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The Effects of Supervisor Nonverbal Immediacy and Power Use on Employees'
Ratings of Credibility and Affect for the Supervisor

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of supervisor power and nonverbal immediacy on employees' satisfaction, affect, and perceptions of supervisors' credibility. After reading written scenarios of supervisors engaging in nonverbally immediate (or nonimmediate) and prosocial (or antisocial) power, participants reported perceptions of satisfaction, affect, and credibility. Results of the 2 x 2 analysis of variance revealed significant main effects for supervisor prosocial power and nonverbal immediacy. Supervisor prosocial power and nonverbal immediacy were positively and significantly related to employees' self-reported satisfaction and liking for the supervisor. This study demonstrates that supervisors should maintain immediacy and frame prosocial-type messages to preserve their credibility.

Key Words: Supervisor-Subordinate Communication, Subordinate Satisfaction, Supervisor Credibility, Supervisor Power, Organizational Communication, Workplace Relationships

The relationship between subordinates' perceptions of various types of supervisor behavior and organizational outcomes is an important area of study. Supervisors' communicative behavior has shown links to important organizational outcomes, including: subordinate self-esteem (Falcione, McCroskey, & Daly, 1977); subordinate satisfaction (Campbell, Martin, & Wanzer, 2001; Falcione, 1974a; Infante, Anderson, Martin, Herington, & Kim, 1993; Infante & Gordon, 1985, 1989; Infante, Gordon, & Izzo, 1988; Lamude, Daniels, & Smilowitz, 1995; McCroskey & Richmond, 2000; Richmond, Wagner, & McCroskey, 1983; Wheelless, Wheelless, & Howard, 1984); employee identification (Cheney, 1983; McGregor, 1967; Roach, 1998); and supervisor credibility (Cole & McCroskey, 2003; Falcione, 1974b; Falcione, et al., 1977; McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Nesler, Aguinis, Quigley, & Tedeschi, 1993; O'Reilly & Roberts, 1977; Posner & Kouzes, 1988; Teven, 2007). Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980) note that most research conducted within the organizational environment has focused on the ways supervisors influence subordinates, particularly the tactics they use to increase employee productivity and morale. Although several factors are related to employee morale, the single most important one in enhancing job satisfaction is superior-subordinate communication (Baird & Bradley, 1978; Jablin, 1978; Remland, 1984).

The manner in which supervisors communicate with their subordinates may be more important than the verbal content. Relational messages are important in understanding how supervisors maintain subordinates' commitment to the job and organization, as well as achieve their persuasive ends (Jablin, 1987). Surprisingly, extant research in the area of organizational communication has not yet fully explored the nonverbal behavior of supervisors in relation to the influence strategies such supervisors often utilize in the workplace. The present study was an investigation of supervisor use of power and nonverbal immediacy in relation to perceived supervisor credibility, subordinates' satisfaction, and liking for the supervisor. The rationale for the present study lies in its contributions to both organizational communication theory and practice. Specifically, this study sought to expand our understanding of the superior-subordinate relationship by examining the independent and interrelated impacts of supervisor power and nonverbal immediacy on interpersonally-related outcomes.

Review of Related Literature

Nonverbal Immediacy

Communicative behavior such as facial expression, eye contact, vocal expression, and body movement is crucial to the superior-subordinate relationship. Nonverbal messages play a central role in interpersonal interactions in respect to impression formation, deception, attraction, social influence, and emotional expression (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1996). Scholars have explored how nonverbal communication alters attitudes and overt behaviors of message recipients (Burgoon et al., 1996). Nonverbal immediacy is a compendium of behavior related to the perception of closeness in interpersonal relationships (Mehrabian, 1969, 1971). "People are drawn towards persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer" (Mehrabian, 1971, p. 1). Nonverbal immediacy is a means for supervisors to increase interpersonal affect with subordinates.

Research has established the impact of teacher nonverbal immediacy in instructional settings (for a comprehensive discussion of this research, see Richmond, 2002). Nonverbal immediacy is associated with increases in students' willingness to engage their instructors outside the learning setting (Fusani, 1994), and students' perceptions of instructor homophily and

interpersonal attraction (Rocca & McCroskey, 1999). Conversely, Thweatt and McCroskey (1996) discovered that students viewed non-immediate teaching as interfering with learning, essentially, as a type of teacher misbehavior. Similarly, subordinates would likely see supervisor non-immediacy as inappropriate and as a detriment to effective communication. Management styles, in general, whether immediate or non-immediate, have differing impacts on subordinate satisfaction in a variety of organizational contexts (Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1982). Remland (1984) reported that participants evaluated the leadership performance of supervisors as more considerate and effective when they enacted low status behavior rather than high status behavior.

The Relationship of Supervisor Behavior to Social Influence and Supervisor Credibility

Credibility is a foundation for successful influence (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Kouzes & Posner, 1993; McCroskey & Teven, 1999). If subordinates do not trust a supervisor, the resulting communication between the two parties will tend to be evasive. Surprisingly, few studies have examined the ways in which supervisors establish and maintain credibility with subordinates and the effects supervisor credibility has on compliance-gaining attempts. Kay and Christophel (1995) noted a relationship between subordinate motivation and supervisors' openness and nonverbally immediate communication. McCroskey, Richmond, and Franey (1999) discovered that supervisors who are more immediate appear to be more credible. Subordinate satisfaction with immediate supervision is strongly associated with perceptions of supervisor communication behavior and other factors such as perceived credibility (Falcione et al., 1977). Increased supervisor nonverbal immediacy ostensibly fosters reciprocity and accommodation, as well as contributes to a more positive work environment and other desirable outcomes (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). An interesting dynamic for research is to examine how the nonverbal immediacy (or nonimmediacy) of supervisors interacts with supervisor power use to impact credibility and subordinate-related outcomes.

Social Influence

To influence their subordinates, supervisors utilize power (Richmond et al., 1983). A significant amount of research on aspects of power has reflected French and Raven's (1959) early conceptualization of the five bases (legitimate, coercive, reward, referent, and expert) and Marwell and Schmitt's (1967) work involving compliance-gaining. Student (1968) found that the bases of power showed different relationships to subordinate productivity and satisfaction. Hunter and Boster (1987) determined that supervisors generally preferred messages that stimulated positive affect in subordinates and avoided ones that tend to create negative reactions.

Organizational power clearly involves an interdependent relationship between supervisor and subordinate and is, as McShane and Von Glinow (2003) assert, "ultimately a perception" (p. 356). Influence derives from the capacity of one person to influence another in this relationship, only so long as the other perceives the source of influence as having something of value to him or her. Hirokawa, Mickey, and Miura (1991) develop this idea further in maintaining that when supervisor legitimacy is low, compliance-gaining tactics must necessarily be more direct and polite to allow the supervisor to "save face" (p. 434). Prosocial power, or influence, is often a consequence of messages that communicate friendliness and liking, whereas antisocial influence is a product of messages that entail some form of psychological force or punishing activity (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). Johnson (1992) examined the perceptual effects associated with supervisors' use of a prosocial versus an antisocial compliance-gaining tactics in an organizational setting. The results indicated that respondents perceived supervisors seeking to

exert influence via prosocial compliance-gaining tactics as more communicatively competent than ones who resort to antisocial tactics. Recently, Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond (2006) discovered subordinates' perceptions of supervisor use of legitimate and coercive power were related positively and strongly to a supervisor's level of Machiavellianism, which, in turn, showed a negative relationship to his or her credibility.

Rationale

Researchers have isolated and examined aspects of supervisor nonverbal immediacy (Kay & Christophel, 1995; Richmond & McCroskey, 2000) and supervisor use of power (Richmond et al., 1986; Richmond et al. 1980; Richmond et al. 1983) in supervisor/subordinate communication, but not as yet examined their interaction with various facets of supervisor/subordinate relationships.

Power is an important aspect of organizational environments, particularly between superiors and subordinates. Among other things, it is central to effective supervision. Without power, supervisors have little influence on their subordinates. The focus of the present research was subordinates' perceptions of supervisor power and how that interacts with nonverbal immediacy behavior in respect to perceptions of supervisor credibility, subordinates' satisfaction, and subordinates' affect (i.e., liking for that supervisor). Lamude et al. (1995) discovered that subordinates' satisfaction with supervisors' communication was closely related to nonverbal expressions and verbal strategies that reflected intimacy, willingness to listen, similarity, openness, and empathy whereas subordinates' dissatisfaction increased in proportion to relational expressions of superiority and task orientations. This suggests main effects (and possible interactions) for nonverbal immediacy and power use on perceived supervisor credibility and subordinate-centered outcomes. Hence,

H1: Supervisors who utilize more prosocial power will be perceived by subordinates as more credible than supervisors who interact from more antisocial bases.

H2: Supervisors who engage in immediate behaviors will be perceived by subordinates as more credible than supervisors who engage in non-immediate behaviors.

The combination of nonverbal immediacy and power use may bear importantly on the outcomes explored in this study. The following research question reflected this concern:

RQ1: To what extent do supervisor nonverbal immediacy and power use interact to influence subordinates' perceptions of supervisor credibility?

Satisfaction with one's job has been defined as one's affective response to various facets of the work environment (Wheless et al., 1984). Subordinates continually assess how personally beneficial or detrimental their work environment is to their well-being (Allen, 1995). One specific facet of the workplace for subordinates is their relationship with their immediate supervisor. Since supervisors have legitimate authority in respect to their subordinates, the manner in which they communicate with them and the quality of those relationships likely affects the work-related satisfaction of those subordinates (Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1986). Thus,

H3: Supervisor prosocial power use and nonverbal immediacy will positively influence subordinates' self-reported satisfaction.

Supervisors convey liking toward others and, in turn, cultivate liking for themselves by nonverbal means. The norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) suggests that supervisors who engage in supportive and responsive communication with subordinates will generate more

interpersonal affect. McCroskey and Richmond (2000), for instance, noted that supervisor responsiveness was positively related to perceptions of trustworthiness and increased social attraction from subordinates. Nonverbal immediacy by supervisors, such as smiling at or making direct eye contact with their subordinates, is a set of responsive behaviors. Additionally, supervisors who attempt to be “friendly and helpful to get the target in a ‘good frame of mind’ so that he [sic] will comply with the request” will naturally elicit more positive reactions than ones who utilize antisocial influence (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967, p. 357). Thus, it stands to reason that:

H4: Supervisor prosocial power use and nonverbal immediacy will positively influence subordinates’ liking for that supervisor.

Method

Participants

Participants were two hundred and sixty-six employees (133 males, 133 females) employed in a wide variety of organizations, including for-profit and non-profit service, private small business, and large business. Participation was voluntary. The age of the participants ranged from 21 to 64 years ($M = 25.68$, $SD = 6.38$). The average time the participants reported working at their current job was 7.87 years ($SD = 10.21$, range 1-38). On average, the participants worked 43.78 hours per week ($SD = 9.25$, range = 15-80).

Design and Procedures

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four written scenarios (see Figure 1). The two independent variables of supervisor nonverbal immediacy (low/high) and power use (anti-/prosocial) differed for each scenario.

Figure 1: Experimental Manipulations

Scenario 1: High Immediacy/Anti-social Power

You work for a supervisor, Mr. Johnson, who smiles frequently, makes direct eye contact, uses vocal variety, and gestures. Moreover, this supervisor is enthusiastic, walks around the office, and seems relaxed in at work. However, Mr. Johnson gives his subordinates undesirable job assignments and generally makes work difficult for them. When his subordinates ask why they are doing particular jobs, Mr. Johnson replies by saying “because I’m the boss and I say so.” If his subordinates do not complete a task, he will often find ways to punish them. His employees feel that he applies pressure to carry out required tasks and when they don’t, he finds ways to penalize them.

Scenario 2: Low Immediacy/Prosocial Power

You work for a supervisor, Mr. Johnson, who seems very tense, lacks facial expression, and uses a monotone voice, and often sits behind his desk for most of the work day. Moreover, this supervisor rarely makes eye contact when discussing work-related issues and is generally perceived as unfriendly and unapproachable. However, Mr. Johnson can share with his subordinates his considerable job experience. Employees at the organization respect his competence, good judgement, and the advice he passes onto them. Because of his expertise, Mr. Johnson is admired and respected by his peers. His employees admire him for his personal qualities and want to perform their tasks in ways that merit his respect. Conversely, Mr. Johnson has the tendency to make his subordinates feel valued.

Scenario 3: Low Immediacy/Anti-social Power

You work for a supervisor, Mr. Johnson, who seems very tense, lacks facial expression, and uses a monotone voice, and often sits behind his desk for most of the work day. Moreover, this supervisor rarely makes eye contact when discussing work-related issues and is generally perceived as unfriendly and unapproachable. Mr. Johnson gives his subordinates undesirable job assignments and generally makes work difficult for them. When his

subordinates ask why they are doing particular jobs, Mr. Johnson replies by saying “because I’m the boss and I say so.” If his subordinates do not complete a task, he will often find ways to punish them. His employees feel that he applies pressure to carry out required tasks and when they don’t, he finds ways to penalize them.

Scenario 4: High Immediacy/Prosocial Power

You work for a supervisor, Mr. Johnson, who smiles frequently, makes direct eye contact, uses vocal variety, and gestures. Moreover, this supervisor is enthusiastic, walks around the office, and seems relaxed in at work. Mr. Johnson can share with his subordinates his considerable job experience. Employees at the organization respect his competence, good judgement, and the advice he passes onto them. Because of his expertise, Mr. Johnson is admired and respected by his peers. His employees admire him for his personal qualities and want to perform their tasks in ways that merit his respect. Conversely, Mr. Johnson has the tendency to make his subordinates feel valued.

Manipulations

Supervisor immediacy. Supervisor nonverbal immediacy was manipulated in the four scenarios in the following way. There were six types of nonverbal behavior that were either highly immediate or nonimmediate: eye contact, gestures, body position, smiling, movement, proximity, and vocal expressiveness (Andersen, 1979). Two levels of immediacy, high and low, were created by varying the proportion of behaviors that were immediate. In the high-immediacy conditions, the supervisors were immediate in all six categories of nonverbal behavior. Conversely, in the low-immediacy conditions, the supervisors were in non-immediate behavior in all six categories.

Supervisor power. Supervisor power also varied across the four scenarios. There were four bases of power that represented either anti-social (coercive and legitimate) or prosocial (referent and expert) types. Both organizational and instructional communication research provided the justification for this configuration of power types and message strategies. Subordinates’ perceptions of supervisors’ use of coercive and legitimate power are often related to negative interpersonal affect, decreased job satisfaction, and resistance, whereas referent and expert power enhance the superior-subordinate relationship. Since supervisory rewards may include providing something positive (positive reinforcement) or removing something negative (negative reinforcement), reward power was omitted. The pertinent basis of power was reflected in how the supervisor interacted with the subordinate. The Behavioral Alteration Messages (BAM’s) were employed to generate either the prosocial or antisocial power conditions (Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1986). For instance, in the anti-social power condition, when the subordinates question why they are doing particular jobs, the supervisor replies by saying “because I’m the boss and I say so.”

Treatment Checks

To assure that the scenarios would be perceived as intended, in respect to immediacy and power, four graduate student coders were provided with definitions of both variables and then taught to reliably recognize immediacy behaviors and power use. They then read each of the four scenarios representing the various experimental conditions. Perceptions of supervisor immediacy and power were consistent with the manipulations. The coders were able to discriminate both the supervisor’s immediate/nonimmediate behaviors and anti-social/prosocial messages across the four experimental scenarios.

Measurement

Supervisor credibility. After reading one of the four scenarios, participants completed measures of supervisor credibility. The credibility measures used in this study were the ones

Teven and McCroskey (1997) developed. The instrument consists of eighteen bi-polar scales, six each for the competence, goodwill, and trustworthiness dimensions. The scales yielded the following estimates of internal reliability: competence, $\alpha = .81$ ($M = 27.24$, $SD = 9.42$); goodwill, $\alpha = .96$ ($M = 31.07$, $SD = 15.63$); trustworthiness, $\alpha = .87$ ($M = 26.28$, $SD = 9.65$).

Subordinate satisfaction. In this study, the Generalized Belief Measure (GBM; McCroskey & Richmond, 1989) was the measure of subordinates' level of satisfaction with the supervisor. This is a five-item, bipolar adjective scale taps beliefs in a variety of domains. The participants indicated their impressions of how satisfied they felt had they been working for the supervisor as described in the scenario. The items for the measure included: *true/false*, *right/wrong*, *no/yes*, *disagree/agree*, and *correct/incorrect*. Cronbach's α for the scale was .94 ($M = 19.26$, $SD = 9.51$).

Liking for supervisor. Subordinates indicated their liking for the supervisor in response to the aforementioned GBM measure (McCroskey & Richmond, 1989). The participants indicated their impressions of how much they liked the supervisor they read about in the scenario. The same items for job satisfaction listed above were used. Cronbach's α for the scale was .97 ($M = 20.22$, $SD = 10.40$).

To test the hypotheses and answer the research question, the dependent variables were initially subjected to two-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA). The data were further examined via two-way analyses of variance. *Post-hoc* cell comparisons were made when justified by significant main and interaction effects. The "Tukey b" statistic was utilized since cell sizes were unequal in the experimental conditions. The traditional α of .05 was adopted for all tests of the null hypothesis.

Results

The results of the first MANOVA revealed significant main and interaction effects. A significant multivariate main effect was observed for type of power in relation to perceptions of supervisor competence, goodwill, and trustworthiness, Wilks' $\lambda = .35$, $F(1, 266) = 153.12$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .65$. A significant multivariate main effect was also observed for level of immediacy in the case of perceptions of supervisor competence, goodwill, and trustworthiness, Wilks' $\lambda = .65$, $F(1, 166) = 48.84$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .35$. Univariate tests for each of the dependent variables helped to account for the multivariate main effect. Significant F ratios were obtained for the three dimensions of supervisor credibility. The observed F ratios for type of power were as follows: supervisor competence ($F = 205.71$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .44$), goodwill ($F = 439.67$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .63$), and trustworthiness ($F = 221.31$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .46$). The observed F ratios for level of immediacy were as follows: supervisor competence ($F = 11.03$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$), goodwill ($F = 126.16$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .33$), and trustworthiness ($F = 12.97$, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .05$). Subordinates' perceptions of supervisor competence, goodwill, and trustworthiness were clearly more positive for the prosocial power and high immediacy condition than for their counterparts.

RQ1 concerned the extent to which supervisor nonverbal immediacy and power use interact to influence subordinates' perceptions of supervisor credibility. A multivariate interaction effect for supervisor nonverbal immediacy and power use on subordinates' perceptions of supervisor credibility did emerge, with Wilks' $\lambda = .81$, $F(1, 266) = 19.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$.

H1 posited that supervisors who interacted from more positive power bases would be

more credible than supervisors who interacted from more negative power bases. In the present study, the type of power base had a significant association with all three dimensions of credibility. H2 held that supervisors who engaged in non-immediate behavior would be less credible than supervisors who did not. The data support this speculation.

Post hoc analyses, using least squared means when interaction effects were significant, revealed significant differences among the eight manipulated conditions. These differences are further explicated for all three dimensions of credibility below.

Supervisor competence. For the dependent variable supervisor competence, the analysis for the overall model was significant, $F(3, 265) = 74.31, p < .0001$, with 46 percent of the variance accounted for in the model. When the supervisor was highly immediate and used more positive power strategies, the supervisor was perceived as significantly more competent ($M = 35.38, p < .0001$) than the one who was non-immediate and exercised antisocial power ($M = 20.05$), when the supervisor was immediate, but antisocial ($M = 22.60$), and when the supervisor used prosocial power but was non-immediate ($M = 31.95$). See Table 1 for the means for Immediacy/Power Conditions on all dimensions of credibility.

Table 1

Means for Immediacy/Power Conditions on Dependent Measures

Dependent Variable	Low Immediacy		High Immediacy		
	Antisocial	Prosocial	Antisocial	Prosocial	
Supervisor Competence		20.25 _{acd}	31.95 _{bcd}	22.60 _{abc}	35.38 _{abd}
Supervisor Goodwill	18.18 _a	32.94 _a	23.00 _a	52.37 _a	
Supervisor Trustworthiness	19.62 _{acd}	30.27 _{abcd}	20.63 _{abc}	35.60 _{abcd}	
Subordinate Satisfaction		13.84 _{acd}	20.51 _{abcd}	12.92 _{abc}	30.03 _{abcd}
Subordinate Liking	16.21 _{ad}	20.17 _{abc}	14.08 _{abc}	30.54 _{abcd}	

Note. Means with the same subscript on the same dependent variable are significantly different at (at least) the .01 level.

Supervisor trustworthiness. The values for the overall model in the case of supervisor trustworthiness were $F(3, 262) = 80.34, p < .0001$, with 48 percent of the variance accounted for. When the supervisor was highly immediate and prosocial, the supervisor was perceived as significantly more trustworthy ($M = 35.60, p < .0001$) than the supervisor who was non-immediate and antisocial ($M = 19.62$), immediate but antisocial ($M = 20.63$), and prosocial but non-immediate ($M = 30.27$). There was no significant difference in perceived trustworthiness of the supervisor low in immediacy and antisocial in power use and the supervisor high in immediacy but who operated from anti-social power bases and the supervisor who was non-immediate but prosocial in use of power.

Supervisor goodwill. For supervisor goodwill, the analysis for the overall model was significant, $F(3, 264) = 203.63, p < .0001$, and accounted for 72 percent of the variance. When the supervisor was highly immediate and interacted from prosocial power bases, the supervisor

was perceived as significantly more caring ($M = 52.37, p < .0001$) than was the supervisor who was non-immediate and antisocial ($M = 18.18$), immediate but antisocial ($M = 23.00$), and prosocial but non-immediate ($M = 32.94$).

The results of a second MANOVA revealed significant main and interaction effects. A significant multivariate main effect emerged for level of power in respect to perceptions of subordinate liking of and satisfaction with the supervisor, Wilks' lambda = .10, $F(1, 266) = 1044.16, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .90$. A significant multivariate main effect was also observed for level of immediacy in the case of perceptions of subordinates' liking and satisfaction, Wilks' lambda = .91, $F(1, 266) = 12.24, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .09$. Univariate tests conducted on both of these dependent variables helped to explain the multivariate main effect. Significant F ratios for these relational outcomes were in evidence. The observed F ratios for level of power were as follows: subordinate liking of the supervisor ($F = 88.27, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .27$) and subordinate satisfaction ($F = 189.21, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .44$). The F ratios for level of immediacy were as follows: subordinate liking of the supervisor ($F = 14.75, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .06$), and subordinate satisfaction ($F = 23.85, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .09$). Subordinates' affect for and satisfaction with their supervisors were more positive for the prosocial power and high immediacy condition. A significant multivariate interaction effect was also emerged for level of power and level of immediacy, Wilks' lambda = .85, $F(1, 266) = 21.36, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .15$. *Post hoc* analyses were conducted using least squared means when interaction effects were significant. These differences are further explicated for each of the following relational (subordinate) outcomes.

Subordinate satisfaction. For subordinate satisfaction with the supervisor, the analysis for the overall model was significant, $F(3, 262) = 80.34, p < .0001$ (which supports H3). The variance accounted for was 56 percent. When the supervisor was highly immediate and used prosocial power strategies, subordinates were significantly more satisfied ($M = 30.03, p < .0001$) than they were when the supervisor was non-immediate and antisocial ($M = 13.85$), immediate but antisocial ($M = 12.92$), and prosocial but non-immediate ($M = 20.51$). See Table 1 for the means for Immediacy x Power conditions for both subordinate outcomes.

Subordinate liking. A final ANOVA focused on the mean differences in subordinates' liking for their supervisors among the various experimental conditions. The analysis for the overall model was significant, $F(3, 246) = 44.21, p < .0001$ (which supports H4). The variance accounted for was 38 percent. When the supervisor was highly immediate and used more favorable power strategies, subordinates showed significantly greater liking of that supervisor ($M = 30.54, p < .0001$) than the one who was non-immediate and antisocial ($M = 16.21$), immediate but antisocial ($M = 14.08$), and prosocial but non-immediate ($M = 20.17$).

Discussion

The current study was designed to detect relationships among supervisor use of power and nonverbal immediacy in respect to perceived supervisor credibility, subordinate satisfaction, and liking for the supervisor. In this way, it was possible to identify the conditions under which supervisor behavior may influence subordinates' emotional reactions toward supervisors and perceptions of credibility of those supervisors. Previous research has shown that supervisors can convey warmth or coldness *vis a vis* the manner in which they communicate in addition to the social influence they employ in the workplace (Tjosvold, 1984). In view of the present study, it appears that supervisors may generate more positive subordinate perceptions of credibility by interacting from prosocial power bases and being more nonverbally immediate, thus supporting H1 and H2. The data were similar to the results for supervisor nonverbal immediacy on all three

dimensions of credibility as observed by Richmond and McCroskey (2000). Burgoon, Birk, and Pfau's (1990) study also revealed numerous associations between the nonverbal behaviors of a source and attributions of credibility and persuasiveness. Interestingly, the results also indicate that a *non*-immediate supervisor can generate more favorable perceptions of credibility by exercising prosocial power.

Supervisors who do not verbally communicate in prosocial ways to their subordinates, regardless of their level of nonverbal immediacy, are apt to be perceived negatively by subordinates. After viewing both the low nonverbal immediacy/anti-social and high nonverbal immediacy/anti-social behavior scenarios, subordinates rated those supervisors lower in competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill. Antisocial messages by supervisors can manifest themselves in various ways, but most commonly as verbally aggressive messages. Verbally aggressive messages attack a person's self-concept in order to deliver psychological pain (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Cole and McCroskey (2003) recently uncovered significant negative relationships between verbal aggression and the three dimensions of source credibility and general affect towards a supervisor. Verbal behavior, then, seems to play a significant role in shaping subordinates' perceptions of their supervisors. An earlier study by Infante and Gordon (1991) is supportive of this possibility.

RQ1 focused on the extent to which the various conditions of supervisor power use and nonverbal immediacy interact in accounting for subordinates' perceptions of supervisor credibility. The fact that these supervisor characteristics did interact should not be surprising. Previous research focusing on supervisor social influence behaviors in the workplace has revealed that a supervisor using prosocial compliance gaining techniques is viewed as more competent than a supervisor who resorts to anti-social tactics to elicit compliance from subordinates (Johnson, 1992). In the present study, both power use and nonverbal immediacy accounted for a substantial amount of variance in ratings of credibility. The implication of these findings for supervisors is that they should attempt to be more nonverbally immediate and communicate more explicit, prosocial statements to their subordinates; on the basis of the present results, supervisors will be perceived as more credible if they do. A supervisor's credibility is likely to mediate persuasion by influencing how particular messages are interpreted and evaluated by subordinates. The results of the study add to the literature on organizational communication by providing an indication of how power use and nonverbal immediacy interact in respect to various dimensions of supervisor credibility. It is in a supervisor's best interests to be perceived as both competent and trustworthy if he or she is to be effective in the workplace. In turn, it would appear that supervisors who are better able to monitor their behavior in the workplace and communicate positive intent may subsequently be able to achieve greater compliance and elicit more positive evaluations from their subordinates.

H3 and H4 posited that supervisor prosocial power use and nonverbal immediacy is positively and significantly related to subordinates' self-reported satisfaction and liking for the supervisor. A strong main effect in the direction indicated in the third hypothesis was observed for subordinate satisfaction. Hecht (1984) found communication satisfaction to be positively linked to persuasive efficacy. If supervisors are to have a significant impact in the workplace and achieve compliance from their subordinates, they should attempt to understand what behavior and influence strategies are least preferred by their subordinates. H4 holds that supervisor prosocial power use and nonverbal immediacy are positively related to subordinates' liking for a supervisor. A strong main effect was observed for subordinate liking. The obvious implication

is that the attitudes of subordinates toward their supervisors are likely to affect the success of his or her attempts to gain compliance (Tjosvold, Andrews, & Struthers, 1990). Subordinates will simply work harder for a supervisor whom they like.

The significant interactions of immediacy and use of power in respect to subordinate satisfaction and affect for the supervisor suggest that the impact of these variables is more complex than the final two hypotheses presumed. The consistent pattern of results indicate that subordinates were more satisfied and had greater affect for the supervisor when that supervisor adopted prosocial power strategies and was nonverbally immediate. The presence of antisocial messages and non-immediacy exhibited by the supervisor revealed strong negative relationships to subordinates' satisfaction and liking for the supervisor. Being nonverbally immediate while expressing antisocial messages (e.g., making work difficult, applying pressure, and finding ways to punish or correct one's subordinates) is undesirable, and may lead subordinates to be more likely to resist compliance attempts by the supervisor; previous research conducted in the instructional context by Kearney, Plax, Smith, and Sorensen (1988) suggests that this is the case. The results seem to also indicate that subordinates may perceive their nonverbally immediate supervisors' use of antisocial power strategies as insincere. Subordinates have negative attitudes toward supervisors who employ legitimate and coercive power, who do not nonverbally express interest in their subordinates, and who do not make them feel valued. These findings are consistent with those in other studies examining supervisor behavior and subordinate satisfaction and affect in the workplace (Campbell, Martin, & Wanzer, 2001; Johnson, 1992; Richmond, McCroskey, Davis, & Koontz, 1980; Richmond, et al., 1983; Wheelless, Wheelless, & Howard, 1984).

One theory, in particular, offers insight into the dynamic relationship between supervisors and subordinates. According to Bandura's (1977, 1986) Social Learning Theory, a substantial amount of human behavior is learned vicariously by observing models. Supervisors are not only an agent of power use, but are also a recipient of subordinate power use (Yukl, 1989), which potentially affects the satisfaction of both supervisor and subordinate. Hence, the influence attempts exchanged between supervisors and subordinates are mutual in nature. Influence in organizations can occur in upward, downward, and lateral fashions. Through their communication, supervisors play a part in creating the organizational climate. Manz and Sims (1981) found that subordinates have a tendency to imitate supervisor behavior. From the social learning perspective, the major implication of this study is that supervisors would do well to model immediacy and prosocial behavior for maximum effect.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

A limitation to the study is that the above results and subsequent interpretations were based on written scenarios of supervisors as opposed to those supervisors observed in videos or live interactions with supervisors. Respondents were observers rather than participants in the interaction. At the same time, however, the use of scenarios allows researchers to remove potential confounds and extraneous sources of variance that other methods may introduce (Aguinis & Henle, 2001). While external validity is a serious concern, it should be remembered that experiments do not address external validity--they are designed to demonstrate internal validity. Employing different methodologies for two comparative studies of superior-subordinate communication that should have similar outcomes provides a test of replicability of research (Teven, 2007). Still, research that provides a thicker and richer description of supervisor behavior within the organization is called for. Field studies, observations, and other qualitative

investigations will likely capture a more complete transactional view of interaction between supervisors and subordinates.

Future research should also aim at assessing the degree to which supervisor goodwill interacts with supervisor affinity-seeking and misbehaviors, as well as their relationships to various organizational outcomes, including subordinate motivation, compliance, and resistance. This study moves researchers one step closer to discovering the intricate ways in which nonverbal immediacy and power interact so as to influence subordinates' perceptions of supervisor credibility, satisfaction, and liking for those supervisors. Adding additional variables into the mix should provide scholars with an even clearer picture of the role of nonverbal immediacy and social influence in the workplace.

Conclusions

This investigation extends previous research that employed correlational designs by successfully manipulating and testing the combined effects of supervisor immediacy and power on subordinate affect, job satisfaction, and supervisor credibility. Although the overall conclusions of this study reconfirm previous findings (McCroskey & Richmond, 2000; Richmond & McCroskey, 2000), the specific effects observed as well as the methodological approach taken contribute new insight to organizational theory, research, and practice. The results provide a strong rationale for training supervisors to use communication behaviors such as nonverbal immediacy and prosocial power messages to enhance their interactions with subordinates. The results indicate that supervisor non-immediacy and use of antisocial power strategies are predictive of negative outcomes for both supervisors and subordinates: subordinates' affect and supervisors' credibility may be substantially reduced. It should be noted, however, that this study's design was such that it provides useful information about the effects of extremes in immediacy and power but reveals little about the various nuances between those extremes. It is not appropriate, let alone defensible, to posit a linear relationship between these variables and subordinate affect or supervisor credibility on the basis of one study. Further studies which examine moderations of these variables are needed. However, in view of the findings of the study, in conjunction with the results of extant research, a warranted conclusion is that supervisors' nonverbal behavior and use of power strategies interact. Specifically, subordinates find nonverbally immediate and prosocially-oriented supervisors as more competent, trustworthy, and caring and report significantly more positive affect toward those supervisors.

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