaging students with in-class and in extracurricular activities creates a feeling of classroom connectedness. Mr. Traeger does this by:

Addressing everybody at least once a week, in order for everybody to feel connected. There are going to be students that struggle with that but I'm not picking on the slower students, the weaker students, I'm not just calling on them for the sake of calling on them. The way I

draw attention to them is maybe I call on them when I'm asking everybody how did their

weekend go, maybe I call on them when I ask them who won the game at (the high school

they attend) this weekend?

Mr. Gergich creates this feeling with school spirit "by supporting our school athletics and

encouraging students to attend those and also recognizing when something good happens at our

school." Students will feel more connected to the classroom and educator if they communicate

with them regularly about content material and the students lives as well as being involved in and

showing interest in school activities.

Communication Challenges Teachers Face With Students

The participants reported the communication challenges they face with their students to be

language barriers such as keeping up with the latest slang/lingo, expressing the importance of

studying for tests, and not being a minority, therefore, racially relatable.

With every new year of students, even every new week, teachers hear new slang and lingo

their students are using as well as new mediums with which students are communicating. When

asked what the greatest communication challenge he faced with his students, Mr. Wyatt said: "I

would say that it would be keeping up with the latest slang and lingo because it seems to change

every week and keeping up with the technology and social media terms and things like that." It is

important in communication for both parties to hear and understand the message being

communicated. This can be challenging for teachers in many ways, from simple conversations in

class to the way students remember material or assignments. Teachers must constantly be learning

as they teach their students because, although the statement "that's fried" might mean "that's

ridiculous" today, or using a Kahoot game to review for a test might be the way students prefer to

study for a test, it does not guarantee that tomorrow there won't be a new term or more popular and fun way of reviewing content.

Expressing the importance of studying and earning good grades was also a challenge for some of the participants. Mr. Gergich said, "I struggle to communicate with my students the importance of studying, and what that looks like and how that happens on a daily basis with students that have unstable home environments generally." Teachers are only responsible for their students and visible to students only when they are in the teacher's classroom. The participants have a hard time communicating with the students the importance of studying when students are outside of the classroom, especially when the students are lacking academic support at home.

Mr. Traeger works at an inner-city school and found that being a White male in a school with a 75% minority population to be a communication challenge:

> While I don't divulge a ton of information about myself, I do tell them where I'm from and my educational background, so they know that I have a private school background. So occasionally I feel a certain sort of apprehension with my students that they sort of feel like I could never relate to them.

Mr. Wyatt also expressed that race, more specifically how to communicate to students about race, can be a challenge: "In my class during black history month we were discussing white privilege and some of my African American students kind of misunderstood the use of the word 'privilege.' I had to make it clear that the word doesn't mean 'better than' it just means that you don't have to deal with the same set of problems." Educators will not always have the same backgrounds as their students, and it is important in these cases for them to find a way to connect with students.

Classroom Management Styles and Practices

When asked to describe their classroom management practices, the participants reported they used democratic approaches, have their rules and guidelines clearly posted, practiced consistency, and demonstrated flexibility in their classrooms.

Creating a democratic environment was one approach the participants took towards their classroom management practices. Mr. Wyatt was one of the participants who uses this approach: "On day one, I line it all up in my syllabus what the rules are and what the procedures are but I don't dictate those necessarily to the students. There are some non-negotiable ones but I do ask the students, 'Ok do you want to add anything to this?'" Although some rules are non-negotiable, allowing students to create rules for their classroom not only gives them a voice and a purpose in the classroom but assures the teacher that the rules created are considered fair to the students.

When it comes to classroom management, the participants found it crucial to have clear expectations and guidelines for their students to follow. Mr. Traeger said, "If there is nothing to follow, without trying to be disruptive or without not trying to act-out, they might be breaking every rule in the book if they don't know what is expected of them." Until the students know and understand what they can and cannot do, teachers cannot expect anything from them. Mrs. Knope expressed that it is not only necessary to explain the rules for them to understand right away, nut "giving expectations in the beginning is what takes care of problems down the road, if you stick with them." Mrs. Knope's response leads us to the next practice the participants practice, consistency. Consistency is important not only as described above to provide clear understanding, but also if the rules are consistent, they are fair to all students.

Participants claimed that not only do the rules need to be consistent, but they must also be flexible. Ms. Perkins said,

When I got my own classroom was when I learned how to manage my children. Now

where I started two years ago to now its completely different, but you also have to learn

that every period is also a different way to manage a class and every student is different.

So it's not like you're going to walk in and be like, ok I'm going to do it XYZ because

that is definitely not how it's going to operate. You definitely have to, one learn your kids

and how they respond to things and then you can definitely go from there.

Educators can still create consistency while treating each class or student differently as long as the

expectations remain the same throughout the class.

Classroom Management: What is Taught and What is Learned

When asked how much the participants knew about classroom management before entering

the classroom, five of the participants reported they knew very little, and one participant reported

to know a lot about classroom management before entering the classroom. Mr. Gergich said, "I

learned that it was important to have relationships with your students to be an effective classroom

manager, and try to have a relationship with every student in some way." In order to have good

classroom management, it is important to build relationships at some level with students. Mr.

Gergich also stated, "Clearly expressing your expectations and having procedures." Students need

clear guidelines of teachers expectations and for procedures to exist and remain constant.

When asked what they learned from their student teaching experience regarding classroom

management, the participants reported they learned respect is earned and that trial-and-error is a

large part of teaching.When working in any authority position, being respected is crucial for

keeping order. While student teaching, Mr. Wyatt came to this conclusion and a solution for

earning the respect of his students: "I learned that respect is something that you earn by connecting

with students." It is more important to know that simply being a teacher will not guarantee the respect of the students, but it is something that you need to gain and earn from them.

Ms. Perkins and Ms. Knope reported that they learned the trial-and-error technique to be an important part of teaching. Ms. Perkins reported,

> You try one thing and that doesn't work so then you try something different. But it's never a set, I don't go in every year with a set like OK this is how I'm going to manage my classroom. I have to learn who my kids are first and then I go from there and I take it into my hands how I'm going to manage the situation.

And on the same note, Ms. Knope said,

> It was a lot of trial and error and I heard about a technique so I'm going to try it and having never worked with this group of students and I had to try something different with them or specific students and it's constantly shifting, changing, balancing act to figure out what works best with a certain class or a particular student.

Every group of students is going to be different from hour to hour, and year to year, leading Ms. Perkins to believe that with populations so diverse it couldn't be possible to know how students will perceive the lessons and more importantly understand the material.

Are Student Teachers Ready For Their Student Teaching Experience?

When asked if they felt prepared for their student teaching experience, one participant said yes, one participant felt partially prepared, and four participants said they did not feel prepared.

All education programs require preservice hours spent in the classroom. During these hours, student teachers will observe, and sometimes help, the teacher with small lessons. Specifically, Mr. Gergich did feel prepared for student teaching because his education program

emphasized spending a lot time in the classroom during preservice teaching, and his university carefully placed their student teachers into assignments. Mr. Gergich felt that the amount of preservice time his university required of its student teachers was enough to make him feel comfortable in the classroom before entering student teaching. He also said "[the university] did a really good job of matching you with a student teaching placement that was encouraging and supportive so I didn't have a lot of apprehension where I was going because I had already interviewed with this teacher and kind of understood what they were about." A high level of confidence and comfort was gained even before beginning student teaching because he was matched with an encouraging teacher that he was familiar with by the time school started.

Ms. Perkins said she was partially prepared for her student teaching experience because her education program emphasized content, but not actual experience in the classroom: "I think I was prepared more on like the content end and like that situation but for actual in-class preparedness was definitely not a thing." Most notably, classroom management was an area lacking in her education program, as she stated, "They don't teach you how to handle kids, they don't teach you how to manage them. They just expect you to teach them the material after you walk in and everything to go perfectly as planned. But apparently that does not happen." Ms. Perkins experience shows that just knowing the content is only half of the battle when it comes to teaching.

The other participants agreed they did not feel prepared because they did not have enough preservice time in the classroom and their time observing, was just that, an observation. Mr. Wyatt said, "We had certain hours we had to complete in the classroom in the education program but I wish I had done more hands on stuff instead of like, you're just going to lead one activity or you're going to sit in the back of the classroom and observe I feel like I needed to be in there doing

things." The participants would have been more prepared if their observation hours were more hands-on.

When asked what they wished they would have known before entering the classroom as a teacher, the participants replied they wish they would have known: how to communicate with parents and co-workers, how to better communicate with students, and that sometimes being a teacher can be a tough and unrewarding.

Communication with different audiences requires different techniques. Addressing parents and colleagues requires different communication approaches than speaking to students, and both of these types of communication teachers come across daily. Ms. Perkins said, "We were not taught anything regarding communication or how to deal with parents we weren't taught with like how to deal with administration, our colleagues, nothing." Communicating with parents and colleagues is critical and something every teacher is required to do, yet this often receives little attention in education programs. Mrs. Knope works at a a school with a high level of parental involvement and found this particularly difficult when entering student teaching. She stated,

> It's a huge part of my day-to-day teaching world, and it's something that I struggle with. I find that the struggle with communicating with them effectively and giving them the information that they need and that they want and that the student needs and wants. As teachers how do we effectively have a conversation with parents and then come upon with a consencensis of how to deal with a situation that is definitely at the top. I wish I had learned techniques and other things that would have helped with any misunderstanding for unhappy parent situations.

How to communicate with students, form bonds, and gain respect is not always taught to teachers in their education programs, but they are aspects of teaching every teacher needs to know. Mrs. Knope said, "It's all about how you talk to students and I think that really influences the way things go and I think that if you can communicate effectively with them in a way that they understand and is relatable, I think that makes the job a lot easier, it has for me." In the same way, some of the teachers found that learning how to communicate with students effectively it is incredibly difficult, and specifically, Mr. Gergich wished he would've known how to handle situations that go poorly with students even after he gave his best efforts and a student did not respond to their communication well. Mr. Gergich said, "I wish I had known that there would be some students that I would try to communicate on a regular basis that would still be so resistant to education that my efforts to relate to them wouldn't have a positive effect in my classroom." Sometimes even when teachers give their best effort in communicating with a student, it won't be enough.

Teachers' Perspectives on Effective and Ineffective Communication

The participants shared communication experiences they found were effective with students. The results show that communication is most effective with students when teachers talk to students about challenges they face, credit students when they do a good job, and give students a second chance when they make a mistake.

Students face many challenges throughout their education experience. These challenges may be related to curriculum, outside of school experiences, and as Mrs. Knope expressed, extracurricular activities. Mrs. Knope is assistant director of the competitive theater program at the high school in her school district:

At the district competition we were met with several challenges when performing in this

competitive environment, one which is all shows have to be under 25 minutes. In the

middle of the show we discovered we were running significantly over time and it's a huge

penalty with the judges. And the (student) stage manager met with several other students

and in that moment she made that call to cut some scenes in order to help make time they

were effectively able to end the show with a reasonable amount of time without hurting

overall scoring. But they were stressing, it took a lot of communication and quick thinking.

We were able to talk about that afterwards and why that went well and why it was

beneficial and why it's important to communicate and be able to work like that especially in

a competitive and frustrating environment.

It is important that educators help guide challenges students present before them, but in this

instance, it was important for Mrs. Knope to reward and recognize the students as they prevailed

over the seemingly overwhelming obstacle.

Mistakes occur every day, and there are two ways to approach them: ignore the mistake

and make it again, or if given a second chance, learn from the mistake and correct the problem.

Mr. Traeger shared an experience where a student made a mistake and instead of punishing the

student on the first offense, he gave that student a second chance and an opportunity to correct the

behavior:

A student was particularly angry one day, I'm not exactly sure what was going on in his

personal life, but he came in with a big big attitude. He was in-my-face confrontational,

the kind of thing that will derail the entire day if you just let it go. So I had to ask him to

leave class, he did." It is not uncommon in some schools to have incidents such as this

happen on a daily basis. In cases such as this disciplinary action is taken. Mr. Traeger

followed procedure and wrote a referral. On the way to delivering it to the office, Mr.

Traeger ran into this particular student again and gave him a second chance. "I pulled him

aside and I wanted to have a discussion with him. "What's goin' on? What's the story?"

And he said I'm really sorry my parents are just like having a huge fight and they're

going to split and it's just been a really rough day for me. I said was I sympathize with

that, that's a really tough thing that's going to happen, but he can't lash out on other

people like that.

Mr. Traeger found that it was an underlying reason why the student was acting that way. Instead of

sending the referral to the office, he decided to give the student another chance: "I was able to just

rip [the referral] in half and I never had anymore issues with that kid who was going through a

tough time in his life." By giving this student a second chance, he was able to find out what the

issue was, sympathize with the situation, and prevent any further conflict with this student again.

The participants shared communication experiences they found were ineffective with

students. The results show that communication is ineffective with students when sarcasm is

inappropriately used by the teacher or misinterpreted by the student and when teachers yell at, or

belittle, their students.

Sarcasm is a powerful use of language and is popular in our culture. It can be used to

emphasize a situation or moment or for a comedic effect. If interpreted the wrong way, sarcasm

can be hurtful. Ms. Perkins expressed a situation when communication was ineffective with a

student because sarcasm was interpreted in a way which the student found hurtful: "I'm very

sarcastic with this one student. One day he would not stop talking and then he started talking about

his brother. And I said, 'You know, no one cares right now about your brother.' And it got like

really silent in the class and so I didn't know if something had just happened with him." Ms.

Perkins did not intend any harm by this comment but, in a moment of frustration, displayed an inappropriate use of sarcasm that was ineffective with a student.

In moments of frustration, it is not uncommon to raise your voice and sometimes become unfriendly, and this kind of communication was also found to be ineffective with students. Mr. Traeger recalled a moment when he caught a student cheating and the student did not understand the severity of its consequences: "For me I was like cheating is cheating, how does anybody not know how serious that is? So rather than pointing it out to her I kind of just berated her and kind of yelled at her. She was obviously in the wrong, but I sort of squandered that moment by just yelling at her." In moments of frustration, it is easy to lose your cool, yet many times when teachers do this, it causes a missed opportunity to teach a lesson and can create a greater divide in the relationship with that student.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The select sample of teachers approached building student-teacher rapport in a variety of ways. One instance of such rapport building was the use of "Getting-to-Know-You" activities at the beginning of the school year to help with learning the names of their students and their students' interests. All teachers involved in this study used this method in some fashion and reported it being a successful tool in building rapport with their students in the classroom. Additionally, four out of the six teachers reported attending or taking part in extracurricular activities such as theater or sports to help build rapport with their students. Two of the teachers indicated building rapport with their students when addressing cultural or racial differences in the classroom. One teacher said giving students credit and praise when they've done a good job is an important key to building rapport. Three of the teachers said that making sure they can laugh and have fun in the classroom with their students leads to building good student-teacher rapport. All of the teachers indicated that having a strong knowledge of the content area in which you are teaching to be a strong rapport builder with students.

While teacher-student rapport was built in a variety of ways, the results of how teachers approach to conflict in the classroom can be broken down into two categories: (a) how teachers should and should not handle conflict and (b) how to prevent conflict in the classroom.

Table 1
Teachers' Approaches to Conflict

Do's	Don'ts
Admit a mistakes when they arise and then correct them	Point out student mistakes in front of the class
Give students a second chance when they've made a mistake and not always punishing a student on a first offense	Yell
Discuss challenges with the class	Use sarcasm when disciplining
Point out inappropriate language, discuss why it's wrong and an appropriate word to put in its place	

The teachers in this study also found the following items essential in preventing conflict in the classroom: instillation of good and fair classroom management practices, treatment of students with respect, thorough explanation of all assignments and with good examples provided, and lessons specifically addressing handing conflict in the classroom. Ms. Perkins, for example, incorporated a game of "Telephone" into her "Getting-to-Know-You" activities. Perkins said, "I was teaching a speech unit we did communication games so that I could show that communication has a lot of loopholes and a lot of misunderstandings." This game is a fun and simple way to show how easy our communication can be altered and how easily misunderstandings arise.

Finally, the study found that teachers believed the following to be incorporated into good classroom management: creation of fair and democratic classroom rules, consistent treatment of students with respect, having clear-stated and visibly posted expectations (and sticking with them), flexibility during daily lessons, and the allowance of students to express themselves in the classroom. To this end, Mrs. Knope even has a section of wall dedicated to student expression and argued, "It gives students the opportunity to hang up their drawings or anything. The classroom is

a safe place to display something beyond what we do in the classroom. I think the idea of valuing

the student as an individual and creating that little safe area in that classroom makes them feel

appreciated and understood." In each instance, the teachers in this study claimed that good

classroom management was an integral part of instructional communication and one in which they

would have preferred to receive more training or education in during their undergraduate

programs.

Specifically, this study found that these teachers thought additional preparation or courses

needed to be taught in their education program's three areas of classroom management:

communication with administrators, communication with parents, and the creation of classroom

connectedness.

Although classroom management is a topic discussed within most education programs the

participants wished they would have learned more on the topic before student teaching. Ms.

Ludgate said,

> I don't think that I learned any wrong way necessarily but I do think that the education
>
> program or the one that I took specifically did not prepare me for classroom management at
>
> all. I constantly am trying to look for new techniques that I can try with different group and
>
> personalities. I still think that I have a lot to learn but I think in the last year and a half I
>
> have learned effective strategies, which is more than I've learned before.

Classroom management practices are not concrete nor are the communication patterns between

teachers and administrators. Each teacher has a different personality and a different style in which

they run their classroom just as administrators may run their building or manage their teachers in

specific ways. Classes that don't necessarily teach exactly what to do but instead give a plethora of

different ideas of classroom management strategies is needed so that teachers can find a style of

classroom management that suits them more effectively as well as prepares them to communicate these strategies effectively with their respective administrators.

Parental communication, and in many instances, what results from neglect of or bad parent communication, is a crucial issue as well. Preservice teachers need to learn how to effectively communicate with the parents of their students and what to do when there is a reluctance of parent communication. While admittedly a difficult situation to emulate in a college setting, increased attention to ways in which communication with parents can be handled in an effective and efficient manner would be a worthwhile addition to undergraduate education programs and courses.

The final issue the participants found lacking in their undergraduate college of education programs was how to create a feeling of classroom connectedness. Mr. Traeger stated:

> I think additionally it's important that student teachers are instructed more on how to create a connected classroom and how to connect students to us and get students to not just play ping-pong with a teacher but to really pass the ball around in the fence in the classroom and just generate that as a teacher. How do we do that? That should be a communication skill that really heavily encouraged in order for teachers to prepare their students for the 21st century workplace, where collaboration is required, it's not optional.

In order for a classroom to operate with successful communication it is important to create a feeling of classroom connectedness. Mr. Traeger says this because it is important in his classroom and because he believes it will prepare his students for the workplace. Teachers need to learn how to develop this feeling to create an environment where collaboration is essential.

This study confirms the basic findings of Cayanus (2004), Osinchuk (1995), Goodboy and Bolkan (2009), and Johnson and LaBelle (2015) that found elements of instructional communication, such as building rapport, managing classroom conflict, and developing classroom

management skills, to be essential for new classroom teachers to develop. This study also expands the findings of these previous studies to provide a deeper understanding of what teachers are often missing from their undergraduate teacher preparation courses in instances where instructional communication is either dismissed or ignored altogether. The findings of this study provide insight into the pedagogical value of instructional communication and suggest that, when possible, topics such as effective classroom management techniques or strategic conflict resolution should be addressed in undergraduate education course curricula.

Limitations

Given more time and financial resources, I would have liked to complete classroom observations of communication of my own to add into the study. Truly knowing how the teachers communicate with their students was the limitation of this study. If I was not only able to study the teachers responses given in their interviews but also witness the interactions they have with students, I believe my study would have been more concrete.

Future Research

If I were to continue researching this topic, I would like to look more closely at and compare the difference between teachers whom did receive instructional communication courses in preservice to those who did not. Studying this and paring it along with what this study has found will answer two different questions: Do colleges of education need to have a course on instructional communication offered to preservice teachers?; and, What should a course on instructional communication for preservice teachers cover?

I would also like to research more on parent communication. In my findings, I had a few participants struggle with how to communicate with parents. As I thought more on the subject, I thought about the parent communication I have as a teacher in an inner city high school and, most of the time, the lack thereof communication I am able to have with the parents/guardians of my students. What are teachers to do if parent communication seems impossible?

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Appendix: IRB Approval Letter

RESEARCH @ EMU

UHSRC Determination: **EXEMPT**

DATE: **May 1, 2017**

TO: **Vanessa Callanan**
Eastern Michigan University

Re: **UHSRC: # 999338-1**
Category: Exempt category 2
Approval Date: May 1, 2017

Title: **Instructional Communication Interview**

Your research project, entitled **Instructional Communication Interview**, has been determined **Exempt** in accordance with federal regulation 45 CFR 46.102. UHSRC policy states that you, as the Principal Investigator, are responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of your research subjects and conducting your research as described in your protocol.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. When the project is completed, please submit the **Human Subjects Study Completion Form** (access through IRBNet on the UHSRC website).

Modifications: You may make minor changes (e.g., study staff changes, sample size changes, contact information changes, etc.) without submitting for review. However, if you plan to make changes that alter study design or any study instruments, you must submit a **Human Subjects Approval Request Form** and obtain approval prior to implementation. The form is available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website.

Problems: All major deviations from the reviewed protocol, unanticipated problems, adverse events, subject complaints, or other problems that may increase the risk to human subjects or change the category of review must be reported to the UHSRC via an **Event Report** form, available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website

Follow-up: If your Exempt project is not completed and closed after **three years**, the UHSRC office will contact you regarding the status of the project.

Please use the UHSRC number listed above on any forms submitted that relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the UHSRC office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 734-487-3090 or via e-mail at human.subjects@emich.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

April M Gravitt, MS
Research Compliance Analyst
University Human Subjects Review Committee