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EXPLORING HURTFUL COMMUNICATION FROM COLLEGE TEACHERS TO  
STUDENTS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

by

Michelle Marie Maresh

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
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Major: Communication Studies

Under the Supervision of Professor William Seiler

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 2009

EXPLORING HURTFUL COMMUNICATION FROM COLLEGE TEACHERS TO  
STUDENTS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

Michelle Marie Maresh, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2009

Adviser: William Seiler

The purpose of this study was to extend teacher misbehavior research via an investigation of teacher communication that is perceived as hurtful by college students. While previous research on teacher misbehavior focuses on the content-oriented dimension of teacher-student communication, this study goes a step further by also considering the relational dimension. A mixed methods approach is used in this study to explore the function of hurtful communication in the teacher-student relationship. There were 34 participants in the first, qualitative, phase of this study; whereas the second, quantitative, phase of this study was comprised of 208 participants.

Identified in the results of this study are nine themes of hurtful messages that students perceived teachers to communicate which are also indicative of incompetent or offensive teacher misbehaviors. Face Theory was the framework for this study, as hurtful messages occurred when students perceived their face needs for competence, autonomy, and fellowship were threatened. Following the communication of a hurtful message, students responded using one of three strategies in an attempt to employ corrective facework. Students in the first phase of this study believed their motivation, affective learning, and relational satisfaction was impacted by hurtful messages.

As suggested by the results of the second phase of this study, there are differences in the degree of hurtfulness of each type of hurtful message. An increase in hurtfulness resulted in a decrease in relational satisfaction, affective learning, and motivation for students. However, students who perceived that their teacher demonstrated solidarity while communicating a hurtful message exhibited increased levels of affective learning, motivation, and relational satisfaction.

Taken together, the results of both phases of this study demonstrate that students who perceive their teachers to communicate hurtful messages are less satisfied with the teacher-student relationship, and experience a decline in motivation and affective learning. However, the key to preventing hurtful messages appears to be demonstrating solidarity by creating a teacher-student relationship that moves beyond a role-based perspective and views students as individuals with unique circumstances.



DEDICATION

To my parents

James and Elizabeth Maresh

who made all of this possible by giving me the courage to follow my dreams,  
and for providing me with the support necessary to attain them.

I love both of you more than words could describe.

\*\*\*\*\*

In memory of

My Papa (Juan E. Acosta)

&

Uncle Johnny (John Acosta)

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“I praise loudly, I blame softly.” –Katharina II, Russia.

As evidenced by decades of research in instructional communication, “communication and successful instruction are inherently intertwined...without communication, classroom instruction cannot be successful” (Daly & Korinek, 1980, p. 516). Because of the relationship between communication and instruction, much of the research conducted in the area of instructional communication has been dedicated to teacher behavior. Specifically, a large quantity of this research focuses on students’ perceptions of what teachers say and do and how these perceptions influence students’ motivation and learning, teacher credibility and effectiveness, and other related classroom variables (Banfield, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Gorham & Christophel, 1992; Kearney, Plax, Hays, & Ivey, 1991; Nussbaum, 1992; Nussbaum & Scott, 1979; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998; Wittrock, 1986; Woolfolk & McCune-Nicolich, 1984). Within the existing research, a considerable amount of effort has been made toward identifying “effective” teacher communication behaviors, such as immediacy, clarity, and caring (Nussbaum, 1992). Although this research is undoubtedly significant, considerably less time has been spent discussing the incompetent, indolent, and offensive teacher behaviors that impede effective instruction and student learning (Kearney et al., 1991). These behaviors are otherwise referred to as “teacher misbehaviors” (Kearney et al., 1991).

Regardless of its relatively undersized presence, research concerning teacher misbehaviors is crucial in understanding students’ attitudes and their classroom

experiences. Specifically, existing research on teacher misbehaviors has highlighted the negative influence that these misbehaviors may have on students namely in regard to affective learning (Banfield et al., 2006; Dolin, 1995; Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009; Toale, 2001), cognitive learning (Dolin, 1995; Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009), motivation (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009; Zhang, 2007), communication satisfaction (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009), and participation (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009), as well as teacher credibility (Banfield, et al., 2006; Semlak & Pearson, 2008) and immediacy (Kelsey, Kearney, Plax, Allen, & Ritter, 2004; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1996).

As I discuss further in the following section, teacher misbehaviors are primarily perception-based. As teachers perform certain (negative) behaviors, students assign (negative) attributes to the behaviors and, typically, alter their actions as a result (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009). As such, teacher misbehaviors are often viewed as suggesting that teachers do not care about the courses or students that they teach (incompetence misbehaviors), that they discourage and humiliate students (offensive misbehaviors), or that they do not satisfactorily complete their responsibilities (indolence misbehaviors) (Kearney et al., 1991). Similarly, as Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, and Alexander (2005) have found, humiliation and discouragement are *also* types of hurtful messages. Hurtful messages are operationalized in this study using a well-accepted definition evident in interpersonal communication research: any message, verbal or nonverbal, that elicits feelings of emotional and/or physiological hurt in the recipient (Daily & LePoire, 2003; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). Thus, with at least two of the existing categories of misbehaviors including dimensions akin to hurtful messages, it is



plausible to suggest that the performance of certain teacher misbehaviors may lead to feelings of emotional or physiological hurt in the students that are affected by them.

Based on the abovementioned implications that teacher misbehavior research has in understanding student- and teacher-related outcomes, the purpose of the present study is to extend teacher misbehavior research through an investigation of hurtful messages. By addressing hurtful teacher misbehaviors, I hope to raise teachers' awareness of students' perceptions about their communication and the effects that it may have on student- and teacher-related outcome variables. Pragmatically, this consciousness-raising should help teachers identify instances when they have possibly hurt a student's feelings, in hopes that they may begin to employ corrective action to repair their relationship with the offended student. On the other hand, offended students may experience catharsis while reflecting on their experiences with hurtful messages, which may allow the student to gain a more complete picture of the hurtful event, potentially giving them insight into the teacher's perceptions, as well. Accordingly, a mixed methods research design is enacted to understand how students experience hurtful teacher communication, as well as the impact that this communication has on their overall classroom experience and their relationship with the offending instructor.

In the remainder of this chapter, I provide further support for the importance and utility of the present study. This rationale is presented through a discussion of teacher misbehaviors and their impact on instruction, the nature of face in the teacher-student relationship, and the basis for studying hurt feelings in the context of instructional communication. Finally, I explore the purpose of this study with more profundity. In the

subsequent section, I define “teacher misbehaviors” and argue in favor of extending this research by focusing on relation-oriented outcomes in addition to the regularly studied content-oriented variables.

### *Defining Teacher Misbehaviors and Recognizing Their Impact*

Kearney and her colleagues operationalize teacher misbehaviors as “those teacher behaviors that interfere with instruction and thus, learning” (p. 310). Behaviors that students have recalled as being indicative of misbehaviors range from task-related incompetency to more personality-based assessments. In the earliest study of college teacher misbehaviors, student participants identified their perceptions of 28 categories of teacher misbehaviors, addressing issues such as punctuality, indifference, favoritism, qualifications, personal attributes, evaluation methods, language skills, and contempt of students, to name a few (Kearney et al., 1991). In the second part of this study, student participants were asked to consider specific college teachers when reporting misbehaviors to help the authors assess the range and frequency of the occurrence of misbehaviors. As such, the authors were able to reduce 21 of the previously defined misbehaviors categories into 3 dimensions: incompetence, offensiveness, and indolence (Kearney et al., 1991).

Misbehaviors that are classified into the incompetence dimension are characterized by a teacher’s inability to embrace basic teaching skills. These behaviors mostly suggest that teachers do not seem to care about the course or their students, fail to help students prepare for exams, and are not perceived as appreciating student input during class (Kearney et al., 1991). Instructors behaving in ways that are considered

offensive often discourage and humiliate students, use profanity in the classroom, and tend to be condescending to students. Finally, the indolence dimension is comprised of behaviors that can be described using the term “absent-minded.” Instructors who behave in this way are disorganized and may fail to hold class, neglect their grading responsibilities, and often change due dates or requirements for students’ assignments. The misbehaviors described in each of these categories have been found to interfere with student learning in various ways (Kearney et al., 1991).

Researchers investigating classroom-related inquiries have often followed a popular argument that considers student learning to be best predicted by “academic engagement time.” Specifically, teachers who find ways to keep students actively involved in the learning process are considered to be more effective regardless of the methods that they use to teach course material (Woolfolk & McCune-Nicolich, 1984; Woolfolk, 1987). It has been posited that a crucial means for gaining and maintaining student involvement in the classroom is reliant on the way that teachers communicate and behave in the classroom (Kearney et al., 1991). As such, teachers that behave in ways that students deem as being positive are effective in achieving this goal, whereas teachers who behave in ways that students do not like are more likely to meet resistance in the pursuit of student involvement. As Kearney and her colleagues argue, teacher misbehaviors may “act as potential antecedents to a number of undesirable student consequents” as they negatively influence the ways that students think and act (p. 110).

One prospective predictor of student involvement following a teacher’s misbehavior is dependent on the way that students make attributions for the

communication of the misbehavior. Students tend to make biased attributions of teacher behaviors by over-emphasizing internal causes to their behaviors, thus regarding teachers as being responsible for their demotivation and lack of learning (Christophel, 1992). Similarly, when a teacher misbehaves, students frequently attribute internal causes to these negative teacher behaviors, as well. For example, Kelsey, Kearney, Plax, Allen, and Ritter (2004) provided exemplars of the internal attributions that participants disclosed, one being that the instructor “thinks he is superior to us” (p. 49). Kelsey et al. further found a significant relationship between the perceived likelihood of the teacher engaging in misbehaviors and students’ evaluations of internal causes of those misbehaviors. As an indirect result, Kelsey et al. suggest that “student motivation and judgments of their teachers’ effectiveness are both adversely affected by teacher misbehavior that is attributed to internal causality” (p. 53). The implication that teacher misbehaviors are related to both student- and teacher-outcome variables demonstrates the task-oriented nature of this line of research.

Unfortunately, by focusing solely on the task-oriented aspect of the teacher-student relationship, teacher misbehaviors researchers have failed to identify potential social and relational variables that may also be affected by the misbehaviors. In the present study, I seek to extend teacher misbehavior research by identifying the way that these misbehaviors influence both content *and* relational outcomes. In order to do so, the nature of face in the teacher-student relationship must be discussed. In the following section, I present the arguments supporting the ways that face needs function in the

teacher-student relationship, specifically in regard to teacher misbehaviors and hurt feelings.

### *Face in the Teacher-Student Relationship*

All communication between individuals occurs simultaneously at two levels: content and relational (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). The content-oriented dimension is inclusive of the denotative information that is being communicated; whereas, the relational-oriented dimension involves the relationship among those communicating and how the content will be interpreted (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). At this relational level of communication, predictions are made between communicators concerning the outcomes of the content that is being communicated (Miller & Steinberg, 1975). Predictions may be made on one of three levels: cultural, sociological, or psychological (Miller & Steinberg, 1975). Cultural predictions indicate that individuals are expected to unite based on their cultural norms and values. Sociological predictions, however, predict that individuals will behave according to what is acceptable in their group memberships. Finally, a psychological perspective would suggest that individuals will communicate with one another as unique individuals. Communication that occurs on a cultural or sociological level tends to be role-specific, such as a customer ordering a meal at a restaurant; however, when communication occurs on the psychological level, communication partners treat each other as individuals and interpersonal relationships may be formed.

In regard to the teacher-student relationship, it is widely believed that this relationship operates on the sociological-level, whereby students and teachers view each

other in a role-specific manner with certain expectations as to how each should perform their roles. Although instructional communication research has predominately viewed the teacher-student relationship as such, researchers are beginning to present evidence that suggests that the teacher-student relationship includes a relational dimension, as well. A more recent argument made by researchers deals with the need to view of the teacher-student relationship as being more interpersonal, or psychological, in nature (Frymier & Houser, 2000). This argument stems from the fact that over two decades of instructional communication research has identified interpersonal variables (such as immediacy, affinity-seeking, self-disclosure, humor, caring, solidarity, communicator style, and compliance-gaining) as being positively related to learning (Andersen, 1979; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1994; Norton, 1977; Nussbaum & Scott, 1980; Plax & Kearney, 1992; Sorensen, 1989; Teven & McCroskey, 1997; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). The research supporting this argument largely suggests that the teacher-student relationship shares similarities with other interpersonal relationships. Specifically, as Frymier and Houser (2000) suggest, “teachers and students go through a process of meeting one another, exchanging information, and adjusting and developing expectations similar to what any two individuals would go through in developing a relationship” (pp. 207-208). Furthermore, the authors contend that teachers and students experience “communication intensive activities that go on in all relationships,” such as negotiating with one another to achieve their respective goals (p. 208). However, regardless of whether the teacher-student relationship remains sociological or moves on to more psychological levels of prediction, one thing remains constant: teachers and students enter the relationship having

certain expectations of one another. These expectations function largely based on face, or the “socially situated identities people claim or attribute to others” (Tracy, 1990, p. 210).

As I further discuss in “Chapter Two”, evidence exists in support of the notion that the teacher-student relationship is largely entrenched in face needs and the potential for face threats to occur. It has been argued that students become emotionally involved in various aspects of the educational experience, such as conversations about their grades (Goulden & Griffin, 1995; Janzow & Eison, 1990; Sabee & Wilson, 2005; Smith & Price, 1996), illustrating the importance of teachers and students constantly working to adapt to and maintain each other’s face. As students and teachers alike attempt to be autonomous (negative face) and respected by significant people (positive face) the likelihood of a face threat, or identity challenge, may be heightened (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Overall, the contention that the teacher-student relationship (a) includes both content and relational dimensions, (b) is either sociological or psychological, and (c) carries with it important face needs, allows me to present two main arguments. First, the teacher-student relationship may include an emotional dimension that is understudied and needs to be understood to facilitate important content and relational outcomes. Second, the likelihood that the teacher-student relationship may move past the sociological level of prediction and enter the psychological level of prediction may be largely hindered by the occurrence of certain face threats.

In the present study, I seek to explore one emotional dimension to the teacher-student relationship, that of hurtful messages stemming from particular teacher

misbehaviors. In doing so, I hope to help teachers understand the importance of balancing the content and relational dimensions of communication within this relationship. Researchers have already begun to emphasize the important outcomes that relational development and maintenance, in addition to more content/task oriented dimensions, may have on the classroom environment. Frymier and Houser (2000) suggest that, although the teacher-student relationship “lacks the equality typically associated with friendship and has time constraints not typical of friendship,” the basic functioning of communication in the development and maintenance of the relationship is not affected (p. 208). As such, the authors contend that the results of their research support the conclusion that teachers must find a way to balance the content and relational dimensions of their relationship to successfully facilitate student learning. They criticize the fact that “teachers have not been encouraged to think about the relationships they have with students beyond those that are clearly inappropriate” despite the evidence that effective teaching requires both personal communication and effective content delivery (p. 217).

The key to balancing the content and relational dimensions of communication appears to be treating students as individuals (psychological level) rather than consumers (sociological level). Consequently, research shows that when teachers and students interact with each other on the psychological level, respect and trust develop. The development of this respect and trust makes it much easier for students to feel that they are part of a safe learning environment. As Frymier and Houser (2000) posit, “achieving higher levels of learning such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation may require



interaction between teacher and student” (p. 217). Consequently, for this trust to develop and be maintained, certain face needs will be required to be upheld, or the proper corrective actions will need to be enacted following a face threat. Unfortunately, if teachers and students do not recognize this need, it is possible that the teacher-student relationship will not be perceived as satisfying and, thus, may not have the potential to move beyond the sociological level.

Furthermore, it is logical to suggest that, if the teacher-student relationship experiences many of the communication messages that occur in other personal relationships (Frymier & Houser, 2000), teachers and students may experience similar emotional ramifications following negative communication. These emotional ramifications may be, in part, due to the performance of certain misbehaviors that may be perceived as face threats that create an “unsafe” learning environment that is not indicative of individualized trust and respect. Because of this implication, I assert that teacher misbehaviors need to be studied with an emphasis on emotion and equivalence to the attention given to the face threats that occur in other human relationships. As I discuss in the following section, hurt feelings typically result from the perception that another individual does not regard their relationship with another individual to be as important as that individual desires (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). This coincides with the definition of positive face, or the desire to be liked and respected by significant people in our lives (Cupach & Metts, 1994). This connection makes it logical to assume that hurt feelings may result from threats to positive face, a form of face that appears to be particularly important in the teacher-student relationship (Sabee &

Wilson, 2005). As such, this warrants the need for teacher misbehavior research to consider hurt feelings as a potential consequence of face threats in the teacher-student relationship, as well. In the following section, I present a definition of hurt and further rationalize the attention to hurt in the present study.

### *Defining and Rationalizing the Study of Hurt*

Hurt has long been viewed as the pain that results from sustaining a physical injury. More recently, however, researchers have begun to examine physiological pain, or social pain, as it relates to experiencing feelings of hurt. In favor of this view of hurt, Danziger and Willer (2005) presented a case study of a 32 year-old woman who was diagnosed with congenital insensitivity to pain and, thus, had never experienced painful feelings following the physical injuries she sustained in her lifetime. Interestingly, following her younger brother's death from an automobile accident, the woman suffered her first feelings of pain—an intense headache that lasted for days. Although the woman had never experienced feelings of pain from physical injury, she was able to experience this pain from a physiological or emotional trauma. As such, this case study—along with recent research—suggests that “threats to social connection may stimulate painful feelings, or social pain, via some of the same physiological mechanisms activated by physical injury” (MacDonald, in press).

In its earliest conceptualization as physiological injury, hurt was regarded as a negative emotional feeling that an individual experiences when they perceive that they have been harmed and/or emotionally injured in some way by another individual (L'Abate, 1977; Folkes, 1982). In the present study, I operationalize the feeling of *hurt*

using this same conceptualization. This particular feeling has been paired alongside emotions such as fear, sadness, anguish, agony, and shame in that they all involve a degree of suffering (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987; Leary & Springer, 2001; Vangelisti, 2001; Sanford & Rowatt, 2004; Feeney, 2005); however, it is important to recognize that hurt is distinct in and of itself and plays an ample role in human relationships.

The aforementioned case study provides sufficient evidence of the special role that emotions play in our communicative relationships. Although humans have the capacity to experience a variety of emotions, such as sadness and fear, throughout their daily lives, there are many emotions that are exclusively experienced as a result of communication within our relationships. Emotions such as hurt feelings, jealousy, embarrassment, loneliness, social anxiety, and shame are emotions that “occur only in response to real, anticipated, or imagined encounters with other people” (Leary & Kowalski, 1995; Tangney & Fischer, 1995; Miller, 1996; Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). Extensive research has been conducted with the purpose of examining the role of emotions in interpersonal relationships. However, research on hurt feelings has been particularly sparse despite the notion that “the psychological hurt engendered by interpersonal events can be as acute and aversive as the physical pain of bodily injury, and it sometimes lasts far longer” (Leary et al., 1998).

Studying hurt feelings in human relationships is significant for the field of communication as these feelings are evoked by and expressed through communication itself (Vangelisti, 1994). Communication is central to the process of receiving and

responding to messages that evoke feelings of hurt. Focusing in the communication of hurt as a process, rather than solely focusing on hurt as an emotion, is important because communication and emotion are inextricably linked. Communication can awaken or suppress emotions and emotions can facilitate and inhibit communication (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). As a result, some relationships can become irreparably damaged by the hurt feelings that individuals experienced following certain relational transgressions, such as sibling favoritism or sexual infidelity (Leary et al., 1998). Other relationships can be strained but may be able to be repaired following less-severe relational indiscretions, such as unreturned phone calls and forgotten anniversaries (Leary et al., 1998). Regardless of whether the relational damage is temporary or long-term, Leary and his colleagues contend that hurt feelings almost always results in the perception of relational devaluation, or “the perception that another individual does not regard his or her relationship with the person to be as important, close, or valuable as the person desires” (p. 1225). This is particularly important to the present study, as teacher misbehaviors that result in hurt feelings, or students’ perception of relational devaluation, may be unable to move from the sociological level to a psychological level. Because of this, students may not be experiencing the type of relationship or, at the very least, the type of learning that they expect within this relational pairing. In this regard, teacher misbehaviors may experience relational outcomes analogous to those that are experienced in other relationships following the communication of a relational transgression.

In addition to relational transgressions, one of the most recognizable manifestations of hurt feelings across cultures and contexts is that of social exclusion, or

a threat to one's identity (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Being excluded in a relationship involves a loss of important rewards in addition to the identity threat (MacDonald, in press). Because of this, hurt feelings are often associated with perceptions of rejection, non-inclusion, betrayal, and criticism (Leary et al., 1998), with messages of rejection being considered more hurtful than neutral messages (Leary et al., 1998; Buckley, Winkel, & Leary, 2004). This also has important implications for the teacher-student relationship, as teachers are placed in a position of authority that requires them to provide positive and negative feedback and criticisms of students' work. In doing so, teachers hold an important part of student identity and rewards in their hands. The teacher-student relationship may include rewards such as validation, feelings of achievement, and learning which may be "lost if the relationship dissolves, potentially leading to immense distress" (MacDonald, in press). Therefore, teacher misbehaviors that are perceived by students as being hurtful may not only threaten the teacher-student relationship, but the face needs of students, as well. In the present study, these particular misbehaviors will be operationalized as being indicative of hurtful messages, or a nonverbal, verbal, or combined communicative message whereby feelings of hurt—emotional and/or physiological—are elicited (Vangelisti & Young, 2000; Daily & LePoire, 2003). To conclude this link between teacher misbehaviors and hurtful messages, I summarize the purpose of the present study in the following section.

#### *Purpose of the Present Study*

As warranted in the current chapter, teacher misbehavior research has an important role in understanding the ways that teachers and students interact and assign

meaning to one another's classroom-related behaviors. The purpose of the present study is to extend teacher misbehavior research via an investigation of the teacher misbehaviors that are perceived as threats to students' face needs, thus contributing to feelings of hurt in these students. In doing so, I hope to highlight the importance of considering both the content and relational dimensions of teacher-student communication; specifically in regard to the role that emotion plays within this relationship. Because these hurtful messages are also teacher misbehaviors, it is likely that they will result in content-related outcomes, such as reductions in student learning, motivation, and participation (Kearney, et al., 1991); however, because hurtful messages are a relational construction, it is also likely that they will generate outcomes analogous to those that they produce in other relationships, particularly relational devaluation and relational distancing (Leary et al., 1998; Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998).

Furthermore, with such an emphasis being placed on the need for teachers and students to communicate on a more psychological level to truly achieve effective learning, (Frymier & Houser, 2000) I also seek to explore the implications that the enactment of hurtful messages, or the violation of face needs via teacher misbehaviors, may have in the teacher-student relationship. Based on the previously cited literature, it is logical to suggest that the teacher-student relationship may be hindered by hurtful messages in such a way that it may not be able to move beyond the sociological level.

Therefore, the results of the proposed study will provide better insight into the ways that face threats via hurtful teacher misbehaviors influence both content (i.e., student motivation) and relational (i.e., relational satisfaction) dimensions of the teacher-

student relationship. Specifically, this inquiry will give teachers insight into five primary areas:

1. Teacher misbehaviors that students perceive as being hurtful.
2. How students perceive their identities to be threatened following hurtful communicative behaviors, if at all.
3. How students communicatively respond to these hurtful behaviors in an effort to restore their identity, if at all.
4. How hurtful behaviors impact students' relationships with their teachers and their overall classroom experience, if at all.
5. Students' advice for teachers regarding communicating with students and hurt feelings.

The results of this study should equip teachers to recognize when their communication behaviors may have hurt students so that they may begin taking steps to repair the relationship in order to avoid the potential long-term occurrence of negative relational and/or content-oriented outcomes.

In the following chapter, I continue to provide foundational justification for the proposed study via a discussion of the following topics:

1. The link between teacher misbehaviors and hurtful messages.
2. The link between hurtful messages and identity.
3. The outcomes of hurtful messages in other relationships.
4. The content-related outcomes of teacher misbehaviors.
5. The use of Face Theory in instructional communication research.

6. An argument for Face Theory as an ideal theoretical framework for guiding the current study.

The research questions for the present study are integrated throughout the chapter.

### Summary

In this chapter, I provided support for the importance and practical utility of this study. I illustrated the importance of considering teacher misbehaviors and their impact on instruction and the teacher-student relationship, as well as the significance of studying hurt feelings in the context of instructional communication. Furthermore, I explained that the overarching purpose of this study is to extend teacher misbehaviors research by focusing on relation-oriented outcomes in addition to the commonly studied content-oriented variables. In doing so, we gain better insight of the ways that hurtful messages influence both dimensions of the teacher-student relationship. Now that the purpose of this study has been presented, I discuss the rationale and justification for this study further in “Chapter Two.”



## CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to review the extant research related to hurtful messages and teacher misbehaviors and to present the research questions and hypotheses for the proposed study. The first sections of this chapter provide an overview of the types of hurtful messages that occur in various human relationships, as well as the ways that hurt individuals respond to these messages. Next, I discuss Face Theory as a useful framework for understanding the communication that occurs between teachers and students. Finally, I discuss the relational outcomes of hurtful messages and the content-related outcomes of teacher misbehaviors.

### Hurtful Messages in Human Relationships

The communication that occurs within human relationships is extremely complex. Humans rely on each other for love, affection, friendship, belonging, praise, and other benefits. With such reliance on one another, we can easily consider our sense of vulnerability when communicating with others with whom we seek these benefits. The complexity of the human communication process serves as an illustration of how easily misunderstandings can occur between communicative partners, often resulting in hurt feelings. Therefore, researchers have explored the types of communicative messages that elicit hurt in family, romantic, and working relationships.

In an early attempt to create a typology of hurtful messages in general relationships, Vangelisti (1994) asked participants to describe instances when someone had said something to them that hurt their feelings. Although her inquiry was non-specific in regard to context and only dealt with verbal messages, her data found that

disclosures of information, accusations, and negative evaluations were the most frequent types of hurtful messages reported by participants. Vangelisti's research warrants the need to explore hurtful messages within the teacher-student relationship, as communication between teachers and students is mostly comprised of informative statements and evaluations, which are both considered possible offending messages.

Although Vangelisti's (1994) research on verbal messages is useful, Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, and Evans (1998) identified her typology as limited in that it focused exclusively on verbal communication, rather than including elements of nonverbal behavior. In response to this limitation, Leary et al. conducted a general analysis of the causes and consequences of hurt feelings. Participants were randomly assigned to complete one of two questionnaires that either prompted them to think of a specific time when someone said or did something that hurt their feelings, or a time when they said or did something that hurt someone else's feelings. As a result, Leary et al. created a 6-category typology of hurtful events across relational contexts that include behaviors such as active disassociation, passive disassociation, criticism, betrayal, teasing, and feeling unappreciated/used/taken for granted (pp. 1229-1234). The participants reported having their feelings hurt by "close friends, or romantic or dating partners," as well as "acquaintances, family members, and authority figures such as teachers and bosses" (p. 1228). Therefore, Leary et al.'s research further justifies extending hurtful messages research into the teacher-student relationship, as they provide an explicit link between teachers and hurt feelings.

Although Leary et al.'s (1998) general typology is an adequate foundation for exploring hurtful messages across contexts, several researchers have taken an additional step by revising it to make it applicable to specific interpersonal relationships. Mills, Nazar, and Farrell (2002) revised the typology in an investigation of mother-child communication and found that children perceive their mothers' hurtful messages to be inclusive of discipline (such as yelling, punishment, and denying permission), and disparagement/disregard (such as sibling favoritism, broken promise, disrespect, teasing, criticism, and distancing). Mothers, on the other hand, reported that their children communicated hurtful messages inclusive of disparagement/disregard (such as disrespect, yelling, and criticism) and child misconduct (such as noncompliance and physical aggression) (pp. 741-744). Feeney (2004) further revised the typology as it applies to romantic relationships. This revision includes active and passive disassociation, criticism, infidelity, and deception as hurtful behaviors (pp. 503-504).

Each of the aforementioned relationships, like the teacher-student relationship, requires a degree of self-disclosure, trust, and interdependent goals to thrive (Corrigan & Chapman, 2008; Gewertz, 2002). Because of this, the reasons that individuals have for feeling hurt following a communicative event will differ based on the way that they perceive their relationship with the offender. With this in mind, Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, and Alexander (2005) revisited these hurtful message typologies and created the "underlying dimensions of individuals' explanations for their hurt feelings" to serve as a foundation for all forms of hurtful messages, regardless of context. Their typology consists of eight forms of hurtful messages: relational denigration, humiliation,

verbal/nonverbal aggression, intrinsic flaw, shock, ill-conceived humor, mistaken intent, and discouragement.

Relational denigration consists of messages that make the receiver feel as though the relationship is less important to the offender, that the relationship was not as close as the receiver thought, and makes the receiver feel betrayed or used. Humiliation consists of messages that embarrass, humiliate, or make the receiver feel bad about his or herself. Messages that are considered verbally or nonverbally aggressive are stated in a negative tone or are personal attacks on the receiver. Intrinsic flaws focus on flaws that the receiver has and may not be able to change, whereas shock consists of unexpected messages of which the receiver was not prepared. Ill-conceived humor involves teasing that the receiver did not find as funny and/or making fun of the receiver. Mistaken intent questions the receiver's judgment or shows that the offender did not understand the receiver. Finally, messages of discouragement point out that something that was important to the sender does not matter and/or that the positive efforts of the receiver do not matter (Vangelisti et al., 2005).

In an early conceptualization of the proposed study, I (Maresh, 2007) conducted a pilot study (See Appendix A) of students' perceptions of hurtful teacher communication using Vangelisti et al.'s (2005) general typology. Maresh's findings suggest that students provide similar explanations for their hurt feelings as individuals who have been hurt in other interpersonal relationships. Specifically, the types of hurtful messages that students reported experiencing consisted of humiliation, verbal/nonverbal aggression, shock, mistaken intent, and discouragement. The fit between my pilot study data and Vangelisti

et al.'s (2005) general typology hurtful messages suggest that the rules surrounding the hurtful communication process in other human relationships are also applicable to the instructional context. Furthermore, the exemplars provided by the pilot study participants illustrate the link between teacher misbehaviors and hurtful messages, as each type of hurtful message is found on the list of teacher misbehavior categories provided by Kearney, Plax, Hays, and Ivey (1991). Teacher misbehavior categories that were specifically addressed in the pilot study in the form of hurtful messages include sarcasm and putdowns, verbally abusive, unreasonable and arbitrary rules, unresponsive to students' questions, apathetic to students, and shows favoritism or prejudice (Kearney et al., 1991).

The results of the literature on hurtful messages indicate that hurtful messages differ across interpersonal contexts. For instance, a message that may be considered hurtful between siblings may not be viewed as hurtful in a romantic partnership or friendship. Because every relationship differs in regard to the identity needs of individuals, it is unreasonable to assume that what is considered hurtful in one relationship will be perceived as hurtful in all relationships (Feeney, 2004; Mills, Nazar, & Farrell, 2002). Unfortunately, most of the research that has been conducted to identify types of hurtful messages is general and meant to encompass all relationships. While these general typologies are useful, it is important to conduct an inquiry into hurtful messages that is specific to relationships, such as the teacher-student relationship, rather than relying on existing typologies to make sense of the phenomenon.

Although relationships differ in the specific types of hurtful messages that are experienced by individuals, the underlying cause of hurtful messages is ultimately the same: perceptions that a message violates expectations for that particular relationship. As I explain in the aforementioned pilot study, the fact that students do experience feelings of hurt following interactions with college teachers warrants a need for extending hurtful message research into the teacher-student relationship. Specifically, this extension must explore the types of relational transgressions—or *teacher misbehaviors*—that result in hurt feelings. Therefore, the following research questions are proposed:

*RQ<sub>1</sub>*: What type of hurtful messages do students perceive college teachers are communicating to them?

*RQ<sub>2</sub>*: How, if at all, are the types of hurtful messages that students perceive college teachers are communicating to them representative of teacher misbehaviors?

Just as individuals' perceptions of hurtful messages may differ from one relationship to another, their responses to feelings of hurt may also differ. Thus, in the following section, I discuss responses to hurtful messages across relational contexts and present a research question that is specific to the teacher-student relationship.

### Individuals' Responses to Hurtful Messages

In addition to the importance of understanding the types of messages that people perceive as being hurtful, it is also worthy to identify the ways that offended individuals respond to hurtful messages that they receive. An individual's response to a hurtful message often depends on such factors as their gender, the power differentials evident in the relationship, their relationship with the offender, and the attributions they make as to

why the message was communicated (Leary, et al., 1998; Young, Kubicka, Tucker, McCoy, Kanaan, Chavez-Appel, & Dinger, 2003; Miller & Roloff, 2005; Young, Kubicka, Tucker, Chavez-Appel, & Rex, 2005; Bachman & Guerrero, 2006; Feeney & Hill, 2006). Furthermore, the ways that individuals respond to a hurtful message often impacts the likelihood of that relationship to either remain intact or to dissolve (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Baxter, 1986; Metts & Cupach, 1986; Metts, 1994; Leary, et al., 1998; Feeney, 2004; Vangelisti, 2005).

The degree of hurt that an individual feels following a hurtful message often dictates how the receiver will respond to the message. Numerous studies have found that the intensity of hurtful messages has a strong influence on the types of responses that individuals provide (Young, Kubicka, Tucker, Chavez-Appel, & Rex, 2005; Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). For instance, Young, et al. (2005) found a relationship between message intensity and active distancing, negative affect expression, distributive communication, and violent responses. This result suggests that “when a hurtful message is accentuated with negative language or a harsh manner of delivery, the natural response of a receiver is to be defensive and, in extreme cases, even violent” (pp. 135-136). Furthermore, the amount of emotional pain evoked by the hurtful messages in some instances is “severe enough that respondents were unable to access as wide a range of reactions as they may have if they were less hurt” (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998, p. 182). Thus, individuals who are deeply hurt by events such as break-ups or sexual infidelity may choose to acquiesce—or “pull away or lash out”—rather than actively respond to the

offender (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998; Young, et al., 2005, p. 136; Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b).

As the amount of emotional pain caused by a hurtful message ranges between low and severe, so do the types of responses that persons who have been hurt communicate. In many instances where minor to moderately hurtful messages are communicated, the offended individual will remain unaware of the feelings of the hurt individual. As Feeney and Hill (2006) found, a high proportion of hurtful events are reported by only one of the individuals in the relationship with many of the victims choosing to not actively respond to the hurtful event. Victims who were more likely to discuss their feelings with the offender did so when they were extremely distressed by the hurtful event. These findings are important as they suggest “that greater victim distress may be an important impetus for couple communication, which presumably alerts the perpetrator to the existence and extent of the victim’s hurt” (Feeney & Hill, 2006, p. 605). This also has implications for cases of low or moderate hurt, as offenders are less likely to become aware of the other individual’s hurt feelings. This lack of awareness may be incorrectly perceived by the offended individual as “further evidence of their failure to care” which may further aggravate existing feelings of hurt (Feeney & Hill, 2006, p. 605).

In addition to the degree of hurt that individuals feel following the receipt of a hurtful message, the relationship that individuals have with the offenders may also influence their response. In family relationships, lower levels of relationship satisfaction influence family members’ likelihood to take part in distributive communication, active distancing, and avoidance/denial as a response to hurtful messages (Young, et al., 2005).



As such, if an individual is already dissatisfied with the relationship, they are more likely to enact distancing responses and less likely to respond actively to make the offender aware of their feelings. Furthermore, an individual's view of their relationship with the individual largely depends on whether they feel that the offender was sincerely apologetic for communicating in a hurtful way. When individuals believe that their partner has sincerely apologized, they are more likely to forgive the offender and use integrative and distributive communication (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b).

As this study and others indicate, there are various characteristics that determine how individuals who have been hurt in a variety of interpersonal relationships will respond to hurtful messages that they have received. Because of this, Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, and Alexander (2005) created a general typology of the underlying dimensions of individuals' reactions to being hurt to make sense of the types of responses that occur across interpersonal relationships. In this typology, they found three common types of responses communicated by persons who feel that they have been hurt: active verbal, invulnerable, and acquiescent responses. Active verbal responses consist of attack silence, and asking for or providing an explanation. Invulnerable responses include ignoring, laughing, or crying, and acquiescent responses comprise of giving in and/or apologizing to the offender (Vangelisti et al., 2005). The general, non-context specific nature of this typology previews the ways that individuals across communication contexts choose to respond to hurtful messages, but is not specific to one particular type of interpersonal relationship.

Vangelisti et al.'s (2005) typology was utilized in my (Maresh, 2007) pilot study to begin to identify the responses that students report using after they have received a hurtful message from one of their teachers. Following the receipt of a hurtful message, according to the Maresh's findings, students reported engaging in active verbal and/or acquiescent responses. When they provided an active verbal response, they verbally challenged the teacher, did not respond to the teacher, simply walked away from the teacher, asked teachers for explanations as to why they said or did something, or provided explanations for the things that they did or said. Acquiescent responses consisted of students giving in to teachers' wishes or apologizing to their teachers, regardless of whether they felt that their actions warranted an apology.

As the current research on responses to hurtful messages suggests, following the receipt of a hurtful message, individuals will make attributions for the offender's intent and will enact a behavioral change in the form of a communicative response. As it pertains to the present study, students may make incorrect assumptions about teachers' intent for communicating hurtful messages and may respond negatively. Although students may feel hurt by teachers' communication, it is likely that teachers are unaware that the messages they communicated have been perceived as hurtful by students. By gaining knowledge of the ways that students communicatively respond, and thus change their behavior, teachers may be able to approach students and encourage them to communicate about their feelings. The encouragement of open communication may allow teachers to improve and/or repair their relationships with offended students. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

*RQ*<sub>3</sub>: How do students who perceive that their feelings have been hurt by teachers' hurtful messages respond?

The awareness that teachers may gain by understanding how students respond to them after they have been hurt is particularly important in the teacher-student relationship. Because a clear power differential exists between teachers and students, the response strategies that students use may be influenced by their need to maintain a certain identity with their teachers. This form of identity maintenance is discussed in the subsequent section.

#### Theoretical Rationale

As students choose how they will respond to teachers following the communication of a hurtful message, many identity issues are brought to the forefront. Based on this notion, the results of my (Maresh, 2007) pilot study suggest the use of Face Theory as the theoretical perspective. In the pilot study interviews, students often described their responses as being communicated in an effort to keep their teachers from becoming angrier with them and/or viewing them as bad students, or to restore their image with their teachers or classmates after becoming embarrassed by a publicly communicated hurtful message. Furthermore, students also described feeling hurt because of their fear that their teachers or peers did not/would not like them, or because their teachers did not trust them enough to treat them as professionals. Each of these ideas pertains to the concepts of positive or negative face needs and/or corrective or preventive responses. Therefore, I discuss Face Theory and provide support for the use of this theory as the guiding framework for the dissertation in the sections that follow.

### *Face Theory*

Just as in the pilot study, the elements of this study deal largely with *identity*. First, students have a particular identity that they wish to uphold for their teachers and peers. Secondly, teachers have an identity that they rely on for establishing and maintaining credibility in the classroom. When students feel that their identity has been challenged, they may feel that this challenge is hurtful. Similarly, if teachers feel that students have challenged their identity, they may reciprocate by challenging the students' identity. Regardless of the specific details, this emphasis on identity calls for a theoretical framework that can help us understand how our identity functions in our communication and why our identity needs are important during times of problematic communication. Furthermore, a theoretical framework is needed that can offer insight into the reasons why students experience hurt feelings and how they choose to respond following this hurtful interaction. For this framework, I turn to Goffman's (1967) *Face Theory*.

According to Cupach and Metts (1994),

When a person interacts with another, he or she tacitly presents a conception of who he or she is [*face*] in that encounter, and seeks confirmation for that conception. In other words, the individual offers an identity that he or she wants to assume and wants others to accept. (p. 3)

In the 1950's and 1960's sociologist Erving Goffman proposed a cooperative principle whereby people agreed to support each other's performance of "face" in their daily interactions (Goffman, 1959). Although Goffman was mostly concerned with

public performance, his conceptualization of face has become an important component in research concerning the management of interpersonal relationships. With this premise in mind,

the purpose of Goffman's Face Theory is to help us understand two important aspects of interaction: (a) why and how people construct their public images, and (b) the strategies people use to maintain or restore their own or other's images if they are lost or threatened. (Metts & Cupach, 2008, p. 203-204)

Face Theory has its roots in Goffman's (1967) work on interaction management and has consistently been developed by various researchers over the past three decades. For Goffman, everyday social interaction mirrors the performance in a play; "it is designed, consciously or unconsciously, to create an impression for others of who we are—an idealized self that fits appropriately into the requirements of the context" (Cupach & Metts, 2008, p. 205). In accordance with Face Theory, interactants undergo an "expressive ritual" whereby they support each other's face presentation (Goffman, 1967). Generally, interactants do so because they realize the reciprocal nature of the communication of identity. In other words, if they do not help others protect their face, then they cannot expect others to help them protect their own face (Metts & Cupach, 2008). Instances do exist, however, where an interactant challenges, or threatens a person's face. These face threats may occur in two contexts: positive face needs and negative face needs. Positive face needs pertains to an individual's desire to be liked and respected by significant people in their lives, whereas negative face needs refer to an individual's desire to be autonomous, or free from constraint and imposition (Brown and

Levinson, 1987). As follows, facework refers to “the communication strategies available to conversational partners to present, maintain, or restore a person’s identity once it has been challenged” (Goffman, 1967).

Although the components of Face Theory are considered “automatic and unconscious,” the relevance of saving and repairing face becomes particularly obvious when a problematic communication situation occurs (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Because a person’s face is such a vulnerable part of their identity construction, the way that persons manage these problematic communication situations has direct implications for several aspects of their relationship. Cupach and Metts (1994) specifically argue that “the quality and longevity of relationships and the psychological health of the relational partners” are at stake in these situations (p. 3). These implications are particularly relevant to the teacher-student relationship as college students adjust to the autonomy of college life and seek a long-term mentorship from their instructors to help them achieve their career-related goals.

#### *Threats to Face Needs*

There are two main instances when an individual may be prone to lose face. In these instances, the individual may be in wrong face or out of face (Metts & Cupach, 2008). When an individual is in wrong face, their image is being discredited by some type of information or action; whereas, when a person is out of face, they are unable to put forth the image that is expected of them in a particular situation (Metts & Cupach, 2008). In either situation, positive face and/or negative face needs are being threatened. When face loss occurs, “we become flustered, we feel embarrassed, or even

‘shamefaced’” according to Metts and Cupach (2008, p 206). As a result, the individual—and often those who witnessed the face threat—will enact facework to restore their identity after it has been threatened.

In the context of the present study, students’ face can easily become threatened as they attempt to manage both positive and negative face needs in a variety of unique communication situations. Students may specifically desire being liked and respected by their teachers and peers (positive face), and may experience challenges to their image when they answer a question incorrectly in front of the class (wrong face). Because of this possibility, Face Theory has been previously applied in instructional communication research; specifically, in regard to face-relevant teacher communication activities, teacher feedback about student work, and student-instructor conversations about disappointing grades (Kerssen-Griep, 2001; Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003; Sabee & Wilson, 2005).

In this literature, Face Theory is discussed in terms of teacher *and* student face needs. Sabee and Wilson (2005) found that students have learning goals that direct the majority of their face threatening actions toward their instructor’s negative face, whereby students who have other primary goals (such as persuading, impressing, or fighting) direct their face threatening actions toward their teacher’s positive and negative face (p. 200). The authors posit that this may be a result of students with learning goals believing that their future performance would improve with their teacher’s help, whereas students with different primary goals are more likely to challenge or criticize the teacher, as they do not feel that adopting different learning strategies will lead to improved performance

(Sabee & Wilson, 2005). This is particularly relevant to the proposed study as students who believe that they can still receive rewards from a teacher (such as learning, career opportunities, or letters of recommendation) may be less likely to respond negatively to a teacher when their feelings have been hurt.

Researchers have also detailed the types of face-saving strategies that teachers employ during communication with their students. Kerssen-Griep (2001) discovered seven types of face-relevant instructional communication activities that were associated with students' motivation to learn. These strategies emphasize teachers encouraging students' ownership in the class, creating a safe communication climate, encouraging student participation, analysis, and evaluation of course concepts, respecting autonomous thought, and focusing on improvement (p. 265). Similarly, Kerssen-Griep, Hess, and Trees (2003) found that the facework dimension of instructional communication was particularly important when providing feedback on students' work. Specifically, two forms of facework—solidarity and tact—were identified as predicting students' intrinsic motivations, interaction involvement, and task-mastery orientation to their schooling (pp. 372-373). Solidarity facework was the most consistent predictor of positive classroom outcomes, whereas tact facework predicted students' accomplishment motivation, attentiveness, and absence of their amotivation and work-avoidance orientation (p. 373). This further illustrates the need for teachers to be cognizant of students' face needs during feedback-giving aspects of their communication with students. If teachers are not face-sensitive during this communication, hurt feelings are likely to arise.



Of particular interest to the present study is the contention that “instructors’ competent facework in such situations may be more consequential for motivation than is similar facework during less exposed classroom interactions” (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2003, p. 268). Thus, teachers should be careful with their communication in sensitive situations, such as those involving providing feedback of students’ work or contributions to the class, and in motivating the class to succeed. More importantly, teachers should constantly attempt to provide face-support during their interactions with students, regardless of the purpose of their communication (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci, Ryan, & Williams, 1996; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991).

While the aforementioned literature suggests that Face Theory is applicable to teacher-student communication, this theory is especially pertinent to studying hurtful messages in the college classroom. Students often want to be liked and respected by their teacher and peers, and the typical college classroom is designed to expand students’ critical thinking skills with more active involvement and autonomy. In this regard, students have certain face needs that may conflict with teacher communication, possibly resulting in hurt feelings. As Kerssen-Griep, Hess, and Trees (2003) explain, “facework is important to maintaining the productive identities and learning relationships that facilitate successfully innovative teaching designs and tactics” (p. 375). Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

*RQ<sub>4</sub>*: What form(s) of face threat do students experience when they perceive that they have been hurt by a teacher’s communication?

As explained above, individuals enact a certain response (or facework) following the receipt of a message that threatens their identity. Thus, restoring identity through facework is discussed in the following section.

### *Restoring Identity through Facework*

Although our face needs are implicit in our every day communication, Cupach and Metts (1994) posit “it is only when some event, action, or comment discredits face or threatens to discredit face that strategies to minimize the occurrence and consequences of face threat come into consciousness” (p. 4). In an instance where we feel that our face may be or has been threatened, we communicate in ways to repair or save our face. When a face-threatening act may be avoided or minimized before it occurs, individuals utilize preventive facework. According to Cupach and Metts (1994), this type of facework includes: “avoiding face-threatening topics, changing the subject of conversation when it appears to be moving in a face-threatening direction, and pretending not to notice when something face-threatening has been said or done” (p. 6). It is important to note, however, that preventive facework is not only used before a face-threatening event occurs—it may also be used after an incident occurs that has warranted an individual to feel that their face may be threatened again.

Conversely, corrective facework is employed when a face threat that was not anticipated occurs. Corrective facework may be employed by the person who has lost face, the person responsible for creating the face threat, or others who witnessed the face-threatening communication. Cupach and Metts (1994) discuss corrective facework strategies as being inclusive of: “avoidance, humor, apologies, accounts, excuses,

justification, and physical remediation” (pp. 8-10). Avoidance is accomplished by acting as though one’s face has not been threatened. In particularly intense hurtful incidents, a form of avoidance that may be utilized by the offended is “physically fleeing the embarrassing or shameful encounter” (Cupach, Metts, & Hazleton, 1986). Humor is comprised of simply laughing or making a joke about the incident. Apologies, on the other hand, are simply statements of regret or remorse, requests for forgiveness, or restitution offers. Accounts consist of verbal explanations for the incident, specifically excuses or justifications. Excuses minimize the offender’s responsibility for the incident, whereas justifications downplay the incident through reframing. Finally, physical remediation involves a nonverbal correction of any physical damage that has occurred as a result of the face-threatening incident. Regardless of the strategies employed, Goffman (1967) argues for the use of facework in that the ability to do so is synonymous with acting with “tact, *savoir-faire*, or diplomacy, or social skill” (p. 13).

While facework has been applied in instructional communication research, it has yet to be considered as having a role in hurtful messages communicated between teachers and students. As Cupach and Metts (1994) explain, “in order for people to achieve their own goals, they must be able to establish and maintain desired identities for each other when they interact” (p. 15). If we consider college teachers’ goals for student learning, the current study becomes increasingly relevant in understanding how a violation of students’ face needs may lead to an unsuccessful outcome in regard to students’ learning. The effective use of facework by teachers and students, specifically, has been named a factor in student motivation, instructional communication competence, and student

involvement (Kerssen-Griep, 2001; Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003). In particular, Kerssen-Griep (2001) states, “facework clearly is one means by which teachers continually encourage (or diminish) students’ self-determination” (p. 270). Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

*RQ<sub>5</sub>*: How do students employ facework in their communicative responses to hurtful messages that they perceive being communicated by their teachers?

Because hurtful messages may be intentionally or unintentionally delivered during teachers’ communication with students, we must continue to conduct research using Face Theory in instructional communication. By attempting to understand the factors that may contribute to the lessening of student motivation, student learning, and instructional effectiveness, we become better teachers—those who have the ability to foster rewarding relationships with our students. As such, it is my goal to use the results of this study to continue to advance Face Theory’s utility in instructional communication research. One way to do so is to understand the consequences of face threats in the form of hurtful messages in the college classroom. Therefore, the consequences of hurtful messages and teacher misbehaviors are discussed in the next sections.

### Relational Consequences of Hurtful Messages

Although hurt feelings are a common occurrence in our every day interpersonal relationships, the intensity of emotional pain that individuals experience as a result of this hurt varies considerably. The consequences of hurtful messages differ, in part, due to the entire process surrounding the communication of the hurtful message. As appraisal theorists suggest, experiencing an emotion such as hurt requires that the offended

individual perceive that they have been hurt and then assess the impact of the hurtful message on their well-being (Lazarus, 1991; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1998). The attributions that individuals make concerning the hurtful message dictate how the receiver will respond to the offender and, ultimately, the severity of the consequences of receiving this message.

The offended individual almost immediately makes an attribution as to the intent of the individual who communicated the hurtful message. Those who receive hurtful messages on a regular basis from the offender and/or perceive that the offender intentionally communicates in a hurtful way are more likely to experience lower levels of relational satisfaction than those who believe that the hurtful message was accidental (Cramer, 2000; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). Furthermore, the perception that individuals have concerning their relationship with the offender prior to the hurtful message being communicated also has a role in the consequences of this behavior. In the context of romantic relationships, the level of marital distress evident in the relationship affects the ways that spouses will attribute each other's behavior, with distressed spouses making more negative attributions about their partner's behavior (Fincham, Beach, & Baucom, 1987; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). Vangelisti and Young (2000), for example, found that individuals who felt their relationships were highly satisfying were more likely to judge the hurtful message as being unintentional than those who were less satisfied with their relationships.

Ultimately, the characteristics of hurtful interactions have been said to influence the likeliness of the hurt individual to distance or protect themselves from the source of

the painful interaction (Leary, et al., 1998; Feeney, 2004; Vangelisti, 2005). Thus, an individual's perception of relational satisfaction following the communication of a relational transgression determines whether the relationship will be sustained or whether a "break-up" or end to the relationship will occur (Baxter, 1986; Metts, 1994; Metts & Cupach, 1986; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). Interestingly, individuals who feel that their relationships are overall rewarding report greater relational quality after the occurrence of a hurtful event and often decide to stay in the relationship with the offender despite being hurt (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006).

Additionally, those who discuss their feelings with the offender may be more satisfied with their relationships than those who do not discuss the issue (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). Unfortunately, many individuals do not feel that they can discuss their feelings with the offender. The degree of hurt that individuals feel following the receipt of a hurtful message, in part, determines whether they feel that they need to discuss their feelings with the offender. The more hurt that an individual feels after they receive a hurtful message, the more likely they are to share their feelings with the offender (Feeney & Hill, 2006). Furthermore, women imagine being more willing to confront hurtful messages from their romantic partners than men would be and men report being less likely than women to confront their partners following hurtful messages (Miller & Roloff, 2005). However, those who do not share their feelings with the offender may continue to become frustrated with the offender (Feeney & Hill, 2006), which may lead to negative long-term consequences, such as relational damage, dissatisfaction, and/or damage (Vangelisti, 2005). Based on these claims, the degree of hurt elicited by

teachers' hurtful messages and the impact that these hurtful messages have on students must be explored.

The implications of this literature have fascinating connotations for the present study, as students who feel that they have a rewarding relationship with their teachers may feel compelled to assign positive attributions to the hurtful communication and continue their relationships with their teachers despite their feelings of hurt. On the other hand, students who do not feel that they have a rewarding relationship with their teachers may choose to terminate the relationship with their teacher before or after the completion of the course. Additionally, many students may not feel comfortable discussing their hurt feelings with teachers that they believe hurt them. In instances like this, the proposed study is important in helping teachers identify the behavioral cues of the students' responses. By understanding when students have been hurt by a message that they have communicated, teachers may open the lines of communication with them. Perhaps by inviting students to discuss their feelings, the teacher-student relationship may be maintained, as students may view the teachers' concerns as a cue that they did not intend to hurt them. Therefore, to explore the ways that students believe teachers should communicate potentially hurtful messages to them and repair the relationship once it has been harmed by a hurtful message, the following research questions and hypotheses are proposed:

*RQ<sub>6</sub>*: What advice do students have for teachers regarding communicating with students and hurt feelings?

*RQ<sub>7</sub>*: What impact do students believe hurtful communication has on their classroom experience?

*RQ<sub>8</sub>*: What items related to types of hurtful messages and perceived impact of these messages will best measure the themes presented in the qualitative results?

*RQ<sub>9</sub>*: How, if at all, does the type of hurtful communication create differences in the degree of hurt perceived by students?

*H<sub>1</sub>*: The degree of hurtfulness of a message will be negatively related to students' perceptions of relational satisfaction with their teachers.

As the existing literature on the consequences of hurtful messages suggests, there is a possibility for relational reparation and development following a hurtful communicative event. This further justifies the need for extending research on hurtful messages into the teacher-student interpersonal relationship. However, a change in relational satisfaction is not the only consequence of hurtful messages. To explicitly examine outcomes that are specific to the teacher-student relationship, I discuss the consequences of teacher misbehaviors in the following section.

#### Content-Oriented Consequences of Teacher Misbehaviors

As stated in "Chapter One," teacher misbehaviors are teacher behaviors that interfere with instruction and learning and negatively influence the ways that students think and act (Kearney et al., 1991). This is important to the present study because negative communication, such as hurtful messages, may impact students' classroom experience by potentially affecting how they think and behave in the classroom.

Moreover, if we subscribe to the communication-as-process paradigm, it should be



argued that the students' receipt of a hurtful message from a teacher may not only negatively impact the student, but the teacher as well. Overall, students who indicated that their teachers misbehave described their teachers in negative terms, such as being unable to relate to students, uncaring, unwilling to initiate personal relationships with students, selfish-centered, and not being committed to teaching (Kearney et al., 1991).

Distinctively, teachers who commit misbehaviors that are classified as incompetent and/or indolent, are considered to "clearly interfere with instructional goals and student learning" to the point that "students do not feel they are learning as much as they should" (Kearney, et al., 1991, p. 323). Because instructors are, to some degree, responsible for making sure that students are learning in their courses, it is important to recognize when they are acting in ways that students may perceive as being disruptive to their learning.

In addition to student learning, teacher misbehaviors may also have an impact on students' motivation for the course that is taught by the offending teacher. Gorham and Christophel (1992) found that college students were able to identify 20 categories—or 3 factors—of classroom elements that they considered to be demotivating. Of these categories, context factors accounted for 21% of the overall demotivators, structure/format factors accounted for 37%, and teacher behaviors accounted for 43% of the overall demotivators (Gorham & Christophel, 1992). Interestingly, all of the demotivating teacher behaviors are known teacher misbehaviors; specifically, "not knowledgeable, no sense of humor, boring, language barriers, unapproachable, no office hours, nonimmediate nonverbal behaviors, digresses, irresponsible, and negative physical

appearance” (p. 249). Therefore, if hurtful messages are considered a form of teacher misbehavior, it is plausible to suggest that these messages will be demotivating to students who perceive to be the recipient of such a message. This is important as Gorham and Christophel (1992) suggest, both their study and Kearney et al.’s (1991) study present similar “teacher misbehaviors” as being central to the lack of motivation in college courses. As such, Kearney et al. “recommend with reasonable confidence that these are behaviors in which teachers should not engage because they are likely to adversely affect student motivation” (p. 250).

Based on existing teacher misbehavior literature, it is obvious that students react unfavorably when they feel that teacher has done something they do not like. While some of these reactions pertain to student-related outcomes such as learning and motivation, research also supports the notion that students may begin to perceive teachers unfavorably, as well. Several studies have examined the ways that the occurrence of teacher misbehaviors effects students’ perceptions of teacher credibility, caring, and their affect for the instructor. In these studies, the results unanimously indicate that students perceive teachers to be less credible and caring when any of the three types of misbehaviors are present. Specifically, students’ perceptions of teacher competence are affected most by incompetent teacher misbehaviors, then offensive and indolent teacher misbehaviors (Banfield, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006). Teachers who are high in immediacy and do not communicate misbehaviors, however, are perceived as being the most competent and trustworthy (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). Furthermore, the offensive teacher is perceived to be the least caring, followed by indolent and

incompetent teachers. Teachers who are highly immediate are consistently seen as more caring, regardless of whether they communicate misbehaviors, but the absence of misbehaviors allows them to be perceived as more caring than those who misbehave (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). Finally, teachers' trustworthiness is diminished the greatest when they misbehave in offensive ways, followed by being indolent and incompetent (Banfield, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006). While Thweatt and McCroskey (1998) suggest that the negative impact of teacher misbehaviors might be neutralized by a teacher's use of immediacy, they do contend that it is "very doubtful...that immediacy would overcome highly serious teacher misbehaviors such as abuse or harassment, seriously unfair grading practices, or treating students in an inhumane manner" (p. 356). This could be the case because "attacking students personally is unlikely to build or sustain any level of student/teacher trust" (Banfield, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006, p. 70).

In addition to having an impact on teacher credibility and caring, there is also evidence that suggests that teacher misbehaviors have a significant impact on student affect for the teacher (Banfield, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006). As Banfield et al. suggest, offensiveness impacts student affect for teacher the most, followed by incompetence and indolence. A teacher who engages in offensive misbehaviors will be evaluated the least positively, as students express a disliking for that teacher and are unwilling to take another course with that teacher. Incompetent and indolent teachers both are negatively evaluated in terms of student affect, and students are less willing to take a class from an incompetent teacher than an indolent teacher (Banfield et al, 2006).

As the results of this study suggest, “some teacher misbehaviors probably should be considered more serious than others” (p. 69).

As the extant research on the consequences of teacher misbehaviors implies, students may rate instructors poorly on various dimensions of effectiveness and experience a decline in motivation and learning in courses with teachers who misbehave.

To investigate these potential negative outcomes, the final hypotheses are posited:

*H<sub>2</sub>*: The degree of hurtfulness of a message will significantly relate to (a) affective learning, and (b) student motivation.

*H<sub>3</sub>*: Students’ perceptions of instructional face support will significantly relate to (a) degree of hurt, (b) affective learning, (c) motivation, (d) relational satisfaction. .

As evidenced by the research questions and hypotheses of this proposed study (see Table 1), investigating the content and relational outcomes of hurtful messages in the teacher-student relationship has potential benefits for both the teacher and student.

Teachers may become better equipped to identify when they have hurt students’ feelings and become more adept at understanding how to protect students’ face needs in the classroom. This may allow students to retain an affect for learning and a motivation for the class, as well as potentially becoming more satisfied with their relationship with the perceived offending teacher. In doing so, both students and teachers may experience an improvement in their overall classroom experience.

Table 1: Research Questions and Hypotheses

<i>RQ<sub>1</sub></i>	What type of hurtful messages do students perceive college teachers are communicating to them?
<i>RQ<sub>2</sub></i>	How, if at all, are the types of hurtful messages that students perceive college teachers are communicating to them representative of teacher misbehaviors?
<i>RQ<sub>3</sub></i>	How do students who perceive that their feelings have been hurt by teachers' hurtful messages respond?
<i>RQ<sub>4</sub></i>	What form(s) of face threat do students experience when they perceive that they have been hurt by a teacher's communication?
<i>RQ<sub>5</sub></i>	How do students employ facework in their communicative responses to hurtful messages that they perceive being communicated by their teachers?
<i>RQ<sub>6</sub></i>	What advice do students have for teachers regarding communicating with students and hurt feelings?
<i>RQ<sub>7</sub></i>	What impact do students believe hurtful communication has on their classroom experience?
<i>RQ<sub>8</sub></i>	What items related to types of hurtful messages and perceived impact of these messages will best measure the themes presented in the qualitative results?
<i>RQ<sub>9</sub></i>	How, if at all, does the type of hurtful communication create differences in the degree of hurt perceived by students?
<i>H<sub>1</sub></i>	The degree of hurtfulness of a message will be negatively related to students' perceptions of relational satisfaction with their teachers.
<i>H<sub>2</sub></i>	The degree of hurtfulness of a message will significantly relate to (a) affective learning, and (b) student motivation.
<i>H<sub>3</sub></i>	Students' perceptions of instructional face-support will significantly relate to (a) degree of hurt, (b) affective learning, (c) motivation, and (d) relational satisfaction.

### Summary

In this chapter, I highlighted the research on the types of hurtful messages and the responses that offended individuals communicate following the receipt of a hurtful message. I also argued for the use of Face Theory as an underlying foundation to understanding the process of hurtful communication in the teacher-student relationship. Finally, I discussed the outcomes of hurtful messages in other interpersonal relationships, as well as the consequences of teacher misbehaviors. With the rationale and justification for this study having been discussed, I utilize “Chapter Three” to describe the mixed methods research design that I will implement to address my research questions and test my hypotheses.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to investigate teacher misbehaviors as a form of hurtful messages, with the specific goal being to raise teachers' awareness of students' perceptions of this form of communication and the effect that it has on students' classroom experience. Specifically, this study is conducted using a mixed methods research design to (a) gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences with hurtful messages, and (b) to understand the degree of hurt perceived by students, and the impact that this hurtful communication has on students' perceptions of relational satisfaction with their teachers, as well as their motivation and learning. By using an exploratory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), themes of hurtful messages, students' reported responses to hurtful messages, perceived impact of hurtful communication, and advice for teachers are generated. Then, the responses concerning the impact of hurtful communication are used to generate a survey instrument that allows us to measure the impact that these hurtful messages have in the classroom. To make sense of this data, Face Theory is used as a guiding theoretical framework for this study (as detailed in "Chapter Two"). In this chapter, the epistemological assumptions of mixed methods research, as well as the participants, research design, procedures, instruments, data analyses, and validity techniques are described. To begin, I discuss the epistemological assumptions that guide mixed methods research.

### Epistemological Assumptions

In terms of epistemology—or how we gain knowledge of what we know—the relationship between the researcher and the research, and the issue of objectivity are

significant (Mertens, 1998). The epistemological assumptions of this study rest on the idea that no one paradigm will allow us to arrive at “truth” alone—rather, a combination of paradigms is most useful in allowing us to fully understand a phenomenon. This assumption, otherwise termed “pragmatism,” stems from the ongoing debate between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The pragmatic worldview is problem-centered and specifically considers the consequences of actions and their role in real-world practice (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, the pragmatic approach places its emphasis on shared meaning and joint action and reminds us that our values are always a part of our research (Morgan, 2007). As such, Morgan (2007) states that an integrated (or *mixed methods*) approach to research “rejects the need to choose between a pair of extremes where research results are either completely specific to a particular context or an instance of some more generalized set of principles” (p. 60).

In the present study, the pragmatic worldview is upheld as I combine deductive and inductive thinking by mixing qualitative and quantitative data. Specifically, I use multiple methods of data collection to best answer the research question, will employ both quantitative and qualitative sources of data collection, will focus on the practical implications of the research, and will emphasize the importance of conducting research that best addresses the research problem. (Creswell, 2007, p.23)

As assumed by pragmatism, however, our values are a part of our research. Although I operate primarily from a pragmatic perspective, my values as a researcher are reflected in my choice to emphasize interpretivism over a post-positivist perspective. While I believe



that the combination of qualitative and quantitative data will allow me to best answer the research questions, the goal of my research is to “rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation,” and to “focus on specific contexts...in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 20-21). In doing so, I am able to make sense of the meaning-making that students go through when they perceive that they have been hurt by college teachers’ communication. Therefore, I utilize a mixed methods research design that combines qualitative and quantitative perspectives (pragmatism), with an emphasis on the qualitative data (interpretivism). Specifically, I use the qualitative interview data derived from the first phase of data collection to inform the construction of the quantitative survey instrument in the second phase of the study. In doing so, the survey will address constructs that will more accurately tell the story behind the process of the hurtful communication that occurs between college students and teachers. A more detailed explanation of this particular research design is discussed in the section that follows.

### Research Design

This study is situated in the mixed methods research design, focusing on “collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The central premise of mixed methods research is that the use of quantitative and qualitative data collection in combination provides a better understanding of the research problem than using either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Specifically, I use the exploratory sequential design (QUAL → quan) which consists of two phases: a heavily emphasized

qualitative phase followed by a quantitative phase (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989) (see Figure 1). In this design, the researcher first collects and analyzes the qualitative interview data. The quantitative survey data is then collected and analyzed to further understand the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The second (quantitative) phase builds on the first (qualitative) phase, and the two phases are connected in the intermediate stage (instrument development) of the study. In the instrument development portion of the research design, researchers “build on the results of the qualitative phase by developing an instrument, identifying variables, or stating propositions for testing based on an emergent theory or framework” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 77). Because the design begins qualitatively, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) argue, “...a greater emphasis is often placed on the qualitative data” (p. 77).

There are several strengths to using the exploratory sequential research design. First, although the design emphasizes the qualitative aspect, it includes a quantitative component to add understanding and generalizability to the research findings. Second, the two-phased research design is straightforward and easy to implement and report (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Finally, using the instrument development design specifically enables the researcher to further study specific themes derived from the qualitative data to determine relationships, or the extent to which a particular variable influences another variable.

My rationale for using this approach to guide the present study is threefold. First, the qualitative data helps to provide an understanding of the participants’ encounter with hurtful communication, while the quantitative data provides statistical results that allow

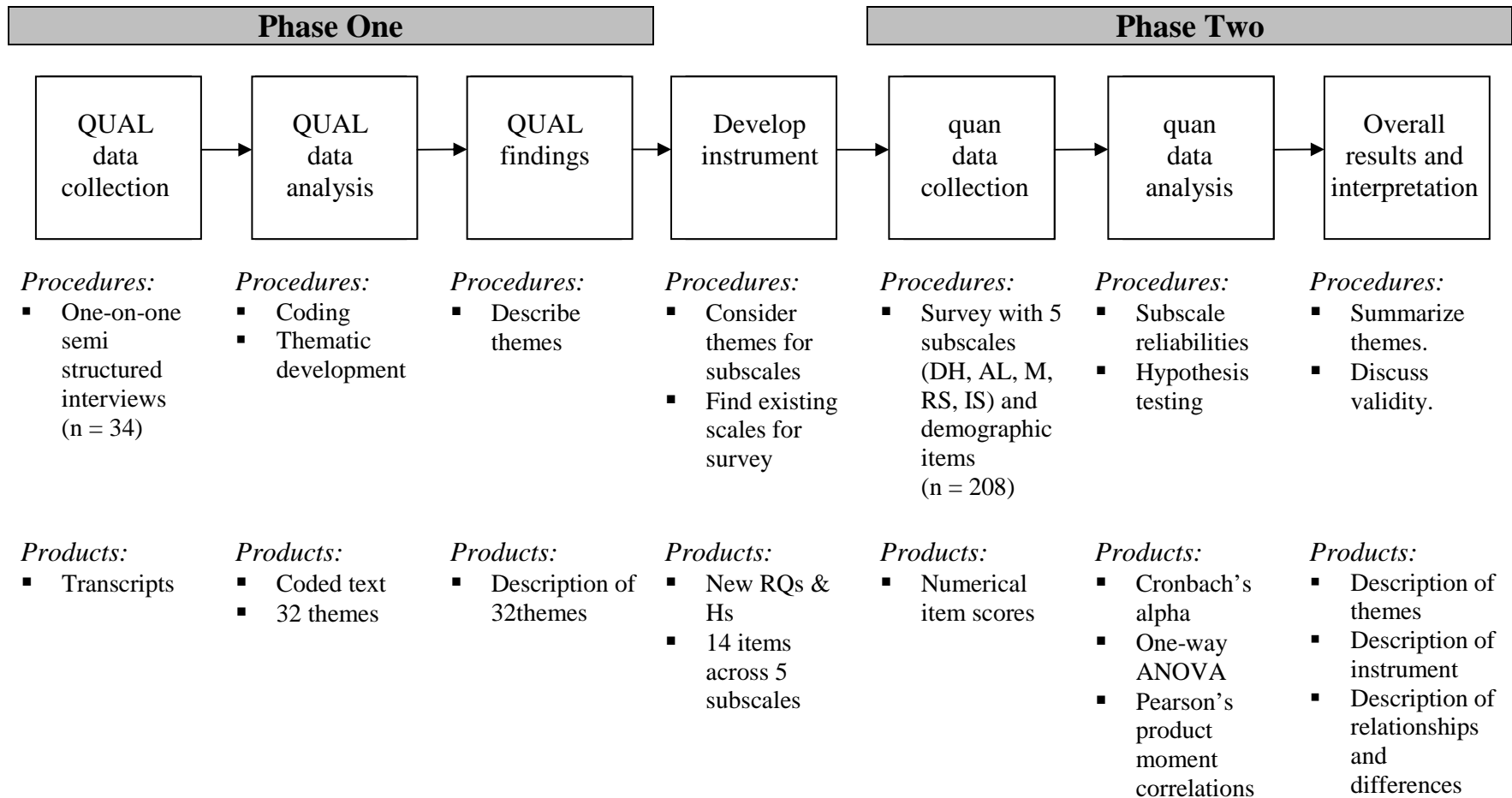


Figure 1: Visual Diagram of the Procedures Used to Measure Exploratory Qualitative Results with Quantitative Data

me to explore the impact that this incident has on participants' classroom experience and their relationship with the offending teacher (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Next, by speaking firsthand with my participants in the initial, qualitative, phase of the study, I gain information about the ways that they feel hurtful messages impact their classroom experience. This data allows me to design an instrument that will more reliably assess these variables than I would be able to by relying on previous research on teacher misbehaviors and hurtful messages alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Finally, by expanding the amount of participants in the second, quantitative, phase of the study, I can argue for the generalizability of my findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). As evidenced by this rationale, the use of a mixed methods research design is beneficial to this study. In the section that follows, I discuss how mixed methods research can specifically enhance research in the Communication Studies field.

#### Communication Studies and Mixed Methods Research

The Communication Studies discipline is no stranger to mixed methods research; as a matter of fact, it is one of the more accepting fields concerning paradigmatic flux. Although the terminology "*mixed methods*" is fairly new for our discipline, communication researchers have used qualitative interview data to build quantitative surveys for several decades. These researchers, however, have primarily published their data separately, minimizing the attention given to using mixed methods. One specific example of an instructional communication study that was published as one "mixed

methods” study, rather than one qualitative and one quantitative study, was completed by Corrigan, Pennington, and McCroskey (2006).

Corrigan et al. used a design that is the direct opposite of that which is used in the present study to investigate the effects of intercultural communication instruction in relation to students’ levels of ethnocentrism and interethnic communication apprehension (ICA). Although a mixed methods design was not the original intent of the authors, they found great success in implementing an explanatory sequential design (QUAN→qual) to make sense of their quantitative findings. At its earliest stage, the authors conducted a quantitative “Study 1” to “examine the impact that a semester of intercultural communication had upon student levels of ethnocentrism and interethnic communication apprehension” using a pre-test/post-test procedure (p. 7). They presented their results at a conference and the non-significant findings garnered a less than positive response from the conference attendants. This response resulted in the authors conducting a “Study 2” whereby they gathered qualitative interview data to account for the discrepancy in their quantitative data. The value of conducting research using the mixed methods design can be illustrated in the authors’ own words:

the quantitative findings show us that something is missing from the instructional experience essential to improving our students’ affective orientations...*to address more thoroughly this question, and account for some of the possible limitations of study-one*, a broader based assessment of students’ involvement in intercultural communication courses was pursued. (pp. 15-16)

Although my study differs from Corrigan et al.'s study in that it is exploratory sequential design, rather than explanatory sequential, my decision to use mixed methods research is similar to that of Corrigan et al. At the 2007 annual National Communication Association conference after presenting my pilot research, I was asked two questions: One, how would I be proceeding with my research on hurtful messages? And two, if my participants had mentioned how the hurtful communication impacted their classroom experience? These two inquiries regarding my pilot study sparked my interest in pursuing a more thorough qualitative data collection and the addition of a quantitative phase to measure the impact of hurtful messages. This process is at the heart of the goals and utility of the mixed methods paradigm—testing research ideas in forums and gaining feedback from our peers to provide the impetus for further research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Unfortunately, all forms of research—whether it is qualitative, quantitative, rhetorical, or mixed methods—carry limitations. The limitations of a mixed methods inquiry are discussed in the next section.

#### Limitations of Mixed Methods Inquiry

While there are many strengths of combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, there are also several challenges in each of the mixed methods design types. One specific challenge of the exploratory sequential design is the difficulty in specifying the procedures of the quantitative phase, as it is difficult to predict how the first phase of the research will shape the second (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Similarly, determining what qualitative data should be used and how to use it to form the quantitative instrument also poses a challenge. Finally, making a decision as to whether

the same participants should be used in both phases of the study may also be considered a challenge. To address these potential limitations, I tentatively composed my quantitative research questions from the data derived from my pilot study. I also designed my interview guide to include specific questions that focus on outcome variables related to the classroom to help ease the transition to the instrument development phase. Finally, I expanded my sample of participants in terms of size and geographic location in the second, quantitative, phase of the study to allow me to reach a larger population and argue for the generalizability of my findings. The specific data collection and analysis procedures that I use in the present study are elaborated in the subsequent sections beginning with the first, qualitative, phase.

#### Phase One: Qualitative

The primary method of this first phase is the qualitative tradition. Specifically, the phenomenological approach to qualitative research is taken in this phase of the study with the intent of describing “the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Phenomenology involves the use of rich description and close analysis of a lived experience to understand the construction of meaning-making through perception (Sokolowski, 2000; Stewart & Mickunas, 1974). As Starks and Trinidad (2007) explain, “the truth of the event, as an abstract entity, is subjective and knowable only through embodied perception” (p. 1374). Therefore, phenomenological research contributes to the deeper understanding of individuals’ experiences by exposing these instances and helping us understand the way that individuals create meaning in these instances. As a result, Sokolowski (2000) writes,

“phenomenological statements, like philosophical statements, state the obvious and the necessary....but even if not new, they can still be important and illuminating, because we often are very confused about just such trivialities and necessities” (p. 57). By recounting what individuals have in common as they experience a familiar phenomenon—in this case hurt feelings—we are able to gain an understanding of the meaning of this experience for those particular individuals. As Creswell (2007) posits, “the reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual” (p. 59).

Therefore, the goal of this phase of the study was to describe the hurtful communication process and the impact of this communication as understood through the experiences of participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To accomplish this goal, my participants and I partook together in semi-structured, focused interviews (Kvale, 1996; McCracken, 1998) targeting their perceptions of hurtful messages that they received from their teachers and how they felt that this negative communication has impacted them. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), this method is necessary because “qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods” (p. 11). As this description illustrates, the purpose of qualitative research is to provide a greater understanding of a phenomena from the participants’ point of view. Baxter and Babbie (2004) further explain, “interpretive researchers strive to paint a verbal picture so rich that readers of the study feel as if they had walked that mile in the shoes of the group members” (p. 62). By conducting open-



ended interviews in the first phase of my study—where participants freely discussed their experiences—the types of hurtful messages that participants reported experiencing, as well as their feelings on the impact of this negative form of teacher behavior, were not limited to pre-configured categories (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

### *Participants*

The purposive sample population (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for the first phase of this study was sought using the following criteria to locate students: (a) at least 19 years old, and (b) believe they have been the recipient of a hurtful message by a college or university teacher (c) while they were enrolled in a course with that teacher. Upon receiving approval from the institutional review board for human subjects (IRB), I began recruiting participants for this study. Participants were sought through convenience sampling techniques, such as announcements sent directly via e-mail and word of mouth. Also, teachers in the Communication Studies department at a large Midwestern university provided the research announcement to students in their undergraduate communication courses. Participants that were recruited in these courses received extra credit for their participation in the study, at their teacher's discretion. In order to present an ample representation of typical college students' experiences with hurtful communication, participants were not restricted to a particular class-standing, major, age group, or institution. Rather than seeking a specific number of interviewees, I collected data until theoretical saturation (Kvale, 1996; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was reached. That is, I continued to interview participants until no new information emerged during coding and existing dimensions and themes that have been identified were repeated in subsequent

interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although theoretical saturation was achieved within the first 24 interviews, I continued to interview participants to increase the validity of my results and establish a more credible set of data.

I interviewed a total of 34 participants for this study, 21 females and 13 males. Thirty-two participants were between the ages of 19 and 24, whereas two participants were between the ages of 30 and 35. Of these participants, there were 29 that identified themselves as White/Caucasian, four Black/African-American, one Asian, and one Native-American. Participants reported receiving hurtful messages from teachers in the following departments: Accounting, Architecture, Athletic Coaching, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Civil Engineering, Communication Studies, Computer Science, Dance, Engineering, English, French, History, Mathematics, Music, Nutrition, Sociology, Spanish, and Speech-Language Pathology/Audiology. Hurtful messages occurred in lower division undergraduate, upper division undergraduate, and graduate-level courses. Participants reported receiving the following grades in the course where they perceived a hurtful message to be communicated: A (n=9), B (n=11), C (n=4), D (n=2). Three participants reported dropping the course, and four were still enrolled in the course at the time of the interview. The amount time that participants reported as having passed since the hurtful message occurred ranged from less than 6 months to over 3 years.

#### *Data Collection*

Each participant's interview lasted approximately thirty minutes to one hour and was conducted in a location that was private and convenient for the participants. The majority of the interviews were conducted in a private research office at a large

Midwestern university, while the other interviews were conducted in a private corner of a coffee shop, or over the telephone. To ensure that ethical considerations were followed, participants were informed, at the outset, of the purpose of the study and were reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study without penalty at any time. Each participant was asked to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B) to ensure that they understood their rights as a participant. They were then asked for their permission to have their voice recorded with a digital recording device during the interviews and were reminded that their identity would remain confidential in all stages of the study. To maintain this confidentiality and avoid any breaches in ethics, I use pseudonyms in my study as opposed to the real names of the participants or the teachers that were named during the interviews. Interviews were transcribed for analysis purposes, resulting in 401 single spaced pages of transcripts.

#### *Focused Interviews*

As I mentioned in the previous section, my participants and I took part in semi-structured, focused interviews (Kvale, 1996; McCracken, 1998) that followed an interview guide to allow each person to discuss their feelings and other information about their experiences that they believed was important to share with me (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). An early version of the interview guide was developed and tested in the pilot study that was discussed in “Chapter Two.” Each pilot interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes and, following each interview, participants were asked to suggest changes that could be made to the interview guide to help future participants recall their experiences more efficiently. The interview guide that I used in this study is a product of the

suggestions made by my pilot study participants, along with my own ideas for improvement based on the quality of description that I received from the pilot study participants.

The final interview guide consisted of a series of demographic questions followed by open-ended and retrospective questions (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to describe an experience when a college instructor communicated in a way that hurt their feelings. They were also asked to discuss how they communicated with their instructor before and after their feelings were hurt, and how they dealt with the hurt feelings that they experienced. With the suggestions from the participants in my pilot study, the final interview guide also included questions designed to elicit responses about the impact that participants believe the hurtful message has had on them and their classroom experience; specifically, why they felt the communication was hurtful, the attributions that they made as to why the hurtful message was communicated, how the hurtful message impacted their experience in the class, as well as how they feel about their relationship with the teacher that communicated to them in a hurtful manner.

### *Data Analysis*

Qualitative analysis deals with the separation of data from the context of individual cases and the assigning of codes to units of meaning in these cases. The codes are then examined for patterns and organized into central themes across the individual cases (Ayers, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003; Morse & Field, 1995; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The phenomenological approach to data analysis is described by Creswell (2007) and Moustakas (1994) as a three-part process. First, horizontalization must occur

whereby significant statements or “quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” should be highlighted (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Then, a description of what participants experienced—a textural description—is written using the significant statements and themes (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). In this stage, Creswell (2007) explains that data is coded by analyzing and categorizing specific statements into clusters of meaning that represent the phenomenon. Finally, the researcher presents the essential, invariant structure—or essence—of the phenomenon. The essence is a descriptive passage that allows the reader to come away from the research feeling that they have vicariously experienced the phenomenon and should be able to come to similar conclusions about the meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989; Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

To analyze the data from the current study, I followed the steps of phenomenological analysis using a mixture of analytic induction and deduction. Upon transcribing the data, I enacted a close reading to familiarize myself with the data, making note of specific statements that provided understanding of the participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). Following this step, I printed copies of each transcript and made handwritten notations in the margins using different colored highlighters to denote similarities in themes. During this step, I specifically sought to find instances in the data that related to each other in such a way that they belong together as a category (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Ragin, 1994). The main treatment of the data was conducted via inductive analysis, where I created themes of the

hurtful messages students perceive college teachers communicated to them (*RQ<sub>1</sub>*), the ways that students respond to hurtful messages (*RQ<sub>3</sub>*), the advice that students have for teachers regarding communicating with students and hurt feelings (*RQ<sub>6</sub>*), and the impact that students believe hurtful communication has had on their classroom experience (*RQ<sub>7</sub>*). The themes/categories that resulted from this analysis were identified through the participants' descriptions of their experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The secondary treatment of the data was conducted via deductive analysis which, according to Huberman and Miles (1998), works best when the researcher "has a good bank of applicable, well-delineated concepts" (p. 185). Since teacher misbehavior research is a well-known conceptual foundation and features a reliable typology, I deductively coded the types of hurtful messages that students perceived as receiving from their college teachers into the existing categories of teacher misbehaviors (*RQ<sub>2</sub>*). This allowed me to determine what general types of teacher misbehaviors, if any, may be considered hurtful by students. Furthermore, during my pilot study, Face Theory emerged as a foundation for understanding the reasons why students felt hurt and how they chose to respond to their teachers following the communication of a hurtful message. Since Face Theory is a well-known and reliable theoretical foundation, I coded the data concerning face into its specific tenets. Specifically, the forms of face threat that occurs when students perceive that they have been hurt by a teacher's communication (*RQ<sub>3</sub>*), and the ways that students employ facework in their communicative responses to hurtful messages (*RQ<sub>4</sub>*).

### *Data Validation*

Several steps were taken to ensure the overall validity of my qualitative interview data. To preserve the accuracy of the verbal accounts of my participants' experiences, I recorded (with the permission of my participants) and fully transcribed each interview. In instances where I was not granted permission to record the interview, I took extensive notes during the interview and shared them with the participant. As they read my notes, I allowed them to correct any inaccuracies and verify that I have properly represented their experiences. In addition to this, I continued to analyze data from participants beyond the point where theoretical saturation was reached. By continuing to interview participants, I was able to confirm the validity of my findings and establish a more credible set of data. Next, to confirm my analysis, I tested my data in a three hour-long collaborative data conference with five different researchers who were trained in the qualitative paradigm. In this data conference, the scholars worked with me to check and refine my analysis and categories, further testing the validity of my findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Finally, participants were given the opportunity to review the themes that emerged from their interviews. Following the data conference, 15 participants reviewed and agreed with the themes that were constructed from the interviews. This process of member checking allowed me to further validate my data by ensuring that it accurately reflected my participants' experiences rather than my interpretation of their experiences.

### *Interim Phase: Instrument Development*

In the first phase of this study, participants freely expressed their feelings and experiences concerning hurtful messages that they believe instructors communicated to

them in the college classroom. During this phase, I paid special attention to any information that the participants shared with me concerning the ways that they felt the hurtful messages had impacted them in general. I developed a specific research question (*RQ*<sub>7</sub>) to identify this impact in hopes of constructing a survey that would help me generalize this impact to other college students. To assist in the development of this quantitative survey, I also posed a research question (*RQ*<sub>8</sub>) to determine which items and scales would best measure the themes presented in the qualitative results. To answer this research question and guide the construction of my survey, I followed DeVellis' (2003) guidelines in scale development.

DeVellis (2003) argues that scale development may be done in an 8-step process. The first of these steps is for the researcher to determine clearly what they want to measure (p. 5). In this step, the researcher should ensure that the boundaries of the phenomenon are recognized so that the content of the scale remains inclusive of only the constructs that are intended to be measured. The specific ways that my participants felt impacted by the hurtful message was inclusive of various constructs. During the data conference that I held with my colleagues, we paid special attention to these particular constructs and considered the picture that I wished to illustrate with this data. In this data conference, we agreed that affective learning (affect for course and teacher), cognitive learning, credibility, vengefulness, likelihood of future communication, motivation, relational satisfaction, classroom anxiety, teacher effectiveness, avoidance, attributions, and face were all potential variables that could be measured. From this list of constructs,



we determined that the most prevalent and seemingly relevant variables are affective learning, motivation, relational satisfaction, and face.

At this point, I had to make several decisions concerning the specificity of the constructs that would be measured and whether I should create a new survey or compile existing scales. This step is similar to DeVellis' (2003) second step, generating a pool of items that will be included in the scale. Because of the fact that there are pre-existing scales that address the constructs that I wanted to measure, I sought to create a survey that combined reliable scales to give a more complete understanding of the phenomenon. One specific theme that was consistent in the first phase of this study dealt with participants believing that an especially hurtful message had a very large impact on them and that they had a lesser impact when the messages were not as hurtful. Based on this description, I chose to utilize Young's (2004) "Degree of Hurt" scale to gain an understanding of how hurtful participants perceived certain messages to be in relation to one another. Similarly, I created an item that listed the 9 types of hurtful messages that were identified in the first phase of the study. This allows me to determine which hurtful messages are considered more or less hurtful than others.

Another theme derived from the first phase of the study dealt with participants disliking the teacher and/or the course that the teacher taught and no longer wanting to participate in the course after they received a hurtful message. With this in mind, the best scale to measure this construct is McCroskey's (1994) "Affective Learning." Furthermore, participants also commented on their lack of interest, motivation, or desire to study and otherwise participate in the offending teachers' course. Christophel's (1990)

“Motivation” scale appears to be a superlative measure for this construct. Many participants emphasized that they felt like their relationship with the offending teacher deteriorated or became “non-existent.” Although many of them felt that they did not necessarily have a “special” relationship or friendship with most of their teachers, they still mentioned that the relationships that they had with the offending teacher were far worse than the relationships that they had with other, non-offending teachers. Based on this idea, I chose a modified version of Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick’s (1998) “Relational Satisfaction” scale to highlight this construct. Finally, Face Theory emerged as an important sense-making tool in my pilot study and continued to remain relevant in the first phase of the study as participants mentioned that they felt hurt because of violations to their face needs. Many of them specifically cited the offending teachers’ lack of tact in handling the violations of face; therefore, I knew that I needed to identify a scale that specifically emphasized teachers’ attention to students’ face needs. The “Instructional Face-Support” measure developed by Kerssen-Griep, Hess, and Trees (2003) was created specifically for the purpose of measuring teachers’ attention to students’ face needs.

It should be noted that the third step of DeVellis’ (2003) scale development guidelines, determining the format of the measurement, is covered in the use of existing, reliable scales. Each of these scales has been determined to have properly weighted items and successful response formats. In the fourth step, DeVellis recommends having the initial item pool reviewed by experts to “confirm or invalidate your definition of the phenomenon” (DeVellis, 2003, p. 86). I sent a completed draft of the survey to four

colleagues that have worked with similar constructs and asked them to rate each item in terms of its relevance to the phenomenon that I am attempting to measure. According to DeVellis (2003), “this is especially useful if you are developing a measure that will consist of separate scales to measure multiple constructs” (p. 86). As DeVellis (2003) states, experts should have little trouble determining which scale items correspond to which constructs. The individuals that reviewed my survey evaluated it as being clear, concise, and highly relevant to the phenomenon and specific constructs that I sought to measure. As such, I chose to move forward with this portion of the study. The final steps of scale development are embedded in the administration of this survey; therefore, they are further discussed throughout the second phase of the study.

#### *Mixed Methods Validity*

Much has been said about the challenge of measuring validity in mixed methods research due to the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research and their respective requirements for validity (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2008). To address this challenge, validity in mixed methods research as “the extent to which rigorous and persuasive interpretations can be drawn,” and “the extent to which design interferes with” these interpretations (Creswell, in press). With each type of research design in mixed methods study, there are specific steps for determining the validity of that design. This study utilizes an exploratory sequential research design with an emphasis on instrument development; therefore, the specific steps to ensure the validity of this study are largely focused on issues concerning the research design.

The validity concerns that are most pertinent to the present study deal specifically with sample, scale development, instrument, and procedure. One concern may be that the participants used in the first and second phases of the study may not be representative of the population (Creswell, in press). The criteria for participation in both phases of this study included the need for participants to have been the recipient of a hurtful message communicated by a college teacher. This criteria ensured that each of the participants have experienced the phenomenon being researched, thus being representative of the population. Another validity concern may be the use of qualitative data analysis procedures that do not yield useful scale items (Creswell, in press). By posing a research question that focused specifically on the impact that hurtful messages had on participants, I ensured that I would yield qualitative data that was directly related to what I wanted to measure in the second phase of the study.

Other pitfalls to validity deal with scale development—specifically the possibility that rigorous scale development procedures were not used, that items were formed inadequately, that the items formed may be ambiguous and not representative, or that the instrument that was designed may not be better than other literature-based instruments (Creswell, in press). As evident in the section above, titled “Interim Phase: Instrument Development,” I took specific steps to ensure that I would not face validity issues with the development of the instrument. I strictly followed DeVellis’ (2003) scale development procedures, making sure that items were properly constructed and that they were clear and representative of the phenomenon that they were meant to be measuring. During these steps, I found that I could not develop an instrument that would better

measure these constructs alone; rather, I turned to existing and well-known scales to create one survey that would help me more accurately measure all of the constructs together. Furthermore, I carefully observed each existing scale and made sure that they had been previously determined reliable and valid in the research of constructs similar to those in the present study. Once this reliability was determined, I piloted the survey and deemed it satisfactory for use in the second phase of the study, which is discussed in the section below.

#### Phase Two: Quantitative

Following the creation of my quantitative survey, I began conducting “Phase Two,” using the post-positivist, quantitative tradition of research. As suggested by the “exploratory sequential” research design in mixed methods research, this phase was secondary to my initial qualitative phase and is meant to be treated as a follow-up to this first phase. As such, this phase of the study was designed to explore specific aspects of the impact of hurtful messages communicated to students by college teachers.

#### *Participants*

Upon receiving approval from the institutional review board for human subjects (IRB), I began recruiting participants for this second, quantitative, phase of the study. The convenience sample population for this phase of the study consisted of students who perceive to have been hurt by a message communicated by a college teacher. A convenience sample was deemed most appropriate for this study as it is a representation of the target population (college students) and because of the increased likelihood of participation from students who believe that they have been hurt by a college teacher at

some point in their higher education. Participants for this phase of the study were solicited from a large Midwestern University, as well as postings on social networking websites that are targeted to college students, directly via e-mail, word of mouth, and flyers.

Comparable to “Phase One,” my colleagues and I also provided the research announcement to students in our undergraduate communication courses. Participants who were recruited from these courses received extra credit at their teachers’ discretion. Also similar to the first phase of this study, participation in this phase of the study required that students satisfy the following criteria: (a) be at least 19 years of age, (b) have been the recipient of at least one hurtful message communicated by a college or university teacher, and (c) have been enrolled in a course with the teacher at the time the hurtful message was communicated. Participants were not restricted to a particular class-standing, age group, or major.

Participants were 77 males and 131 females ( $N= 208$ ) who believed that a teacher had communicated a hurtful message to them at some point during their college education. The participants included 4 freshman, 45 sophomore, 49 junior, 47 senior, and 32 graduate students, as well as 30 non-students. The students reported receiving hurtful messages from both male ( $N= 133$ ) and female ( $N= 75$ ) teachers, 144 of whom were Assistant/Associate/Full Professors, 61 who were Graduate Teaching Assistants or Adjunct Instructors, and 2 who were listed as other teachers, such as Clinicians. The participants represented various academic disciplines and received their hurtful messages in courses of various sizes (under 50 students,  $N= 148$ ; 50-100 students,  $N= 22$ ; and over

100 students,  $N= 38$ ) and levels (freshman/sophomore,  $N= 154$ ; junior/senior,  $N= 34$ ; and graduate,  $N= 19$ ). Fifty seven percent of the participants believed that their teachers were aware of the fact that they had communicated a hurtful message, whereas only 10.6% of students believed that the teacher had attempted to apologize or otherwise correct the hurtful message after it was communicated. The ethnic distribution of the sample was: 78.4% Caucasian, 9.6% Hispanic, 2.9% African American, 2.9% Biracial, and 4.3% Other.

#### *Data Collection*

Participants in Phase Two were asked to fill out a copy of the questionnaire by logging on to QuestionPro ([hurtfulcommunication.questionpro.com](http://hurtfulcommunication.questionpro.com)). This website is an ethical means to collect data as it is encrypted and designed to protect participants' confidentiality and responses. The only location where participants include their name is on the first page in the form of a signature to the informed consent form. The consent form page is separate from the data, as the data collected from the survey is assigned a unique ID number. As the principal investigator for this research, I am the only person who has access to this password-protected, private, encrypted website.

When participants first accessed the website, they were required to read and sign the approved Internal Review Board informed consent form (see Appendix D). In doing so, participants were informed of the purpose of the study and we reminded that their participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Their signature ensured that they read the consent form and understood the rights that were provided to them throughout this process. Additionally, if any participants chose to

include any identifying information, such as their teacher's name, in the demographic questions they were assured that this information will be substituted with pseudonyms in the final write-up of the study. After electronically signing the informed consent form, participants were instructed to complete the research instruments in reference to one teacher that hurt their feelings. In instances where they felt that they had been hurt multiple times, they were asked to reflect on the most hurtful instance. Based on the data derived from the first phase of this study, participants were asked to respond to scales assessing the degree of hurt they felt by the hurtful message, their relational satisfaction with the teacher that communicated the hurtful message, as well as their affective learning, motivation, and the amount of face support they felt their teacher gave them during the communication of the hurtful message. Each of these scales is reviewed in detail in the following sections.

#### *Instrument*

Participants were asked to complete a survey (see Appendix E) concerning the type of hurtful message they perceived to have been communicated by a college teacher and how this hurtful message impacted them. In the demographic questions for this survey, participants were asked to reflect specifically on one teacher who had hurt their feelings and, if their feelings had been hurt more than once, to reflect on the most hurtful instance they experienced. In this section, I included a question asking participants to specifically describe this instance, including what this teacher said or did, what they—as a student—said or did, and why they believe that the message was hurtful. During the data conference held for Phase One of this study, my colleagues and I felt that providing



this demographic question to the participants would allow them to reflect on the instance and more accurately recall what they believed had happened. We felt that this reflection would increase the accuracy of their responses in the actual survey. Similarly, when I piloted the demographic questions and survey to confederates that were representative of the population that would be filling out this survey, they mentioned that this question helped them focus on the hurtful message and increased their clarity of the following survey. Following the demographic questionnaire, participants were prompted to complete a series of scales in reference to themselves and the teacher in which they were reflecting. In this phase of the study, the independent variables are hurtful message type, degree of hurt, and instructional face support; whereas, the dependent variables are degree of hurt, relational satisfaction, affective learning, and student motivation (see Table 2). Each of these scales is described in the sections that follow.

#### *Degree of Hurt*

To measure the degree of hurt that participants felt following the communication of a hurtful message by one of their teachers, participants were asked to fill out a measure of two 7-point Likert-type items (Young, 2004). The first item prompts participants to rate the extent of the hurtfulness of the message from 1 (not at all hurtful) to 7 (extremely hurtful). The second item examines the amount of emotional pain caused by the statement from 1 (it did not cause any emotional pain) to 7 (it caused a great deal of emotional pain). Previous alpha for this scale is reported to be over .85 (Young, 2004). The alpha for this study was .85.

Table 2: Variables, Research Questions, and Related Subscale Items

Independent Variable 1: Type of Hurtful Communication		
Dependent Variable 1: Degree of Hurt	Research Question 9: Does the type of hurtful communication create differences in the degree of hurt perceived by students?	Item(s): 1, 2, 3
Independent Variable 2: Degree of Hurtfulness		
Dependent Variable 5: Relational Satisfaction	Hypothesis 1: The degree of hurtfulness of a message will be negatively related to students' perceptions of relational satisfaction with their teachers.	Item(s): 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Dependent Variable 6: Affective Learning  Dependent Variable 7: Student Motivation	Hypothesis 2: The degree of hurtfulness of a message will significantly relate to (a) affective learning, and (b) student motivation.	Item(s): 2, 3, 4, 5, 13
Independent Variable 3: Instructional Face-Support		
Dependent Variable 8: Degree of Hurt  Dependent Variable 9: Affective Learning  Dependent Variable 10: Student Motivation  Dependent Variable 11: Relational Satisfaction	Hypothesis 3: Students' perceptions of instructional face support will significantly relate to (a) degree of hurt, (b) affective learning, (c) student motivation, and (d) relational satisfaction.	Item(s): 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

### *Affective Learning*

To measure participants' general attitudes toward the teacher that communicated a hurtful message to them, the Affective Learning Measure was used. This measure is an eight-item instrument that consists of four bipolar, seven-step items directed toward students' general attitude toward a teacher and four bipolar, seven-step items concerning students' willingness to take another course with this teacher (McCroskey, 1994). Previous alpha for this scale has ranged from .89 to .98 (Frymier, 1994; Kearney, 1994; McCroskey, Fayer, Richmond, Sallinen, & Barraclough, 1996; Richmond, 1990; Sidelinger & McCroskey, 1997). The alpha for this study was .89.

### *Student Motivation*

Christophel's (1990) State Motivation Scale (SMS) was used to assess the amount of motivation that participants felt following the receipt of a hurtful message from one of their teachers. The SMS is a 12-item seven point scale of bipolar adjectives (e.g., motivated/unmotivated, excited/not excited, inspired/uninspired) designed to measure a students' motivation concerning a specific class. Previous alpha for this scale was reported to be over .90 (Christophel, 1990). The alpha for this study was .85.

### *Relational Satisfaction*

A modified version of Hendrick, Dicke, and Hendrick's (1998) 7-item Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) was included in the survey to measure participants' general satisfaction with their teachers following the communication of hurtful messages. The RAS measures general satisfaction, how a partner rates their relationship compared to others, how well the relationship has met their expectations, and

how many problems there are in the relationship (Hendrick, 1988; Hendrick et al., 1998). Participants answered questions about their relationships on a scale ranging from one (least satisfied) to five (most satisfied). This scale was chosen because it can be used to measure relationship satisfaction in different types of relationships, as opposed to solely measuring marital satisfaction (Dinkel & Balck, 2005; Doohan & Manusov, 2004; Hendrick, 1988; Hendrick et al., 1998). Because this scale is most often used in reference to romantic relationships, several items were adjusted for the current study. Specific changes included substituting the word “teacher” for “partner,” and the word “respect” in place of “love.” Previous applications of this scale, including those with similar word substitutions, have demonstrated internal reliabilities between .86 and .89 (Dinkel & Balck, 2005; Fischer & Corcoran, 1994). The alpha for this study was .88.

#### *Instructional Face-Support*

Prior to Kerssen-Griep, Hess, and Trees’ (2003) study on instructional facework, no suitable instructional face-support measure existed. Thus, Kerssen-Griep, Hess, and Trees developed the “Instructional Face-Support” scale to measure the degree to which students perceived their teachers to attend to their face needs for autonomy, competence, and fellowship during their evaluations of students’ work. The purpose of this measure in the current study was to determine if students believed that their teachers attended to, or violated, certain face needs during the communication of the hurtful message. Therefore, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which each of the statements reflected their teachers’ behavior during the communication of the hurtful message. The measure consists of 15 items on seven-point Likert scales, ranging from one (not at all) to

seven (very much). Of these items, five focus on attentiveness to autonomy face (tact), five reflect attentiveness to competence face (approbation), and five concern attentiveness to fellowship face (solidarity). Previous alpha for these items, include .74 for tact, .71 for approbation, and .86 for solidarity (Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003). Alpha for this study was .83 for tact, .80 for approbation, and .89 for solidarity.

### Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a description of the participants, procedures, and data analyses that will be conducted in both phases of this mixed methods study. In doing so, I have described the criteria for participation in the study, how individuals were recruited, the questions included on the interview guide, and the specific measures that were included in the questionnaire. I have also discussed the possible issues that I will face in conducting a mixed methods analysis with such a distinct population of college students. In general, the current study has been designed to be reliable, valid, and protected against potential shortcomings. Overall, I anticipate that this study will add to our understanding of hurtful messages and illustrate the process of hurtful messages within the teacher-student relationship.

## CHAPTER FOUR: UNDERSTANDING HURTFUL MESSAGES

The data in this chapter reveals the types of hurtful messages participants reported experiencing, the ways that they chose to respond to these messages, and the impact that they believe to have experienced as a result of these hurtful messages. The results of this data analysis support the premise that hurtful messages *do* occur in the college classroom and that students are affected by the communication of hurtful messages by teachers. In the previous chapters, I outlined eight research questions that guide the first phase of this study. This chapter details the emergent themes that helped to answer the research questions by providing, through exemplar statements, a clearer picture of the ways that students experience hurtful messages in the college context. For a tabular representation of these research questions and themes, please see Table 3.

There were a total of 34 participants for this phase of the study (21 females and 13 males). In the passages that follow, it should be noted that I use a specific method to organize participants and their comments. As I transcribed each interview, I assigned a unique number from 1 to 34 to the participant and numbered each line of single-spaced text. To demonstrate the experiences of my participants with clarity, I utilize these numbers following each exemplar statement that is used throughout this discussion (e.g., 34: 279-282). The exemplars for each of the research questions are shared in detail in the following sections.

Table 3: Qualitative Research Questions and Themes

Research Question	Themes
<i>RQ<sub>1</sub></i> : What type of hurtful messages do students perceive college teachers are communicating to them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deconstructive Criticism</li> <li>▪ Inappropriate Jokes</li> <li>▪ False Assumptions</li> <li>▪ Public Embarrassment</li> <li>▪ Disregard</li> <li>▪ One-sided Accusations</li> <li>▪ Misunderstood Motives</li> <li>▪ Refusal to Accommodate</li> <li>▪ Discrimination</li> </ul>
<i>RQ<sub>2</sub></i> : How, if at all, are the types of hurtful messages that students perceive college teachers are communicating to them representative of teacher misbehaviors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incompetence</li> <li>• Offensiveness</li> </ul>
<i>RQ<sub>3</sub></i> : How do students who perceive that their feelings have been hurt by teachers' hurtful messages respond?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active Verbal</li> <li>• Invulnerable</li> <li>• Acquiescent</li> </ul>
<i>RQ<sub>4</sub></i> : What form(s) of face threat do students experience when they perceive that they have been hurt by a teacher's communication?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence (+)</li> <li>• Autonomy (-)</li> <li>• Fellowship (+)</li> </ul>
<i>RQ<sub>5</sub></i> : How do students employ facework in their communicative responses to hurtful messages that they perceive being communicated by their teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corrective Facework</li> </ul>
<i>RQ<sub>6</sub></i> : What advice do students have for teachers regarding communicating with students and hurt feelings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show students that you care</li> <li>• Realize the power of your words</li> <li>• Be positive &amp; offer ways for the student to improve</li> <li>• Balance professionalism &amp; a personal relationship</li> <li>• Listen to the students' side of the story</li> <li>• Consider students' background and/or culture</li> </ul>
<i>RQ<sub>7</sub></i> : What impact do students believe hurtful communication has on their classroom experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Affective Learning</li> <li>• Relationship Satisfaction</li> </ul>

## Types of Hurtful Messages

The first research question was asked to determine the types of hurtful messages that students perceived being communicated to them by their college teachers. Nine themes emerged revealing the specific types of hurtful messages that were reported by students. These themes include: deconstructive criticism, inappropriate jokes, false assumptions, public embarrassment, disregard, one-sided accusations, misunderstood motives, refusal to accommodate, and discrimination. In the sections that follow, I discuss each of these themes in depth, focusing specifically on using the participants' own words to accurately represent their experiences.

### *Deconstructive Criticism*

The first theme that emerged in regard to the types of hurtful messages that college students reported receiving from their teachers is *deconstructive criticism*. The messages that are classified into this category are criticisms that are insensitive, are not constructive, and/or imply that the efforts of the student do not matter to the teacher. Several students reported receiving messages of deconstructive criticism from their college teachers. During the interviews, these students appeared, nonverbally, to be especially distressed by these types of messages from their teachers.

The first instance of this type of hurtful message was described by Sarah<sup>1</sup>. Sarah spoke with me about the challenges that she has faced in her college education due to being a minority student with various language barriers due to her cultural upbringing. She explained that the profession she was hoping to pursue after college requires a great

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<sup>1</sup> The names of the participants have been changed to protect their identity.



deal of public speaking, so she decided to enroll in a course that would give her the opportunity to overcome these barriers and gain experience in speaking to an audience. She described being “really excited” to enroll in this course and receive feedback from her teacher that would help her improve her speaking skills (5: 76).

After she received the first evaluation from her teacher, she described feeling discouraged because her teacher told her that she had a “speaking issue,” but did not offer any sort of recommendation for improvement, rather he commented that her “vocabulary just isn’t big enough for my liking” and gave her a failing grade (5: 80, 82). Although she described feeling deterred by his feedback, she decided to “keep goin’” and described visiting a lab to receive help, having a tutor to help her learn a broader vocabulary and incorporate “big words” into her speeches (5: 85, 88). Sarah felt proud of the work that she had done and the progress that her tutor felt that she had made, but she noticed that her teacher’s opinion of her abilities did not change. She claimed that, despite her efforts, “...during my speech it was like he would just sit there like he was utterly disgusted like that I was even talking” (5: 88-89).

When I asked Sarah to elaborate on the hurtful message that she received, she said that she felt “degraded” because she had taken great strides to improve the aspect of her work that her teacher criticized, but he continued to offer negative evaluations without including any positive comments or strategies for ways that she could further improve. As she said,

A girl was sitting next to me and like, I mean, she was ridiculous, she would be like “Oh, I just put this together last night,” and we’d look at her evaluation and

like it was nothing but “You did this really well” like I promise you I could bring you all three of my evaluations and there was not one positive thing. Not *one* thing that ever said “You did this well, but you need to work on this” and I think *that* would’ve made me be like well at least he thinks I’m doing something right, but I felt like there was nothing I did right...I wish he could see all three of the evaluations he gave me. *Not one* positive thing. (5: 130-137)

She also added that the lack of positive, or constructive, criticism was hurtful to her because,

First it didn’t feel like he was trying to help me, it was like he was just degrading me, and like we’re from two different backgrounds obviously and it felt like he was degrading me for that like, of course your vocabulary is gonna be higher than mine, especially at this point...I’ve never been criticized to a point where it felt like I was just like zero, like I’ve never felt so below anyone in my life and I felt like that with him like that’s what made it so hurtful...and I didn’t feel like he was trying to help me. (5: 157:164)

As a result of this lack of constructive criticism, Sarah said that she felt “so drawn back, like usually in classes like I’m like uh I have fun. I know my professor, like I love talking and like I was scared to even open my mouth in this class...” (5: 90-91). As a matter of fact, she described being so hurt by the message that she considered changing her major and her career goals altogether.

I was really like contemplating changing my major like it had reached that point like I would cry some days in that class just ‘cause I would know the answers to

some of the stuff that he would say and like but these other kids like I would just let answer him because I felt so dumb like I didn't wanna open my mouth in front of him and I would be like, I would be all excited inside 'cause I knew every answer, but like I was just so afraid to talk to him and 'cause I really thought there was something wrong with my speech. (5: 100-106)

Although she understood that she did have a language barrier, Sarah felt hurt because her teacher did not offer suggestions for improvement and did not acknowledge the efforts that she made toward trying to improve. As such, Sarah's statements provide evidence that the use of deconstructive criticism may impact students in a way that interferes with their classroom interaction and overall experience.

In a different scenario, Erin also experienced a form of deconstructive criticism. She described herself as being a new college student who was working hard to transition from high school to college. She wanted to show her new teachers that she cared about her education, so she regularly visited with each of her teachers during their office hours and made sure that she completed all of her assignments on time. She said that she was Valedictorian in high school and that this performance carried over into her college education, as she received mostly A's in the courses that she was taking. In an effort to continue this performance, Erin told me that she attended her teacher's office hours to ask for help with studying for her final exam. During this meeting, she explained that she became hurt by the way that her teacher focused on the things that she had done incorrectly, rather than on the things that she did well. She said,

She basically just let me have it kind of. I went into her office hours and she said,

you know, this is what you did wrong and this is what you did wrong. And instead of trying to say “I realize that you’ve tried to help things out and you know, work at it,” she basically just said everything wrong that I’d done throughout the semester and, you know, instead of looking at a test that I got a 93, she’d point out the seven points that I got off instead. And it was about a half-an-hour in her office that I just didn’t care about her class anymore. It just, I mean, for your first semester it kind of makes or breaks you a little bit.” (28: 191-197)

After Erin shared her experience with me, I asked her to focus on why she felt hurt by her teacher’s behavior. She then told me that it was hurtful because it focused on the negativity. She didn’t try to say anything positive. She didn’t, you know, try to say, “This is what you did wrong, but you can help it by this”...She didn’t form any kind of positive or any, like it’s okay to criticize but there was no constructive criticism. It wasn’t “Yes, you did well,” or “You did bad, but you can make it up in this way.” It was just all negative and I felt like nothing I could do would be right. (28: 233-237)

As a result of this deconstructive criticism, Erin stated that “it was not a happy first semester for me after that” (28: 201) and that, for the remainder of the semester, she distanced herself from her teacher by instead asking other students for help. As she said, “I just tried to [pause] just do whatever I could to do it, and I kinda did it on my own, I didn’t really ask her for help, I would go to other students instead of her to ask for help” (28: 306-308). Thus, for Erin, the lack of constructive criticism and the sole focus on the

negative aspects of her performance in the course changed her perceptions of the course and made her want to distance herself from the teacher.

Thomas is another participant who experienced deconstructive criticism. He specifically talked with me about his intense love for music and how he has become discouraged following his teacher's criticism of his performance. He explained how he was unable to afford a specific piece of equipment that his instrument required. Thomas, with his teacher's knowledge, purchased a substitute piece of equipment that was of lower quality. He also mentioned that the piece of equipment he used as a substitution, coupled with his nervousness, slightly affected the outcome of his performance. Thomas then described his audition:

I get freakin' nervous like with auditions and stuff like that, man *unbelievably* nervous....And uh, you know, I just tried to relax, I tried everything but, you know, it's just the way it is. So and I and I'd been playing it, you know, in like my rehearsals with the TA and when I rehearsed with my accompanist pretty well for the fact that the equipment was, I didn't have the right equipment, but...I thought it sounded, it was it was alright....And uh I uh finished uh [pause] playing and my accompanist left and and then I played my scales and and he [the teacher] said "Thomas, that sounded like shit." (24: 221-228)

As Thomas shared his story with me, he mentioned that this particular statement was hurtful because he felt his teacher was excessively harsh. He mentioned that the teacher would have been more effective in his communication if "he could've said uh [pause] it, you know 'Thomas, I'm gonna be honest with you, you didn't play that

well'...I guess just to say, you know, and while still keeping it direct, 'You didn't play that well'" (24: 341-344). Rather, the insensitivity that was implied with the harsh criticism contributed to Thomas' feelings of hurt and overall discouragement.

The experiences described in this section seem to indicate that much of the hurtfulness that stems from deconstructive criticism is the teachers' focus on the negative aspects of students' work and the lack of positive affirmation and/or strategies for improvement. While deconstructive criticism can be especially hurtful to a student as it may imply that the efforts of the student do not matter, these exemplars seem to indicate that the difference between criticism and a hurtful message may be as simple as changing the wording of a message to be more positive and goal-based.

### *Inappropriate Jokes*

The second theme of hurtful messages that was present in my interviews with students is *inappropriate jokes*. Messages that are included in this category involve teachers teasing or making fun of students, especially when students do not find these jokes to be funny or in good taste. As each student shared their experience with this particular type of hurtful message, they reported being shocked or taken aback by the joke, consistently stressing the inappropriate nature of the jokes.

The first participant who discussed a teacher making an inappropriate joke was Mandie. She began by providing me with a background of her relationship with the offending teacher, stating that she had taken a few courses with this teacher prior to the semester that she received the hurtful message. She disclosed that she had a bit of an attendance problem in the first course that she took with this teacher, but added that she

quickly “realized that that was my fault, not her against me” and changed her behavior the following semester by becoming “really diligent” and maintaining perfect attendance (3: 89-90). She said that, based on her improvement in the previous semester, she was shocked to receive a hurtful message on the first day of class in a new semester with her teacher. In the following description, Mandie shares her feelings about the hurtful message she received:

We had some new people join the class and I said that it was my fourth year here and then I tried to make a joke lightheartedly like “Oh, don’t worry about it, I’m not even close to graduating” because everybody was like “Oh, it’s my fourth year and I’m graduating in May.” And so my thing was, I’m not even close. And she’s [the teacher] like, “Oh that, well you must be pretty stupid then” and that that incident was in front of the whole class and that was right at like the beginning of the semester. (3: 156-161)

When asked about why this particular message was hurtful to her, she explained, “Um, I think that her calling me stupid, whether or not it was a joke, um you just don’t do that and I don’t, you don’t do that to a little kid and you don’t do that to a 22 year old. I wouldn’t do it to a 40 year old and it’s, that was like, oh my gosh, that just...really hurt my feelings” (3: 198-201).

Another example of inappropriate joking comes from Tamika who described being a student in a course where the students and teacher all knew each other quite well. She explained that her significant other, Phil, was well known in their field and, therefore, was no stranger to the students and teacher in this particular course. Tamika

described being well aware that her teacher “has a very sarcastic personality and she made a lot of teasing comments to like a bunch of select students,” but still felt hurt by the teasing that occurred between her and the teacher (10: 143-144). The incident that stood out the most to Tamika was delivered by the teacher in regard to her relationship with Phil. According to Tamika, “I was chit-chatting with the instructor and out of the blue she said, ‘You know, Phil really has horrible taste in women.’ And so I said, ‘Do you mean his prior girlfriends or his current girlfriend?’ And she said, ‘Oh both! Hahahaha’ ...I am so *appalled* with her” (10: 240-242, 250). Following this joke, Tamika mentioned feeling personally attacked, as she believed that the teacher was “insulting” her on purpose (10: 372). She explained,

Well in so many words, she said “You’re a horrible person” you know, she um, by saying that Phil has horrible taste in women and when I clarified do you, if she had meant oh past girlfriends than I would’ve taken it as a compliment because everybody likes to diss that other woman....But because she specifically said past *and* present, not only did she say “Tamika, I think you’re horrible,” but she lumped me together with the ex-girlfriend. (10: 323-326, 330-331)

Dillon experienced a similar situation, whereby he was the recipient of an inappropriate joke by his teacher, whom he believed may have assumed that he was a joker himself. According to Dillon,

Well, I had some friends in the class, so I mean we kind of joked around and stuff in the back and, you know, always kind of laughin’ so I think he just thought that we were just a bunch of pranksters.... [chuckles] Well ac- he was walking around



handin' out tests and like I forgot his name, but I go "Hey Mister," and like "What uh, what'd I get on the quiz—er on the test?" This is the test that I showed up for not even knowing that there was a test and it was fill in the blank....so I thought I did awful and he was like "Well, I can count it on fou- I can ha- I can count it on one hand" (30: 152-154, 181-183, 187-188).

While Dillon acknowledged that his teacher may have thought it was acceptable to tease him because he appeared to be a jokester himself, he argued that this joke took an inappropriate turn when it dealt with his teacher actually discussing his grade in front of his classmates. As he remarked, "But he like he totally said it to the entire class, so I was just like ugh....which is probably violating some kind of privacy thing" (30: 192, 196, 200). A commonality across this hurtful message as well as those experienced by Mandie and Tamika is the personal nature of the jokes that were told. This may indicate that, regardless of one's relationship with their students, a joke about one's personal life or information may be perceived as inappropriate and hurtful in the classroom context.

#### *False Assumptions*

The next theme reported by participants was *false assumptions*. Messages of false assumption are typically stated in a negative tone and are communicated when teachers make incorrect presumptions about a students' performance or dedication to their course. There were several accounts of faulty assumptions in my interviews with participants, but each participant mentioned feeling offended or betrayed by this communication. Specifically, they each mentioned that the message was hurtful because they were putting

a lot of time and effort into the course and their coursework, so they felt hurt by their teachers' assumptions that they did not care.

Kendra, for example, discussed her disappointment with the participation grade that her teacher had assigned to her. She explained logging into the online grading system and noticing that there was a "D" recorded under the participation column. Upon noticing this grade, Kendra said,

I called her and I asked her, you know, why I got a "D" for participation and she told me it was because um I missed- missed a class and didn't talk to her about it which was not the case and then um she said, well I said, "It's bringing my grade from an A to an A minus" and she said "Well what's the difference between that, isn't an A minus good enough for you?"...and she said "Well, maybe if um you and your teammates never left class early," which I'd never left class early, but my teammates did, and I said "Well, I think you know that I'm the one who never left class early" and she said "Well all you athletes think you guys can do whatever you want, so I think an A minus is good enough for you." (2: 90-98)

Kendra's experience illustrates that each student is different, even if part of their identity is defined by an external cohort, such as athletics or a Pan-Hellenic group. Having generalizations about students based on their group memberships may ultimately lead to hurt feelings, as these assumptions are often incorrect or stereotypical by nature. Kendra clarified the reason that she felt this message was hurtful by stating, "I think just getting that stereotype that athletes don't care about their education and that she kind of blew that

out of proportion and gave me that label when I didn't do anything to give her that reason to give me that label" (2: 135-137).

In a similar instance, Kathryn believed that her teacher had pre-existing assumptions about her performance in the course because of her self-disclosure about a disability. As Kathryn explains, she approached her teacher with paperwork concerning the accommodations that she would need due to her disability. Her teacher then accepted the paperwork, but refused to accommodate her in a way that would ensure her success in the course. During her many interactions with this teacher about her disability, she felt hurt by the assumptions that he made about her because of her disability. In one interaction, she describes attending her teacher's office hours to discuss her desire to perform well in his course,

And he said, "Well, there's no workin' out that issue, obviously, you've already made that known to me." [pause] And um, so so that wa- that was a very kind of hurtful kind of, a lot of that was very hurtful um in the fact that he wasn't receptive to me and he, I mean made a lot of assumptions, when he shared with me um that what he had read from this sheet of paper that outlined a disability that I had, he made assumptions and I had asked him [pause] t-to let me explain which he said was not necessary....Well it was necessary because the assumptions he made were were very wrong and what he said is he he he just didn't think that me being successful in his class was gonna happen. (14: 344-349, 353-354)

As Kathryn described during the interview, she told her teacher about her disability and special needs on the first day of class, attended each class, and worked hard on her

assignments. Thus, when her teacher assumed that she was not dedicated to the course because of her disability, she perceived this message to be both incorrect and hurtful.

Another false assumption that resulted in hurt feelings for a student was experienced by Brandon, a student in the honors program. Brandon was taking a course for credit in the honors program and described his teacher's dissatisfaction with his performance, which ultimately led to the teacher communicating a hurtful message to him. He explained,

I don't know, she [pause] I guess wasn't pleased with the progress I was making aaand I don't know, just kinda more, I mean, I think obviously if someone's not doing what they're supposed to be, you should tell 'em, but I don't think a lot of tact was used and [pause] my personal character I felt was a little attacked, but so....I mean, just like an overall vibe of like me being a lazy person and not taking my academia seriously, I guess. (17: 149-152, 157-158)

Similarly, Mark approached his teacher concerning his struggles with the exams that were being given in one of his courses. He described being afraid of approaching the teacher, but doing so because his performance in the course was important to him. As Mark said,

So it was a little scary, but one day I had the courage to go to the office and ask for help for my quizzes and he was like, "What do you need?" and I said, "I'm in [course] and I had a question about the quizzes." And he was like "What about it?" And I told him about how I was struggling and not getting very many of the points and he said, "Yeah, you haven't been doing well, but that's not my

problem” and he continued to say, “Well that’s the problem with students that just came out of high school.” And I told him about how I’m a good student and he said, “Well, you need to figure something out then.” (34: 87-93)

Finally, in a separate case, Lauren attended her teacher’s office hours to discuss potential topics for a paper because she was unable to think of a topic that interested her and fit the criteria of the assignment. Lauren recalled her teacher saying, “That’s okay. At your age, it’s okay, I mean some people just aren’t intellectually curious” (19: 184). Immediately, Lauren felt “offended” and replied with an explanation. According to Lauren, she said “Well no, that’s not it...But I just don’t have anything I want to write about” (19: 185-186). As a response, she said that her teacher explained,

“Oh no, no, it’s fine, I mean some people would be okay with, you know, going to work, and then going out to eat with a friend, and then going shopping, and then going home, watching TV, and going to bed.” She’s like, “Some people are okay with just having that in their life, and that’s okay.” And I didn’t really know how to take it. But, like, okay, you just told me I wasn’t intellectually curious and you like kind of insulted, like, the things that I would do. (19: 186-193)

In each of these cases, the students perceived that their teachers made assumptions about the reasons why they were not performing well or their capabilities to succeed in the course. Each of the students described these assumptions as being incorrect and unwarranted. For the students, however, the implication that they are lazy or incapable of doing well regardless of their efforts was hurtful.

### *Public Embarrassment*

Another theme related to hurtful messages by teachers that was derived from the interviews is *public embarrassment*. As the name implies, hurtful messages of public embarrassment occur in front of individuals other than the teacher and student, and humiliate, or otherwise make the student feel uncomfortable. The forms of public embarrassment that were reported by participants ranged from teachers reprimanding to expressing verbal frustration with a student.

In terms of verbal frustration, Lupe articulated the impact that she felt after her teacher embarrassed her in front of the class. She explained that she did not understand a concept that had been previously discussed, so she raised her hand and asked for clarification. Upon doing so, she says

I was in class and everybody, you know, there's like 100 people in the class or 150 and I had, I didn't understand something apparently that we had gone over before and so I asked him to explain it and he says, "Well, I already explained that [said in short, negative tone]" And it was just like that was it and I was like, "Ookay. Well, nevermind, I won't ask a question again." (4: 85-88)

When asked about the hurtfulness of this message, Lupe shared that she was particularly afraid to speak in class and felt that this embarrassment may impact the other students in the course, as well. For Lupe, public embarrassment was especially hurtful because "It just seemed like I kinda felt stupid. I guess. I felt like I wasn't really worthy of his time kind of..." (4: 135-136).

In a similar case, Emily explained that she had an international teacher who was difficult to understand, at times. She said that there were often misunderstandings between the students and the teacher concerning upcoming assignments and activities. She attempted to explain the misunderstanding with her teacher and, as a result, received a hurtful message of public embarrassment. In Emily's words:

I raised my hand and I was like um "I think that what people are trying to say," because you know in talking with other people, "is that we don't understand like what this is saying like it's just a whole bunch of word- like letters and numbers all together and no one understands what this is." And he was like "You don't get this?" Like [in slow speech rate] "Are you stupid? Do you need me to write it out for you?" I was like "No." And he and then he and I was like "No, never mind" you know 'cause like instantly I was just [pause] Whoa! You know...I was like so embarrassed that I was just, like, I just wanted him to stop talking [nervous laugh]. (25: 154-162)

Once the initial hurtful message had occurred in front of the class, Emily became embarrassed and wanted the interaction to end. As this exemplar shows, as the teacher continued to probe Emily about her need for clarification, she became more embarrassed.

Another example of public embarrassment was experienced by Jamal, who was taking a course about a particular type of software that he had not encountered before. He mentioned that he did not use the software correctly and that his teacher immediately reprimanded him in front of the class, even though she knew that he was one of the students who did not have prior experience in this software. According to Jamal,

She was going through, we turned in homework and when she was going through she called my name out, she's like "JOHNSON!"—that's my last name—"JOHNSON! What is this!?" I was like "What's what?" and she's like "You drew a circle there, there's not supposed to be a circle up here [scolding tone]!" I was like—and in front of the whole class! I was like thinking, you could've pulled me aside after class or something, but she had to do it in front of the whole class. (13: 80-87)

As Jamal mentioned, the public nature of this message is part of what contributed to his feelings of embarrassment and hurt.

A final example of public embarrassment occurred when Aaron was sitting in class talking with a few of his classmates. He describes sitting in a large lecture course where it was not uncommon for students to have side conversations while the teacher is explaining course material. In his particular case, Aaron said that he and his friends were discussing the material that the teacher was presenting. As the teacher noticed their conversation, Aaron says that she called on him and said "Oh! I bet you don't know the answer to this problem because you haven't been listening all class or anything" (32: 124-125). As a response, Aaron said "Okay" and explained,

So she asked me the question and well, turn, surprise, I got it right, so kind of took one back at her.....'cause she like put me on the spot in front of all these kids saying oh, you're stupid or you're you don't know this answer, why don't I just put you on the spot and show everyone else that you are wrong, you don't know what you're talking about. (32: 126-127, 165-167)



As Aaron points out, oftentimes students who are having side conversations in a large lecture course are discussing course material—when the teacher uses an embarrassment tactic to approach a student who they believe is off-task or purposely disruptive, miscommunications and feelings of hurt may occur.

### *Disregard*

Messages of *disregard* were also common, thematically, in the interviews. This particular type of hurtful message occurs when teachers demonstrate an aloofness or lack of caring for their students. These messages may occur when the teacher appears to be impatient, does not respond to e-mail in a timely manner, or treats the student as a number rather than an individual with specific concerns. Several students shared moments that they felt like their teachers did not care about them, and these exemplars are provided in this section.

Cicely recalled being confused by her status in a course that she had enrolled in with the suggestion and permission of her academic advisor. She stated that she was enrolled in the course, attended the first day of class, and then later noticed that she was dropped from the course without her knowledge. She described,

So, I called a bunch of different, like, advisors and stuff and tried to figure out the reason why. And none of them could tell me the reason why, so I ended up going to the class the next day and um it was and I went up to his desk and I like introduced myself and he just goes “Oh. How’d you get into this class?” and like real up and in my face and I was like ‘ I was like I have no i- and he was like “Who’d you get the call number from? Who signed you up for this? There’s no

way you could've gotten into this class" and I was like "My advisor gave me the call number." And then he goes on to say "Well, um, give me her name because I am going to contact her and possibly write her up to the Dean." (7: 72-81)

As this occurred, Cicely mentioned being confused because she had followed all of the steps that her advisor had asked her to, and did not realize that the course required special permission or prerequisites that she had not fulfilled. Since the teacher chose this approach over explaining the problem, Cicely said she felt awkward for the entirety of the semester. As she said,

I went um after class, like just throughout the semester, I felt like he's just been cold to me....I also went to his office again to apologize and I walked in and he was just like "You're gonna need to wait outside." He's like "They were here first" and I was like "Okay. I was just letting you know I was here." Like trying not to be rude. (7: 82, 89-92)

Another student, Kelly, had a similar situation with a message of disregard on the first day of the course. She recalled attending the lab portion of the course where her teacher passed out a syllabus that included "demeaning" information and photographs. She stressed that, although this message was sent to the entire course and not just her individually, that she personally felt hurt by it. She then expanded specifically on the message that was hurtful,

He came in with um he had a printed piece of paper....Um but it started saying like "There are such thing as stupid questions, so don't ask them," like um "I don't bother you on your free time, so don't come into my office hours," like all

this separate stuff like don't bother me on my free time, like don't like um, "If you have a question on a quiz, it's a quiz, I'm not gonna-I'm not gonna help," like stuff like that. Then, on the back he had a huge picture of like a McDonalds french fry thing and it was like, it was a weird saying and it was something like, just like very demeaning and saying some people are meant to serve others." (29: 204, 220-226)

Kelly then disclosed that the message was hurtful because it made her perceive that he did not care about his students because he was so aloof on the first day of class and in the course policies that he included on the syllabus.

A few students remarked on the hurtful messages they experienced after struggling with the course material. It was when they approached their teachers about their struggles that they felt like the teacher communicated in a way that showed a lack of caring for them and their efforts in the course. For example, Jorge spoke about his performance on three exams in one of his courses. He mentioned that he took the third test and the teacher returned the grades during the next class period. He remembers receiving his third test grade, which was subpar, and speaking with the classmate whom he studying with and finding out that they answered the questions the same way, but did not have similar grades. He said, "It's like I had almost the exact same answers as the person I was studying with and my grade was still a D, F, I believe. And so I went up to her and asked her and said 'Is there any reason my grade is that way?' and she said uh 'You don't matter; it's fine'" (9: 75-78). Shocked by his teacher's statement, Jorge said "I'm like, I'm like 'Whoa—what?' I'm like 'I don't matter?' I'm like 'You mean my test

doesn't matter or I don't matter?' She just ignored me..." (9: 79-80). Jorge's teacher's statement, coupled with her lack of response when questioned, led Jorge to believe that he did not matter and that his teacher did not care about him.

Similarly, Samantha mentioned having difficulties with her quizzes. She described her difficulty as knowing the information, but not understanding the way it was presented in the quizzes. In order to seek help, she opted to e-mail her teacher. As a result,

He never returned my e-mails, I wrote him probably 3 e-mails, he never returned my e-mails, and then one day I went up to him after my second exam that I had done maybe a couple percentage points better on and I was like "Okay, I'm having a lot of problems with this class. I like [subject]; I'm normally pretty good at it. I know that doesn't really mean anything 'cause you're a different teacher, but I really need some help. I need some, you know, I need your guidance like I don't know what to do." (26: 208-215)

While Samantha mentioned opening herself up to her teacher and asking for help, she also mentioned his apparent lack of caring due to his response. She stated that, after she approached him and shared her concerns, the interaction ended in the following way:

You know, he basically [pause] he looked at me and [chuckles] he goes, "Well sweetheart" he goes, "Sometimes life's not fair and you have to" he's like "You have to know everything."....And it made me feel [pause] i-it made me feel really stupid. And I didn't appreciate the sweetheart thing." (26: 216-217, 225-226)

As Samantha shared, the condescending nature of the message—with the use of the term “sweetheart” and saying that life is not fair—implied that her teacher did not care about her and was not interested in helping her succeed in the course.

Another example of a message of disregard occurred when Mandie met with her teacher during office hours. She explained that her teacher had several points in the semester in which she required students to visit her office hours to discuss their progress in the course and on their group projects. During their private meeting, Mandie said,

I didn't miss class once, um I thought I was doing really well on the group projects and um which we met with her or whatever and she starts going off about how she doesn't wanna hear me talk in class. Because I annoy her and I annoy everybody else. Nobody in class likes me, um I have an attitude problem and I need to get that adjusted, and I should probably just drop the major. And so I got to the point of tears where I couldn't even say anything back to her. (3: 90-95)

Mandie explained the emotions that she felt after her teacher told her that she did not want her to speak during class. Specifically, she said “I felt really personally attacked and it was like right then and there that I was like okay, you do not care for me as a student...” (3: 110-111). Her emphasis on feeling like her teacher did not care about her as a student exemplifies the description of hurtful messages of disregard.

A final example of this type of hurtful message can be discussed using Richard's experience at the end of the semester. Immediately following final exams, Richard noticed that he was a few points (not percentage points) away from passing the course

and meeting his prerequisite requirements for the next level of courses in his field.

Richard said,

Well this was, it was after our final and I was like I think like 5 points away from a C or somethin' so I emailed her, just said, if you could find it in your heart to please somehow be able to find me 5 extra points and let me continue on and just help me save money, help me, you know, continue to go on to [course] and just get done with all these prerequisite classes...and she didn't email me back, didn't t-do anything like that so and then I just get on my [online transcript] like a week later and saw the D and I was just like "You..."...."You jerk." I guess I'll use that. "You jerk."....And so that kind of pissed me off. (27: 137-142; 147)

As I probed Richard for more information about his grade, he clarified that he understood that he may not be given a "break" with his grade, but that he felt the teacher could have at least responded to his e-mail request by letting him know that she would not be able to help him. He described himself as a student who went to office hours frequently and showed his teacher that he cared about the course as often as possible, so he felt that he deserved at least a response to his e-mail. Because he did not receive this response, he said "And then I don't know that was probably, that was probably just because I mean she knew who I was, she didn't e-mail me back, she coul- she didn't explain at all" (27: 151-153). Considering this exemplar along with the others in this section, it is clear that students may perceive their teachers to be uncaring when they feel ignored or if they feel that a teacher's unresponsiveness or aloofness is unwarranted.

### *One-Sided Accusations*

The next category of hurtful messages is that of *one-sided accusations*. A one-sided accusation occurs when a teacher reprimands a student before asking them for their side of the story. Several one-sided accusations occurred concerning potential academic dishonesty; however, it is important to note that one-sided accusations are not limited to this topic alone.

To begin, Jose explained that he was taking a course where everyone met in the computer lab and completed assignments using the computers. He said that his predicament was unique in that he and his friends did not share answers with each other, rather they worked together to type up a blank chart that they were asked to create.

Specifically,

Instead of going on two separate computers to copy the chart we uh, I read the chart, they copied it into the computer and um we didn't think anything of it because it was just a a basic, you know, take this chart from this paper, put it on the computer, and then we e-mailed it to each other so we had it and then we went and answered our questions individually. (12: 99-102)

Because this was a chart that had been provided to everyone, Jose did not feel as if he were committing academic dishonesty. Thus, the following interaction that he had with his teacher came as a surprise to him. According to Jose,

We turned uh the assignments in and then when we got them back a week or so later, um we had gotten uh an 88 out of 100...and there was nothing wrong with our answers, nothing wrong with the assignment except for, um on the top it said

“See me.” So both of us got that and so we both went and saw him and he talked to us about um he informed us of the cheating and academic um integrity policy for the [field] department and told us that that was why we had gotten points taken off—because we had cheated on our assignment. (12: 107-113)

For Jose, the hurtfulness of the message stemmed from being unable to defend himself and for being accused of cheating when he and his classmate did not work together on the actual assignment.

Similarly, Eric took a quiz in one of his courses and noticed that he lost credit for one of the short answer style essay questions. He proceeded to question his teacher about the reasoning behind his loss of credit, as he felt he had a strong argument in support of the answer that he wrote down. This confrontation ultimately led to the hurtful interaction. As Eric said,

I thought I had a pretty valid answer that her teaching assistant took off and you know I took it ‘cause I was on my way to my lab and I talked to my lab TA about it and I really didn’t understand why my answer was wrong and to be honest with you, she didn’t know why it was wrong either, so I thought I had a pretty valid point to go talk to the lecture teacher about, you know, why maybe I can get some credit back on this question. [pause] [sigh] So the next class period, um, she usually asks if people have any questions to come talk to her after class, so I tracked her down after class and brought up my point where I thought that, you know, this could’ve been right. And uh, I showed it to her and since it was a written response, um I had erased some stuff prior—this was all when I was



taking the quiz—I erased part of my response and added stuff in and just changed my answer when I was taking it. And she kind of accused me of cheating, that I changed it outside of class to take it to her and show her that I, you know, this was my answer. (21: 162-176)

Much like with Jose’s example, Eric felt hurt by the accusation of cheating—especially since he was not given the option to defend himself and was not given any other explanation regarding the situation.

Another example of a one-sided accusation occurred when Deshondra had to leave town to take care of a family situation before the due date for a major class assignment. Deshondra explained that she took her assignment with her and worked the entire time she was on the airplane. She mentioned that she knew that this subject was not her strongest suit, so she expected to receive a lower grade, but she did not expect to be accused of cheating. In her words, she explained:

We were right about to take a test and he handed them back and when he gave me mine back, he said “This was awful; I need to talk to you.” And I was like okay, ‘cause like I knew it wouldn’t be good and it’s like it’s not my strong point. And so I was like okay whatever, so I flipped through and on the back it said “I don’t accept cheating in this class” and I was like okaaay, you know, like maybe it was a misunderstanding, like I’ll just go talk to him. (8: 96-102)

Deshondra emphasized her attempt to approach this situation in a positive way, as she knew that this could potentially be a misunderstanding; however, when she attempted to discuss this with her teacher, she felt hurt by his response.

I went up and um just said, you know, “I can see you had a concern about like the integrity of my work [pause] I would like to discuss this with you.” And um he said, “Well, yeah, you cheated.” And I was like “Well actually, no I didn’t, but could you show me where the discrepancy is and maybe I could explain to you why it could be a problem?” And so he said “Sure” and he pulled out the other assignment that he thought I had copied off of and proceeded to look through both of them for probably 10-15 minutes while I stood there and waited and then he said um, he was like “Well, I don’t see what the problem was, but I could look it over again and talk to you later.” And I was like “Okay.” And he goes “But you’re off my blacklist for now.” (8: 103-111)

Deshondra highlighted that she felt hurt by the accusation and his inability to support his accusation, especially as he continued to end the interaction with a snide remark rather than an apology for the misunderstanding.

A final example of a one-sided accusation took place as Danielle completed an assignment and filed it into a shared sorority record at the end of the semester. The next semester, her teacher accused her of cheating as someone else from the sorority turned in the exact same paper that she had placed in the sorority file. Danielle claimed that she had no knowledge that her sorority sisters would turn in her work, but she did acknowledge that she knew they would use her work for ideas for their assignments. As Danielle recalled,

We had to write a lab report...and it was a really long um written paper. And then I like put mine into the test file after I completed the class and then the next

semester someone used the same one....he sent me an e-mail and like I didn't really know what it was about, you know it wasn't, I was actually thinking that like I might've like gotten some kind of like research assistant thing or something, and then I got there [teacher's office] and like he had my um paper and the one that someone else had turned in and it just kind of like shocked me and stuff and I just didn't really, like in the e-mail he didn't really say anything like what specifically we were gonna talk about, and he had like 3 other professors there, so it was really intimidating. (20: 137-139, 183-188)

While Danielle admitted during our interview that she was in the wrong for placing her assignment in the test file to begin with, she stated that the hurtful message was not so much the accusation, but the fact that her teacher caught her off guard by not sharing his concerns in the e-mail to allow her to prepare for their meeting. Instead, she was confronted by a panel of professors in the department and felt uneasy and scared as he made his accusations without knowing her version of the story. As is evident in the exemplars above, the common distinction in each of the hurtful messages in this category is the use of the "guilty before proven innocent" tactic by the offending teachers.

#### *Misunderstood Motives*

*Misunderstood motives* are another type of hurtful message that was discovered during my interviews with participants. This theme specifically deals with messages that show that the teacher did not understand the student's behavior. Examples of misunderstood motives typically deal with a teacher questioning a student's judgment or behavior. Several students felt hurt by these misunderstandings, as they felt that their

teachers may have been quick to assume that they were engaging in a certain behavior to be disruptive or disrespectful.

Amie described her class as being frustrated by her teacher's lack of knowledge about the online course system because it prevented her from being able to post students' grades in a timely manner. One day, she said that she mustered up some courage to speak for the class and share their concerns with the teacher. In doing so, she said,

I just told her that the class was worried that we weren't getting what we needed to out of it [the course] and asked her if she could like [deep breath] learn [the online course system] so we can get- know our grades....and she kinda got in my face and got that, you know, like "This is your first year in college you have to, you don't know what to expect" and [pause] um, that I don't have the right to question her teaching abilities and just like said I was attacking her or whatnot.

(15: 114-116, 210-212)

Amie expressed that she was not trying to attack her teacher or insult her teaching abilities; rather she was trying to show the teacher that the class was concerned about their performance and show her what strategies would help them learn the material. As her teacher felt insulted, she misunderstood Amie's motives and communicated negatively, hurting Amie's feelings in return.

Another example of misunderstood motives is evident in Dominic's narrative, as he said that he received conflicting information from a teaching assistant and his professor of record concerning notes that were to be taken on a guest lecturer's presentation. When he pointed out this conflicting information, he felt that his teacher

communicated in a way that mocked him and showed that he felt Dominic was attempting to stretch the truth. As he shared in his own words,

I said “My my teacher’s assistant they told me that we didn’t take-we didn’t need to take notes on this date with this uh for this presentation, they said that something was gonna be up on [the online course system],” I asked if uh if he knew anything about that or when it would be posted because the test was in like 5 days and um then he sent me back an e-mail...First it said um “Dominic, you are so very wrong” um “who told you” it was just a ridiculous e-mail like “who told you you didn’t need to take notes? Um you say they” like I remember this because I remember because I read it so many times...he was like “you say they” because I said they told me that I didn’t have to take notes and then it’s like “it’s al- it’s always they, um give me a name, give me the teacher’s as-assistants name...” (31: 165-175)

Dominic said that he felt hurt by this e-mail interaction, as his teacher did not trust him or, at least, tell him that he would speak to the teaching assistant and look into the matter.

Kevin also encountered a hurtful message due to his behavior being misunderstood by his teacher. He pointed out that his teacher required them to do skits to illustrate course concepts. He explained that his group created a skit using the movie Scarface as a referent,

Well it happened actually during a skit [pause]. And um, part of our skit, I can’t remember what it was about to this day, but I was- I was doing an accent [pause] like, from a Cuba- like I wa- I was a character from a movie....And I, and I made

it pretty clear that we're- it was- I was Tony Montana from Scarface, like, it wasn't like I was just saying, you know, an accent without any clarification of the character [pause] that I was portraying...After the speech she like, "I need to see you guys, see you after class." And I'm like, "Okay" and she just basically told me what a terrible person I was for [pause] doing this accent...and I was like "Oh, I'm so sorry, you know, I didn't even remotely mean anything by that at all." And she's like, "I don't care, I'm giving you a zero" all this stuff. And she's like, "Y-you're just not a good person." (23: 195-197, 209-214, 220-222)

As Kevin's exemplar illustrates, he felt hurt by the misunderstanding that occurred between him and his teacher following the skit. In each of these instances, a student's behavior is misunderstood and, thus, their motives are questioned, leading to hurt feelings.

#### *Refusal to Accommodate*

When teachers imply that a student's efforts do not matter and refuse to cooperate with their needs and extenuating circumstances, students perceive this behavior as hurtful. Correspondingly, this behavior is termed *refusal to accommodate*. In these instances, teachers do not excuse absences that are typically considered excusable and may discourage students from taking a particular course or choosing a certain major. This appeared to be a common theme, as students expressed the hurtfulness of these situations.

Several athletes mentioned having to miss classes due to University-approved events. In these instances, they are given a form for the teacher to sign, agreeing that

they will accommodate them by allowing them to complete their assignments early or make up any work that may be missed. Upon agreeing to do so, however, these students argued that their teachers did not comply with their requests. As Carla declared,

I handed in my form that said, you know, what days I would miss and if I could make things up and she was just really like these are the rules and she couldn't like leave or like help me in any kind of way, like I even offered to come in early and it's like she wouldn't work with me, so it's like it was kind of like she was trying to prove a point and I don't think that's what it should be about. (1: 76-79)

Stephanie shared a similar experience, as she said

One day I ha-you know, came up to her with my permit or my um [pause] letter of excuse to go on an away trip for a [sport] tournament and she just went off on me and she was freaking out and just telling me that I, there was no way I could stay in the minor because I wasn't gonna be- I wasn't being there and I wasn't participating and I shouldn't um be able to be in these courses or be a minor because I'm not fully participating. (6: 81-86)

Furthermore, Rachel identified her feelings after being told by her teacher that there was nothing that could be done to help her make up her required lab hours:

With me being a [athlete] on the [institution] [athletics] team, um some weeks would've been really difficult leaving like Wednesday and coming back Monday and um [pause] how it kind of started was that um I'd go to the teacher and I'd explain to her, you know, some weeks might be kind of difficult be cha-challenging to get these whole 50 minutes in and I'm not even here for the

weekend to do them on the weekend—because she said the lab was open on weekends—so then [pause] it was kind of like she wasn't really working with me. And was kinda like “Well then you shouldn't come take this class because they're rules and regulations that just can't be, that are fixed.” (16: 119-127)

In each of these instances, the students were hurt by their teachers' unwillingness to cooperate when they had to miss class requirements for a University-sponsored event. They felt that, because this event was University-sponsored and their teachers had knowledge of their traveling schedule, they should have been given the opportunity to make up their absences and/or work. Carla specifically stated,

I think you should like try to help a kid and so for the quizzes I missed 'cause I was traveling, I got 0's for and so I had to get a tutor like 4 times a week just to stay up in that class and um it was just hurtful because like she kinda was like belittling me in a way and like disrespecting me by not even trying to work with me at all. (1: 83-86)

Stephanie was also discouraged by this lack of accommodation and the suggestion to drop her minor. She said that she ultimately “came back and I did everything that I was supposed to do, um I finished the course, ended up with a 'B' but I ended up dropping my minor” (6: 91-93). Meanwhile, Rachel said that her teacher's suggestion to drop the course was especially hurtful as, “I was so excited to take the course, so that suggestion like really just hurt me because I wanted to do anything I could to even just work through that” (16: 206-207).



As the exemplars above indicate, at times teachers suggest that students drop their course, major, and/or minor. The students regard these suggestions as discouraging, especially when they feel that they are making every effort possible to be a good student despite the circumstances. This scenario was also experienced by Christina, who wanted to change her major from a subject that she was struggling with to one that she felt really showcased her talents. In order to do so, she scheduled an appointment with her teacher, who was also her advisor. As Christina told me:

I sent her an e-mail and um sh-I was talking about how I wanted to do it [change major] and how I know my performance um in my classes before this weren't good, but I had done well in the class that I'm taking right now with her and I want to and I think that this is where like my strengths can shine and I think that I'm creative and I just think that this is where I want to be and she basically e-mailed me back like 'cause you have to be admitted into the college? Um before you can get the call numbers and you have to have a 3.2 and I have a 3.15 and um I told her that by the end of this semester I will be at that, I'll have a 3.2 and um she wouldn't give me the call numbers for the classes and this is like, and I told her, "This is something I really, really wanna do and I am excited" and she basically like shot me down and this, like I've always kinda wanted to do this, and it's been something I've wanted to do and then I feel like I've been shut out and like to-said I shouldn't do this 'cause I'm not smart enough. (18: 166-176)

As illustrated by the exemplar above, after Christina's teacher told her that she could not accommodate her request to provide the call numbers for the courses that she wanted to

take, Christina became discouraged and hurt. Regardless of her feelings, Christina attempted to schedule a face-to-face meeting with her teacher to further discuss the situation. Once again, her needs remained unfulfilled, as she experienced the following:

And so I went in and I made an advising appointment with her and I went in and talked to her and this is kinda when I first got frustrated 'cause she, um, didn't uh she had accidentally scheduled a meeting during it and like I had send her an e-mail and told her like everything about why I wanted to schedule this advising appointment with her and then she had a meeting. (18: 194-198)

Christina not only walked away without having been able to meet with her teacher about her goals, but she also felt as though her teacher was “maybe pushing me away from the program when I told her like I think this is where I can excel and do really well” (18: 267-268).

Another example of refusing to accommodate a student's needs occurred when Rebecca needed to miss class to attend her grandmother's funeral. Consequently, the funeral was out of state and scheduled at a time when she had previously signed up for a required lab meeting. Rebecca explained,

I found out on a Saturday that my um grandma died. And so I go out of town to [state] for her funeral and I e-mailed every, all my professors and told them the situation um, and that I would be gone....and apparently he didn't believe me that there was a death in the family because that's a really common excuse according to him. And, I told him that I could, you know, bring the little pamphlet...and everything, and the obituaries and he really like didn't believe me....And it also,

um, just happened to be that I missed one of the lab times that I was signed up for because I was gone. So, when I came back [pause] um, I had just gotten an e-mail that said um, “You’re responsible for being at your lab every day. Like, every time that you’re signed up, you’ve signed up for it, you’re responsible for that,” and I was just like [pause] there really was nothing I could have done. (22: 160-162, 173-175, 179-184)

Because Rachel had notified her teachers in advance of her leaving town and suggested bringing documentation back to class with her to certify her absence as excused, she felt hurt by her teacher’s refusal to accommodate her needs following the death of her grandmother.

In a final example of refusing to cooperate with students’ needs, Kathryn spent time talking with me about her disability and the special needs that she has for completing assignments and taking class exams. Part of her disability requires that she attend physical therapy sessions at a time that is set by the hospital. This quickly became a barrier in the course that she was taking as she needed extended time for exams. After the first exam, she noticed that she did not have enough time for her exam, so she waited outside until the teaching assistants had finished grading the exams. As she thoroughly described:

I went back in in the classroom after they had finished grading it, um I couldn’t go in when they were doing doing the grading, but I waited and and then when I went in I said uh “This is something um that extended time on a test that probably is gonna be an issue for me, each, each week. Um how can we work that out?”

And he said, “Well can you come at uh, you know, can you come basically an hour before class?” And I said, “Actually no. I have a standing appointment at the hospital that cannot be rescheduled. Um, when else would work for you?” Um kind of putting the ball in his court, and uh really it should- I felt it should be when can I do it, but I said when can you do it and he said, “Well I’ve had physical therapy done, these” and he pointed to his knees “these knees? These- these both are replaced, so I’ve had lots of that done.” Um and he said “I’ve always rescheduled my appointments, so I don’t know what you’re saying by um by the fact that you can’t reschedule your appointments.” (14: 278-289).

In each of the above scenarios, students reported feeling hurt following an interaction where their teachers refused to accommodate them at a time when they were vulnerable or had a legitimate excuse for their circumstances.

### *Discrimination*

The final category of hurtful messages that was identified is *discrimination*. Messages of discrimination involve focusing negatively on characteristics that the student has and may not be able to change—such as gender, race, class, or other groups that they may belong to. While instances of discrimination were not as widely represented in the interviews as the other types of hurtful messages, the fact that they do occur coupled with the way that students described feeling as a result of discrimination warrants its inclusion as a theme in this study.

Charles, an international student, spoke with me about the way that his teacher discriminated against him based on his ethnicity. He quickly explained that his lack of

experience in this subject—due to his overseas upbringing, where the subject was less emphasized—caused him to struggle on his exams. When his teacher noticed his struggles, Charles felt that she communicated a remark that was discriminatory and hurtful. As Charles recalled,

What happened was I was the only [ethnicity] in that class and it was quite lower level [subject] and [sigh] normally if you get a score, right and your score wasn't that good, about like 75 something like 77, just go to the teacher and ask them questions and normally what teachers do uh like they answer your questions, they try to, you know, solve it out like uh what's the solution for this certain question. But she told me that, she told me she was really disappointed and ashamed because "How come you're in this class and how come you're getting this grade in this class even though you're [ethnicity]?" Yeah um uh it's it's not the first time I got discriminated like until my life, but I was really shocked I mean like how can you say you know all [ethnicity] are good in [subject], do you say all Italians are good in music or all Japanese people like sushis or that thing? (33: 198-207)

Charles felt that his teacher was inaccurate in her stereotypical belief that he should be able to perform well in a certain subject because of his ethnicity. As shown in the exemplar above, her use of a stereotype to inquire about his performance in the course was discriminatory and hurtful.

Stephanie also encountered a discriminatory message that was aimed her cultural upbringing. Stephanie informed me that her culture values respect for authority and that

part of this respect is to not question or otherwise interrupt persons of authority when they are speaking. She said that this upbringing caused her to be a quiet, but active participant in her graduate courses and that this was often mistaken for a lack of involvement by her department. In one case, she recalled,

The interaction was, um, I received a message that I needed to, uh basically get over my culturally-learned behaviors and my discomfort because this was academia and this was how academia functioned. And that I needed to adjust, um, my personal ways of interacting with people in order to perform to the ma-the majority culture [pause] standards.... [deep breath] Um [long pause] it was uncomfortable [pause] and humiliating. (6: 97-100, 236)

Both of the aforementioned cases exemplify direct and explicit forms of discrimination. As illustrated by Stephanie's narrative, her teacher's attempt to coerce her into changing her own culturally-learned behaviors to be more like the majority culture was hurtful and unfair; whereas Charles found his teachers' statement to be hurtful and misinformed. In the following section, I will discuss how the nine types of hurtful messages that were discussed in this section fit into the extant typology of teacher misbehaviors.

### Hurtful Messages and Teacher Misbehaviors

As the results of the first research question indicate, hurtful messages do occur in the college classroom. The second research question exists to determine whether these hurtful messages are representative of teacher misbehaviors. Since there is an existing typology of teacher misbehaviors, I deductively coded the types of hurtful messages from

the themes above into the existing teacher misbehaviors typology to answer this research question. As discussed in “Chapter Two,” Kearney et al. (1991) categorized teacher misbehaviors into three dimensions: incompetence, offensiveness, and indolence. As I explain in the sections that follow, two of the three types of teacher misbehaviors (incompetence and offensiveness) were represented in the types of hurtful messages that college students reported experiencing. Indolence, or behaviors that can be described as “absent-minded”, were not considered hurtful by the college students that were interviewed in this study.

### *Incompetence*

Teacher misbehaviors that are classified as being a form of incompetence deal with a teacher’s inability to embrace basic teaching skills. Specifically, these behaviors suggest that teachers do not seem to care about the course or their students, that they do not appreciate student input, and that they do not help their students (Kearney et al., 1991). By this definition, there were several types of hurtful messages that may easily be categorized as incompetence.

When teachers imply that students’ efforts do not matter and do not cooperate with their needs or extenuating circumstances, they are refusing to accommodate the student. This lack of accommodation may be perceived as being unhelpful and/or not caring about their students’ needs and efforts. This connection implies that the hurtful message type, refusal to accommodate, is congruent to the teacher misbehavior type, incompetence. Similarly, messages of disregard occur when teachers are aloof or are perceived as not caring about their students. These behaviors may range from being

impatient with students to ignoring students. These behaviors may also be considered incompetent, as the definition of hurtful messages of disregard explicitly states that the teacher is perceived as not caring about their students.

Misunderstood motives are also a form of hurtful messages that may be considered as incompetence. Because misunderstood motives deal with a teacher misunderstanding students' behavior, requests, or judgments, it is implied that the teachers do not appreciate student input and do not care to get to know the students well enough to ask them about their motives. By behaving in such a way that shows that they are offended by or do not appreciate students' behavior, they are letting their emotions get in the way of their teaching. Thus, students become hurt and perceive the teacher as being incompetent because they were unable to handle the situation professionally. While this behavior, along with refusal to accommodate and disregard, is considered to be indicative of incompetent teacher misbehaviors, the majority of the types of hurtful communication were considered to be offensive. This connection is described in the following section.

### *Offensiveness*

When teachers behave in ways that are considered offensive, they may be perceived as discouraging, humiliating, or otherwise condescending to their students (Kearney et al., 1991). Several of the hurtful messages that students reported during the interviews are considered offensive, by this definition. This is a logical connection, as it makes sense that a person will become hurt by a behavior that is considered offensive.

As the name implies, deconstructive criticism is a form of criticism that is insensitive or negative in tone, is not constructive, and implies that the efforts of the



student do not matter to the teacher. This behavior may be considered both discouraging and humiliating, and may also be considered condescending in tone. As such, this type of hurtful message is analogous to offensive teacher misbehaviors. Similarly, public embarrassment occurs in front of individuals other than the teacher and student, and humiliates or otherwise makes students feel uncomfortable. Due to the discomfort and humiliation that occurs in this type of hurtful message, it is obvious that it would be considered offensive by students.

Another form of hurtful messages that would be considered offensive is discrimination. These messages focus negatively on characteristics that a student has and may not be able to change. The condescending and insulting nature of these messages warrant their consideration as offensive teacher misbehaviors. Akin to discrimination, inappropriate jokes may also be considered offensive. This type of hurtful message involves teachers teasing students, which may not be welcomed by the students who perceive the jokes to be in bad taste. Because these jokes may be considered humiliating or condescending to the students, they may be incorporated the category of offensive teacher misbehaviors.

Finally, false assumptions and one-sided accusations are also considered offensive behavior. With false assumptions, teachers make incorrect presumptions about a students' performance or dedication to the course using a negative tone. These assumptions may be humiliating when communicated in public, and may also be considered discouraging and condescending depending on the assumptions that were made. Similarly, one-sided accusations occur when teachers reprimand students before

asking them for their side of the story. The act of reprimanding may be considered condescending, humiliating, and discouraging depending on the context that it occurs. Because of these congruencies, both of these types of hurtful messages may be categorized as offensive teacher misbehaviors.

Each of the nine hurtful message types were easily categorized into two of the three teacher misbehavior types, illustrating the connection between hurtful messages and teacher misbehaviors (see Figure 2). In the next section, our understanding of this phenomenon is furthered as we learn the ways that students respond the hurtful messages that they perceive being communicated to them by their teachers.

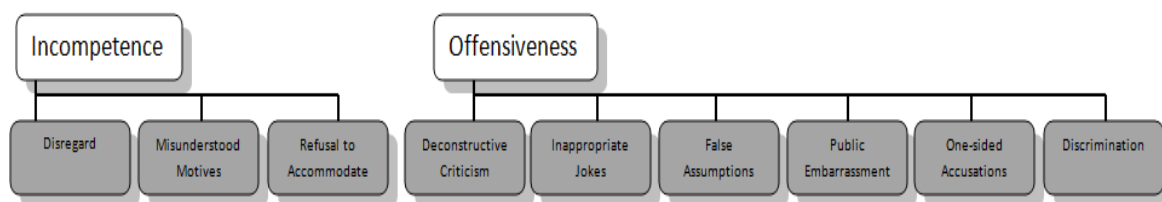


Figure 2: Types of Hurtful Messages as Teacher Misbehaviors

### Students' Responses to Hurtful Messages

To fully understand the phenomenon of hurtful messages in the college classroom, we must not only understand the types of hurtful messages that are communicated, but also the ways that students respond to these messages. In an instance where a student has been hurt, the way that they choose to respond to the hurtful message says a great deal about the relationship they have with their teachers and the comfort level that they feel following the hurtful interaction. Thus, the third research question addresses the ways that students respond to teachers after their feelings have been hurt. As the interview data suggests, there are three main themes that explain students'

responses to hurtful messages: active verbal, invulnerable, and acquiescent. Each of these themes is explained in detail in the following section.

### *Active Verbal*

Active verbal responses occur when the offended individual confronts the offender about the hurtful message (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). These types of responses can be either positive or negative, which may relate to the ability or inability to repair a relationship that has been compromised by a hurtful message (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). In this study, three types of active verbal responses emerged: attack (negative), silence (neutral), and asking for or providing an explanation (positive).

### *Attack*

Several students reported using the attack response strategy when they were hurt by their teachers' remarks. A few of them explicitly described this as being "defensive," while others implied that it was defensive as they threatened to tell a superior or directly addressed their teachers concerning their feelings about the message. As Kendra said, "I got very defensive with her on the phone, I um told her her class was a joke um I-we-our relationship kind of got hashed out from that point on but this it was um we had to turn in our final and then that was it" (2: 103-105). Similarly, Samantha "got a little defensive and I was like, 'Well I know life's not fair and I know that this isn't your problem, but I'm coming to you as a student because I am struggling and I-I was like I it's not like I'm not trying.' And he literally just kind of wrote me off" (26: 311-313).

Deshondra attempted a similar strategy as she described,

I was like “I appreciate that, but...” and then he like kind of laughed and I was like “I really don’t think this is funny,” you know, I was like “I appreciate-I appreciate that like that you can be lighthearted about it,” but I was like “I really take the integrity of my work seriously” I was like “I was actually out of town, there is no way I copied.” (8: 111-114).

Furthermore, Kathryn explicitly disagreed with her teacher and then threatened further action, as she suggested that she would speak to some of her teacher’s superiors because she knew that his actions were against the law. In her own words, she explained:

And I said well um, you know, “Sir, I don’t know exactly how you’re coming to that conclusion that- I am capable of doing everything that anybody else in this classroom and, can do, um I may just go at it a little bit differently, I may, my brain may work a little bit differently but really, it-it’s what co-comes out”....Uh and I also knew that there was a law that he would have to follow. And he would be breaking if he denied me that request, so I said “Well uh, I guess you need to, it’s not between me and you, I guess it’s between you and maybe um” a-and I named people that were higher up, um Disability Coordinator, the Dean of Students. (14: 367-370, 410-413)

As evidenced by each of these exemplars, attack strategies were often negative in tone or became negative following a response from the teacher that the student deemed unsatisfactory.

### *Silence*

Another type of active verbal response that was used by students was silence. Students explained that they were silent following the communication of a hurtful message because they were afraid, shocked, intimidated, or caught off guard by their teacher's remark. A great deal of students reported using this response strategy. Several students remained silent and then immediately left their teacher's office. As they said, "So, I just walked out of the office" (34: 93); "Well, afterwards, I just left the room [laughs] 'cause she said there was absolutely nothing she could do and I was really down, I was hurt" (16: 339-340); "I just left...just walked out and didn't really meet with her again" (28: 278); "So I was kinda in shock with how she shut me out and and then I just left, I gave my paper back to her and just left" (21: 313-314); "But I-I was really mad at the time and so I left the office mad, but I didn't say anything to her" (19: 194); "I left I think. I mean, I didn't really have anything to say after that so [chuckles] I kinda left and, I mean, the rest of the semester was kinda, I didn't really talk to her and when I needed to talk to her, I was short and to the point" (15: 318-320).

While the aforementioned examples occurred at a time when students were in a private discussion in their teachers' office or after class had ended, the following exemplars are representative of more public situations. In these cases, students could not leave the room, so they instead chose to remain silent for the remainder of class. Charles described being shocked by the hurtful message, so "I was speechless...I was really shocked at that times, so. So that's that was the main thing happened to me" (33: 386, 221-222). Similarly, Lupe said, "It was just like that was it and I was like 'Ookay. Well,

nevermind. I won't ask a question again.' So yeah, that kind of um took me off guard" (4, 88-89). Kelly described her response of silence as being in unison with the rest of her classmates, who had also witnessed the interaction. She said, "We were just so freaked out, but like during that first class I'm pretty sure like, it was like you could hear crickets or like a pin drop in the room because everybody was just like oh my gosh....Like we were all silent" (29: 313-315; 319). Dominic explained that he used silence because he was intimidated by his teacher, but in retrospect he wishes that he would have had a more active response. As he shared,

Yeah I think just because I was a freshman and a little just nervous and intimidated by this guy, I didn't do anything, but yeah I definitely wish I would've met him in person and asked uh, you know, that e-mail didn't really help me at all, that wasn't uh what I was expecting, um can you maybe go in further about what I can do or something like that, I definitely wish I would've said something. (31: 297-301)

Other students mentioned remaining silent after the hurtful message was communicated out of fear of further angering or offending the teacher which could ultimately affect their grades in the course. As Brandon disclosed, "No I kind of just, I don't know, it's a pretty subjective class, I didn't want her to hate me and give me a bad grade in a stupid class....I just kind of minded my P's and Q's and got out of there" (17: 237-238, 242). Also, Dillon remarked, "I just kind of took it [nervous chuckle] there's nothin' I really could've done" (30: 235). Richard argued that there is no way for him to respond to his teacher without ruining his potential for passing the class, so he chooses to

“just mean-mug her” instead (27, 212). Finally, Stephanie said that she was silent following the hurtful message because “I was just kind of afraid of her. Just ‘cause she had never acted like that before so....and I didn’t wanna get her even more mad before....I get some kind of grade” (6: 370-371, 376, 379).

*Asking For or Providing an Explanation*

A more positive form of the active verbal response is used when students choose to respond by asking for or providing an explanation to their teachers. Several students chose to respond to their teachers’ hurtful messages by asking them for further information or clarification to support their assertions, or by explaining their behavior to the teachers. In one scenario, Deshondra asked her teacher to provide an explanation as to where the discrepancy was located in her work. As she said, “He was like ‘Well, yeah you cheated.’ And I was like, ‘Well actually no I didn’t, but could you show me where the discrepancy is and maybe I could explain to you why it could be a problem’ (8: 105-106)? In another instance, Jorge thought that he may have misunderstood his teachers’ comment when she said that he did not matter, so he asked for her to explain herself. As he explained, “I said ‘Excuse me, what was that again?’ And she just ignored me like she couldn’t hear me and moved on to the next person. And I thought that was very hurtful” (9: 283-284).

Rather than asking for an explanation from their teachers, some students chose to provide an explanation for their own behavior or needs to their teachers. When accused of cheating, Jose stated his case for why he did not feel that he was cheating:

Immediately when he said it, I said something along the lines of “I don’t know how you consider this cheating, we have the we have this chart that you’ve given us in our handout and we both have it exactly as it is on the handout in our um project and we have the part that required thinking or putting our minds to it we have completely different.” (12: 226-229)

Carla attempted to explain herself against her teachers’ implication that she did not care about the course because she was missing class due to athletics. As she said, “Um, I just told her that it was important to me or else I wouldn’t be e-mailing her and I tried to not say it in a rude way, but I mean that’s kind of where I took it” (1: 122-123). Similarly, Kathryn tried to explain that she could not arrive early to class to have extra time to take her exams because her physical therapy appointments were set in stone and non-negotiable. She described her response

And I said well um, “Actually it’s just uh that’s just how it is, um I see a therapist who’s only there one day a week for a short about of time” so uh, really not giving him much of a chance to, you know, bat me down or to to say much about that, I just said “Well, you know, c-can w work this out at another time?” (14: 293-296)

Each of these exemplars illustrate a positive response provided by students when they felt that they needed more information to substantiate a teachers’ claims or when they wanted to help clear up a misunderstanding that they thought had occurred between themselves and their teachers.



### *Invulnerable*

Another form of response following the communication of a hurtful message is invulnerable response. These types of responses occur when the offended individual acts as though they were not affected by the hurtful message (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). Two types of invulnerable responses were used by students who participated in this study: laughing and crying.

#### *Laughing*

A few students chose to utilize the invulnerable response of laughing to respond to the hurtful messages that were communicated to them. Laughing was used to mask the hurt that students felt or to celebrate the act of proving their teachers wrong. As Aaron responded after he correctly answered the question that his teacher assumed he would not be able to answer correctly, “Well, I laughed back at her and when I told her the right answer then I just kind of started talking to my friends again to see if she did it again, just to prove her wrong again” (32: 145-146). In a different situation, Tamika was hurt by her teachers’ remarks about her boyfriend having bad taste in women, so she chose to force an exaggerated laugh so as to shield her feelings of hurt. In her own words, “I well, I won’t put a judgment on it, but what I did was I laughed really loudly, like too loudly, inappropriate loudly” (10: 267-278).

#### *Crying*

Another form of invulnerable response that was used by students following the communication of a hurtful message by one of their teachers was crying. Students who used crying as a response described being unable to control the tears as they welled up

during the incident and in the days that followed the incident. During the interviews, they were visibly bothered by the recollection of the event in which the hurtful message occurred. Sarah recalled being disturbed by the hurtful message so much that she would grow frustrated during class as she thought of her teachers comment and refrained from participating:

I would cry some days in that class just ‘cause I would know the answers to some of the stuff that he would say and like but these other kids like I would just let answer him because I felt so dumb, like I didn’t wanna open my mouth in front of him. (5: 101-104)

Furthermore, Mandie remembered the way that she felt after the hurtful message and said, “Um, well I left her office crying [nervous laugh] and I couldn’t say anything” (3: 455).

#### *Acquiescent*

A final type of response that was used by students after they perceived their teachers to have communicated a hurtful message to them is acquiescence. When an individual gives in and acknowledges that the offender has hurt them, they are considered to be communicating an acquiescent response (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). This response is often used when someone is deeply hurt by the message that was communicated by the offender (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). There were two types of acquiescent responses used by students who participated in this study: giving in and apologizing to the offender.

### *Giving In*

Several students reported responding to the hurtful message by “giving in,” or succumbing to their teachers’ suggestions or wishes, even if they did not agree with them. As Danielle illustrates, “I was like, ‘Okay, I accept um the responsibility of this cheating um I hope that like my punishment won’t be too harsh’ and I was just like ‘Is there anything I can do to help like, you know, fix this problem or, you know, can I possibly retake the class’ (20: 370-372)? In another situation, Rachel explained that she had to take personal responsibility and work hard to find a way to make-up the time that her teacher would not excuse during her absences. She said, “I went and I went online and I went at the lan-looked at the lab times and I saw where I can maybe fit it in, in between practice go get 10 minutes there, 10 minutes there, so I found a solution, which was hectic, but I made it work” (16: 365-369). Similarly, Christina told her teacher “...that I was just gonna work hard to try to get my GPA up and try to see If I can get in those classes” (18: 373-374).

### *Apologizing to Offender*

Another acquiescent strategy that was used by students was apologizing to the offender, in this case, their teacher. A few of the apologies that were communicated by these students were sincere; however, several of the apologies were issued as more of a respectful response, whereby the student did not know any other way to respond but politely. Maria apologized to her teacher in an effort to be polite and show that she would work to improve. As she disclosed, “And so I was trying not to cry in the office. I was trying to think, really fast, of something that I could say to apologize. I felt really

inadequate so I felt like I had to [pause] basically apologize for the way I was and [pause] promise her that I would change the way that I am” (11: 141-144). Danielle recalled sending her teacher “a really long e-mail of apology” (20: 190), and Thomas said, “I was a little taken aback with how he went about it. I was just like ‘Okay.’.... ‘Sorry.’ [chuckle]” (24: 272).

Kevin felt that his behavior was misinterpreted by his teacher, so he chose to apologize for potentially offending her. He said, “I was like, a-told her and I was like, ‘Oh, I’m so sorry, you know, I didn’t even remotely mean anything by that at all” (23: 220-221). In addition to this, other students chose to apologize in an effort to correct the situation and suggest ways that the situation could be rectified. Cicely described the way that she “apologized and then said I had no idea and then asked if there was any way I could remain in the class” (7: 130-131). Rebecca responded in a similar manner, as well:

I remember saying something like um, “I apologize. There’s nothing in this situation that I could have done differently. I hope that there’s something that we can work out, you know, between like getting, having an extra assignment for extra points or something like that.” But, he didn’t say anything back to that, so. (22: 390-393)

It is evident that, in each of the three response scenarios discussed in this section, students were bothered by the hurtful message and had various reasons supporting the responses that they chose to enact. In the section that follows, I discuss the role that face plays in students’ feelings of hurt and the responses that they choose to employ following the communication of a hurtful message.

## Face and Hurtful Messages

As the themes for each of the research questions emerged, it became obvious that Face Theory plays an important role in teacher-student communication, especially as it pertains to the communication of hurtful messages in this relationship. Research questions four and five deal specifically with the face needs of the student, how these needs may have been threatened by the hurtful message, as well as how students attempted to repair their face following the communication of a hurtful message. As such, the three types of face threats and two types of facework, as well as the influence of instructional face-support are discussed in the sections that follow.

### *Face Threats*

Regardless of the context, individuals generally have two face needs: the desire to be liked and respected by those who are significant in our lives (positive face), and the desire to be autonomous (negative face). When these face needs are threatened, or compromised, individuals become embarrassed or upset. This particular scenario is no different in the teacher-student relationship. The interviews that I conducted with students support Kerssen-Griep, Hess, and Trees' (2003) contention that students have three main face needs when interacting with their teachers in the college classroom. When their face needs are threatened, they feel hurt. In the paragraphs that follow, I will discuss each of these three face needs in more depth: competence, autonomy, and fellowship.

### *Competence*

The first type of face threat that students reported experiencing as a result of their teachers' communication was competence. Competence is considered a positive face need, as it pertains to students' desires to be viewed as intelligent and capable individuals. Many students reported being hurt by their teachers' communication because they felt that the teacher was implying that they were incapable of succeeding in the course, the major/minor, or their future careers. When a teacher communicates in such a way that they threaten a students' face need for competence, students perceive them to be lacking in approbation—a form of instructional face support that deals directly with criticism and feedback.

Erin recalled feeling a threat to her competence face following her teachers' criticism of her work. As she explained, "She didn't try to say anything positive. She didn't, you know, try to say, 'This is what you did wrong, but you can help it by this or you can.' She didn't form any kind of positive or any, like it's okay to criticize, but, like, there was no constructive criticism" (28: 233-236). Similarly, Emily felt that her confidence in her work was compromised following her teachers' criticisms, as "just like the *tone* and like [pause] you know...one of the things is confidence and it was just like *really* questioning my confidence. Like, oh, you're really this stupid that you don't understand what this is saying? Even though *no one* else does [chuckle]" (25: 248-251).

In the same way, Jamal felt that his teacher threatened his competence face because she assumed that he was not intelligent because he had completed his assignment incorrectly. In his own words,

I don't think she understood that a lot of the students had taken [subject] before, so they've seen how to do things, but I don't think she understood that there were students in there that didn't take [subject]. And I think she kind of just made it feel like I was maybe not as smart as the other students. That's what's kind of hurtful to me, I mean, it was just kind of like, you know, I'm a smart person, but I've never seen this before, so I'm doing this stuff for the first time. (13: 197-202)

Similarly, Stephanie described being faced with an important decision concerning her future career goals. As she considered taking on a minor in a certain field, she met resistance from her teacher who told her that she would not be successful with the minor. She described this as being a threat to her competence face as,

I was expecting to switch into that as a minor...that made me be like oh my gosh, maybe I shouldn't be doing this, maybe I'm making the wrong decision, where am I going with my life kind of a thing? So, I think that's like that really got to me personally...because she was basically telling me that I wouldn't be successful if I continued in the minor. (6: 212, 214-217).

Akin to the experience of the aforementioned students, Lauren described her teachers' communication as an insult to her intelligence. As she stated,

Well, for one, I tried really hard in that class. And so I felt like, that her telling me that I wasn't intellectually curious or like it kind of, to me, it mean like you're not really smart, you don't really care about school, you don't really care about any of that and I tried really hard in that class especially because I *really, really* don't like [subject]. (19: 257-260)

Deshondra felt hurt for many of the same reasons, as she explained that being accused of cheating made her believe that her teacher felt she was incapable of doing good work on her own. She said that what was most hurtful was the way that her teacher was “accusatory about um the fact that I had cheated. It wasn’t like there is an issue, can we discuss it? It was you did this and you’re wrong and didn’t even like didn’t even think that maybe I could complete something on my own. That was what was most upsetting to me” (8: 144-154). Similarly, Jose was also hurt by his teachers’ accusation concerning his academic integrity, as he said “I think it was the fact that [pause] he accused [pause] me and my friend of of cheating. Uh [pause] I’ve never been a cheater, I’ve never thought of cheating, um especially in college” (12: 143-145).

As each of these exemplars suggest, there were various ways in which teachers threatened their students’ competence face, leading to feelings of hurt and inadequacy in these students. In most cases, these threats to competence occurred following a direct criticism of a students’ work or capabilities, or an indirect challenge of their academic integrity. While threats to competence face needs were experienced by some students, others reported being hurt by threats to their autonomy face needs. In the following section, I discuss autonomy face threats.

### *Autonomy*

The next type of face threat that students described as contributing to their feelings of hurt following an interaction with their teachers was autonomy. Autonomy is a negative face need, as it deals with students’ desire to be autonomous or viewed as unique individuals. Students who expressed receiving a threat to their autonomy face



needs shared examples of their teachers judging them based on stereotypes or previous experience that they had with other students rather than what they knew about them as individuals. This particular type of face threat is analogous to the instructional face support concept of tact, which deals with the diplomacy that teachers demonstrate when handling classroom concerns.

Several students felt threats to their autonomy face as teachers judged their classroom performance based on stereotypical referents. Charles felt that his teacher assumed that because he was of a particular ethnicity that he should do well in the course. He described this assumption as being a source of pressure for him throughout the semester, because he felt that he did not know the course subject material as well as his teacher thought that he should. As he posted, “I mean like she was, she kept on repeating that the whole semester and then gave me a lot of pressure whenever it comes to test day, like you know, I don’t know what she’s going to say to me after this test result” (33: 336-338). He added,

Then I was really sh- I was really sick one day, um uh you know from the dorm, so I was sick and I just couldn’t go to the class and um, but I was- I was just afraid that you know, you know [ethnicity], you know, she thinks all [ethnicity] are all hard-working and if she- if you miss one class, and I didn’t wanna hear those kind of stuff because I tho-she, I-I knew she would say this kind of stuff. So that was kind of big pressure. All semester. (33: 339-343).

Just as Charles was judged based on stereotypical beliefs about his ethnicity, Kendra and Carla felt that they were judged based on common stereotypes about a social group that

they belonged to. As student athletes, they mentioned that many teachers believe that student athletes expect their grades to be handed to them and that they do not think that they have to work hard to succeed in a course. Kendra said that what was most hurtful about her teacher's communication was "just getting that that stereotype that athletes really don't care about their education and that she kind of blew that out of proportion and gave me that label when I didn't do anything to give her that reason to give me that label" (2: 135-137). Similarly, Carla felt that

Athletes in general kind of get like a negative stereotype about like they just do, they're just known for sports and they don't even have to try in classes 'cause teachers will give them, like be lenient on them and stuff and I don't think that's true at all, like I think if anything they're kind of more, they're harder on us just to prove a point....So I think that for her to like disrespect me in that way and be like like I don't even care about the class and then to say that I um like being an athlete blah blah blah, that just, it really set me off. (1: 138-147)

Other students received threats to their autonomy face needs due to being judged by teachers without an explanation of the basis for the judgment. Mandie mentioned an instance that was hurtful to her, when her teacher told her that she had an attitude problem and that no one wanted to hear her speak in class. She felt that this particular request to stop participating was a constraint to her classroom experience, and described feeling shocked by this judgment. She claimed,

I didn't know what to think. Honestly. Like I was just, I never had this done before and um I was really expecting 'I think you have an attitude problem, but

it's because you do this...' and then giving me a chance to explain and it, it wasn't like that. I just I felt so personally attacked and my first thoughts were, what am I gonna do about this? I really felt like I had absolutely nowhere to turn to. And, I mean, my first thought, just hopeless—like I didn't know what to do. (3: 198-220)

In a similar instance, Cicely felt as though she were improperly judged by her teacher and could not recall any reason that her teacher may have made this judgment about her. She described this threat to autonomy face as being hurtful because, “he judged me immediately without even knowing like what kind of person I am. And that he um, yeah, just already made like, made me out to be a certain type of person and I'm probably the complete opposite of what he thought I was” (7: 147-152).

Thus, students experienced threats to their autonomy face, based on unfounded judgments and the use of stereotypes as referents for expected behavior. As evidenced by each of these exemplars, these threats lead to feelings of hurt and shock in the students. Students who were not hurt by threats to their competence or autonomy face needs reported being hurt by threats to their needs for fellowship. In the following section, I discuss fellowship face needs in more detail.

### *Fellowship*

The final type of face threat that students described as contributing to their hurt feelings was fellowship. An overwhelming amount of students felt that the most hurtful aspect of the interaction that they had with their teachers was the lack of fellowship that they felt during the communication. Fellowship is a positive face need, which focuses

directly on students' desires to be liked and respected by their teachers and fellow students. The students who cited a lack of fellowship between themselves and their teachers referred to feeling alone, misunderstood, or ignored during their communication with the offending teacher. Fellowship face needs are connected to the solidarity aspect of instructional face-support, as students wish to be treated as allies, rather than enemies.

One particular need that students felt to be necessary to a successful teacher-student relationship is that of fellowship. Those who felt that their teachers viewed them as unimportant, subordinates, or enemies reported feeling "betrayed" (21: 244) by hurtful messages. As the following exemplars indicate, students felt as though they were in a battle with their teachers, rather than being part of a union that was committed to success in the classroom. As Sarah said, "It didn't feel like he was trying to help me, it was like he was just degrading me, like and like we're from two different backgrounds obviously and it felt like he was degrading me for that, like that of course your vocabulary is gonna be higher than mine, especially at this point" (5: 157-159). She went on to say, "I am fine with criticism...but this was different like I've never been criticized to a point where it felt like I was just like zero, like I've never felt so below anyone in my life and I felt like that with him, like that's what made it so hurtful...I didn't feel like he was trying to help me" (5: 161-164). Lupe shared a similar sentiment as she described her teachers' communication as making her feel as though she was not worthy of his time or instruction: "It just seemed like I kinda felt stupid, I guess. I felt like I wasn't really worthy of his time kind of, so that was probably the most hurtful part" (4: 135-136).

This clear distinction between teacher and student roles was also a contributor to students' feelings of hurt as Dominic described, "He even really like took the side of you're the student, I'm the instructor, I think. And like that, the intimidating wannabe like overpowering also he didn't even really go into my question at all, he was like just playing de- on the defensive end" (31: 220-223). This role distinction led to feelings of intimidation for students like Kelly who said that, "knowing that he didn't want us to ask him questions, especially if he considered them [start air quotations] stupid questions [end air quotations], like then there was no place to go, we were just on our own" (29: 331-334). As Kathryn summarizes, "And everything that you do and say reminds you uh that you're not the one, uh you're the student and he's the professor" (14: 234-235).

Another assertion made by the students was that teachers should be willing to show concern for students and attempt to understand their needs and varying circumstances. Richard commented directly on this issue as he said,

I mean just e-mail me back, I mean, I'm sure you can find the time to say 'Well, I can't do this I'm sorry, I apologize,' but just she didn't e-mail me back and I think that just kind of [long pause] lost respect for her. As a teacher. Just kind of, she hasn't responded and that should be her responsibility, so that and just [long pause] the way she kind of does that in class kinda just makes me f- just not wanna be there at all. (27: 218, 225-227)

Similarly, when Jorge expressed his concern over this poor performance in his teachers, class, she told him "You don't matter," which left a particularly sour taste in his mouth. He openly disclosed,

I thought back to when the coaches were recruiting me and they said, we want you to come here and we'd love you to come here, and even I was here for camp and they were encouragin' me, I was goin' on-on 100% and uh I, I'm sorry, I didn't even say in the story, but I even had surgery...and I'm in class...tryin' to do everything I can, I was still asking questions, it wasn't like I was ditchin' classes with my injury. And uh, even- even then my coaches and my academic advisors and tutors and classmates, they were helpin' me out, people I don't even know, but the teacher who's supposed to be available, she wouldn't wanna talk to me and when she did talk to me it was quick, to the point, there was nothing else to be helpful with. Um, it just really hurt when she said, "You don't matter." (9: 139-147).

Along these lines, demonstrating fellowship also seemed to imply students' needs for positive affirmation and understanding. As Maria pondered the things that her teacher could have done to show solidarity, she remarked:

She probably could have addressed, um, what [pause] she understood my, um, where I was coming from first. Probably could have connected with me a little better, um, maybe mentioned that she understood that I came from a different background if she knew that. Maybe ask me [pause] why [pause] these things were happening, specifically that they were concerned about first, so that she could get my input and maybe just, um, empathized with me a little bit more. And then, also having specific *tools* or specific suggestions or things that I could do. (11: 259-265)

Part of this process of positive affirmation includes making students feel as though they are trusted, especially if they have not given teachers a reason to believe that they should not be trusted. As Kevin said, “for her to tell me that I was a bad person was just, I thought it was a little out of line, like, she maybe could have... pulled me aside and told me you know, you know, ‘Maybe you should think about this, you know, you don’t want to offend anybody’” (23: 510-513). Similarly, Rebecca remarked that being accused of lying when she disclosed that her grandmother had passed away was hurtful and showed a lack of fellowship between herself and her teacher. She said,

I felt like he was like thinking that I was a liar. Like, I felt like, I wasn’t trust-like, very trustworthy and that he just assumed that I was making excuses and that I wasn’t trying and it was especially, around the time when my grandma died, I was catching up on so much homework. Like, a lot of my professors *were* really understanding about it and they gave me extra time to do everything. But it was still *so* much homework that I, like, had it just bombarded, basically, on me. And it was an emotional time, I didn’t really—I didn’t have any motivation to do homework, I just wanted to be with my mom, like, I just, you know, um. So, I mean that, it was just a s- a stressful time in general, but then having that on top of it was kind of so much worse. (22: 289-297)

As the exemplars pertaining to fellowship face needs illustrate, students expect that teachers will be understanding of their needs and willing to accommodate them during times in which they are struggling. By communicating to students in a way that threatens their needs for fellowship, students perceive being hurt and betrayed.

### *Facework*

Once we understand the face needs that students have and the ways that these face needs are threatened, it becomes important to understand how students interact and attempt to restore their face once it has been threatened. Upon receiving hurtful messages from teachers, students explained various forms of responses that they enacted for differing reasons. As evidenced by the exemplars provided in the section titled, “Students’ Responses to Hurtful Messages,” students enacted corrective facework in their responses to teachers following the communication of a hurtful message. This form of facework was used with the purpose of rectifying the hurtful situation and/or avoiding the possibility of receiving hurtful messages in the future. Each of the categories of responses communicated by students—active verbal, invulnerable, and acquiescent—were used as forms of corrective facework. To avoid repetition, as these types of responses were discussed earlier in this chapter, I will focus my discussion of corrective facework on the purpose of the specific strategies that students employed in their responses to hurtful messages.

#### *Minimizing Future Occurrences*

Corrective facework is used as a strategy for repairing a loss of face once it has occurred (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Many students in this study, however, used corrective facework as a step to thwart a potential hurtful message from being communicated after the initial hurtful message had occurred. Particularly, when students reported feeling personally attacked or especially hurt by their teachers’ behavior, they responded by enacting various strategies to prevent the likelihood that another hurtful message would



be communicated in the future. The specific strategies used by students were those discussed as “active verbal” responses earlier in this chapter. In particular, students responded using one of the following types of responses: attack (negative), silence (neutral) or asking for or providing an explanation (positive).

When students enacted the attack strategy, they described being especially offended by the teachers’ remarks, so they immediately decided to become “defensive” (2: 103). In this regard, the attack strategy was used as students attacked their teachers’ approach to the course, directly told the teacher that they were wrong, or threatened to report the teacher to a superior. Students who used this strategy described making it clear to teachers that “it was important to me or else I wouldn’t be e-mailing her” (1: 122-123), or asking for clarification to determine whether they had misunderstood the hurtful message. Some of the specific language used in these interactions included, “Actually no I didn’t, but could you show me where the discrepancy is” (8: 106), and “Excuse me, what was that again?” (9: 283). Ultimately, this type of response is considered a negative form of facework because it does not promote relational reparation. For the students, however, this response was a way for them to defend themselves and let the teacher know that they would not let them communicate a hurtful message without responding directly to that message.

Another active verbal response that was used by students to prevent a future occurrence of hurtful messages was that of silence. Students described using the silence strategy when they were shocked by a hurtful message or afraid of/intimidated by the teacher who they believe communicated the hurtful message to them. Silence was

typically expressed by students listening to the hurtful message and then immediately leaving the room (if class was over or if they were attending office hours), or putting their heads down and avoiding eye contact. Students who described using silence as a response also mentioned distancing themselves from their teacher (physically and/or relationally). Several students reported dropping the course, the major, or the program and terminating their relationship with the teacher; however, there were many instances where students were unable to drop the course or did not want to give up on themselves or the class. In these cases, students reported physically distancing themselves from the teacher by “not saying anything in the class...just showing up, doing the work, and leaving,” (1: 373-374) or “move myself towards to back so that maybe I’m not, if I’m not speaking up, I’m not noticed as much” (12: 321-322). Other students “would just sit at the back of the classroom like the very, very back...avoided eye contact at all times...I would just like go out of my way to like avoid him” (20: 435-438).

A final facework strategy used by students to avoid future hurtful communication was that of asking for or providing an explanation. Students who enacted this strategy did so to ask their teachers for further information concerning the incident that led to the hurtful message or to have the opportunity to explain their behavior to their teachers. When students enacted this strategy, they described being excessively polite and careful with their teachers because they felt like they were “always walking on like pins and needles, you know, like I always had to watch my back” (1: 372-373). Other students mentioned that they used this strategy because they were afraid of their teachers and did not want to anger them and cause another hurtful message: “I was just kind of afraid of

her. Just ‘cause she had never acted like that before so...and I didn’t wanna get her even more mad” (6: 366, 370-371).

The use of these strategies supports the conclusion that, immediately following a hurtful message, many students begin attempting to prevent the occurrence of future hurtful messages. Furthermore, the strategies that students use to prevent additional hurtful messages are not characteristic of the students’ regular communication with the teacher. This may indicate that noticing a change in students’ behavior, such as a sudden use of attack, silence, or explanatory communication may be tools for teachers to use in considering whether they may have hurt a student’s feelings. Another tool for consideration would be to understand the ways that students attempt to immediately correct their face following the communication of a hurtful message. These strategies are discussed below.

### *Immediate Repair*

In addition to the prevention of future occurrences of hurtful messages, corrective facework was also used by participants as an immediate reaction to a hurtful message, in hopes of being a long-term correction of the problem. In order to accomplish this, students communicated invulnerable and/or acquiescent responses. In a long-term sense many students explained that, as soon as they could do so, they severed all immediate and future ties with their teacher. For example, many students changed their major, went to great lengths to ensure that they would not take another course with the offending teacher, and avoided the potential for any future interaction.

Students who used invulnerable responses, such as laughing, did so to pretend that they were not offended by the message, whereas students who cried did so to express their hurt and/or remorse. Students who used acquiescent responses, such as giving in or apologizing did so with the purpose of showing their teachers that they cared about the course and were not trying to be disrespectful. Students who used these strategies described making statements that suggested that “it was important to me or else I wouldn’t be e-mailing her” (1: 122-123), or asking for clarification to determine whether they had misunderstood the hurtful message. Some of the specific language used in these interactions included, “Actually no I didn’t, but could you show me where the discrepancy is” (8: 106), and “Excuse me, what was that again?” (9: 283).

Apologies were also used as a corrective strategy, to show teachers that the students did not mean to offend them or perform poorly on their assignments. Many students also used apologies as a polite way abruptly ending the hurtful message interaction. As one student explained, “I felt really inadequate so I felt like I had to [pause] basically apologize” (11: 141). Other students claimed, “I just apologized...and then asked if there was any way I could remain in the class” (7: 130); “I was just like ‘Okay.’.... ‘Sorry.’.... ‘Thank you.’” (24: 274-276). Still, others chose to e-mail a lengthy apology to their teacher in hopes of rectifying the situation and showing their remorse.

Another final strategy was to give in to the teachers’ requests regardless of whether they were reasonable suggestions. Many students recalled feeling like they didn’t have much of a choice—it was either try to pass the course or fail—so they chose

to give in and make extra efforts to complete their work. These students “accepted responsibility” and asked if there “is anything I can do to help like, you know, fix this problem” (20: 370-371). Others explicitly told their teachers that they were “gonna work hard” (18: 373) and see if they can “maybe fit it in, in between practice” (16: 366).

Regardless of these corrective strategies, students still mentioned being dissatisfied with their teachers and many of them chose to sever all immediate and future ties to the teacher who communicated a hurtful message to them. This was accomplished by students changing their majors or minors, vowing to not take another course with the teacher, or avoiding future interaction with the teacher. As one student asserted, “I would never recommend him to anyone, I would never take his class again. I would tell people to stay far away. I stayed far away” (34: 165-166). Another student said that when his teacher walks towards him or acknowledges him, he will “look at her, I’ll glance at her and keep walkin’ straight” (9: 247). Similarly, other students severed this relational tie by “dropping my minor” (6: 93) to avoid any future communication with the offending teacher.

Based on this discussion of Face Theory, it becomes evident that a key piece of the puzzle of identifying the role of hurtful messages in the classroom is to understand the role that students’ face needs and instructional face-support plays in the interactions between teachers and students. Students have several face needs, and teachers demonstrate a lack of face support by threatening their face which, ultimately, leads to feelings of hurt in the student. When the student attempts to correct their face or prevent future face attacks from occurring, they undergo various demonstrable behavior changes

that may provide teachers with a clue that something has changed in their relationship with the student. In order to prevent face threats and, thus, hurtful messages from occurring, I asked each student that I interviewed to share a piece of advice with teachers concerning ways to communicate without being hurtful. This advice is presented, thematically, in the following section.

#### Advice for Teachers

To gain a better understanding of the ways that teachers may help prevent the occurrence of teacher misbehaviors, the sixth research question of this study was posed. This research question specifically calls for students' advice for teachers regarding communicating with students and preventing hurtful messages. Six themes emerged showcasing the emphasis that students place on teachers' communication. These themes include: show students that you care; realize the power of your words; be positive and offer ways for the student to improve; balance professionalism and a personal relationship; listen to the students' side of the story; and consider students' background and/or culture (see Table 4).

Table 4: Students' Advice for Teachers

<b>Show Students That You Care</b>	<p>“You’ll notice students do better if you are a positive influence and show them that you want them to learn and that you will help them learn.”</p> <p>“Think of the student...put [yourselves] in their shoes and be really empathetic...”</p> <p>“Be patient with students.”</p> <p>“Every teacher’s busy...but just maybe take time to explain [that]...”</p> <p>“Seem happy, you know, to see the student.”</p>
<b>Realize the Power of Your Words</b>	<p>“We’re intimidated so we don’t feel really comfortable...communicating with them so when they say stuff there’s a lot of value put behind those words.”</p> <p>“In universities...there’s pretty limited contact so...if you go off on a student once, it can like really change their perception for like the entirety of the class...”</p> <p>“You gotta kind of say things in a way that’s not really calling them out, necessarily, but is being like...in future, you know, situations you might wanna be careful.”</p>
<b>Be Positive and Offer Ways for the Student to Improve</b>	<p>“For every negative comment you have to say to someone, maybe you should try to mix it in with positive ones.”</p> <p>“Have a solution for the student to follow, don’t just say the hurtful thing and then have nothing for them.”</p> <p>“Show them how they can do better in the future instead of just saying you did horrible this time and, you know, good luck.”</p>
<b>Balance Professionalism and a Personal Relationship</b>	<p>“Maybe just like have a real conversation with them [students], like actually sit down...”</p>
<b>Listen to the Students’ Side of the Story</b>	<p>“Listen to the student before accusing them of something.”</p> <p>“By the time a student’s in college...they’re an adult too, like they can discuss things, like it’s not the time to like point the finger...”</p> <p>“Take the time to ask questions about it...usually you can get a sense of whether the student is lying or not.”</p>
<b>Consider Students’ Backgrounds and/or Cultures</b>	<p>“Culturally, socially, whatever influences they way they take um in messages, obviously, and the way they are being addressed...There’s some very drastically different cultural, uh, scenarios that affects how students feels.”</p>

*Show Students That You Care*

The first theme illustrates the importance of teachers demonstrating caring in their communication with students. Carla emphasized the need for professors to be approachable and show that they care. She stated,

I don't think that professors should act like oh I wanna be your best friend, but I think they should still be like easy to come talk to as if they were like a friend, you know, like let me help you, I'm here to help you and I think if they communicate that, you know, I'm not a scary professor who's just gonna give you bad grades, like you can come to me if you need something or if you need advice or anything, you know? (1, 509:514)

Similarly, Mark advised, "show students that you care about their learning and help them stay on top of things" and then adds "there's nothing wrong with having a hard class, students like being challenged, but you'll notice students do better if you are a positive influence and show them that you want them to learn and that you will help them learn" (34, 224:227, 233). Students also feel that teachers should "think of the student, like put themselves in their shoes and be really empathetic like how a student feels and um [pause] and maybe, just push every student to do their best and you, like show that you want them to do well" (18, 496-498). Furthermore, willingness to help should also be evident, as "just patience and maybe like [pause] communicating that they are there to help you and they're willing to help you, like I don't know, that would be helpful for me [chuckle]" (29, 561:563).



Other students emphasize the ways that certain, specific behaviors do not demonstrate caring. Jamal expressed that becoming frustrated with a class over their performance on an assignment signifies a lack of caring and could potentially lead to hurt feelings. He explained,

Be patient [pause] with students. Um, [pause] pretty much 9 times out of 10 if you just take that little extra time to, you know, let the student know what he did wrong, he or she, and um help them out, then they'll get it. It's not- it's no use in getting frustrated in the class and calling people out and stuff. (13, 415:418).

Finally, several other students explain feeling “blown off” by teachers who do not take time to respond to their e-mails or questions on assignments. As Emily said,

I think that's another way that....students like feel....not even like really cared about is through emails when professors don't respond back because I have had so many times where you know a paper's due...and you run into a question...Like yeah they have their own life this and that, but you know what I mean, it's like a 5 second response that depends on like a 200 point grade....Or even after it's due and they don't respond and it's past due, you know, they don't even say like “Oh I'm so sorry I missed this and that” I mean especially when you're in class with like 20 people. (25, 523:535; 537:538; 544:546)

Richard shared a similar sentiment, “Find some way to at least do something instead of just completely blowin' 'em off and lettin' 'em fai—I mean it's not that hard to write an email back....and some teachers kind of get annoyed when you go to their office hours and don't seem annoyed, seem happy, you know, to see the student” (27, 370:375).

While Samantha acknowledged the busy schedules that teachers are faced with and advised,

I know every teacher's busy, especially if they're a grad student, but just maybe take time to explain to your students "Hey this is what I'm doing, if I seem short or if I'm not giving you my full attention, you know, please either bring it to my attention and let me know Hey this is what I really need help on and I know you're busy, is there a time that works best for you?'" (26, 534:538)

Ultimately, showing that one cares about their students and wants to help them succeed is one of the factors that students believe may reduce feelings of hurt in the classroom. The next theme deals directly with students' perception of teachers' verbal communication.

#### *Realize the Power of Your Words*

The second theme is illustrative of the power of communication in the teacher-student relationship. Specifically, this theme addresses the ways in which students "hang on" to the words of their teachers and take these words to heart. As Kendra said, "they [teachers] need to be aware that there's a lot of value on things they say and as a student we probably we're intimidated so we don't really feel comfortable fully um communicating with them so when they say stuff there's a lot of value put behind those words" (2, 330:332). Much of the value that is placed in these words may be attributed to the students' transition from high school to college. In this transition, the nature of communication between teacher and student changes, as Mandie remarked, "I think it's like hard for some of us to come to college and, you know, we just expect that same small town feel and we expect people to really care and so when they don't care, it's kind of

like oh, we don't know how to react and so I guess just be so careful with your words" (3, 552:559). Brandon added,

I'd say a lot of times like in universities or whatever, there's pretty limited contact so, even if the teacher themselves is having a bad day....if you go off on a student once, it can like really change their perception for like the entirety of the class because you might only talk to them a few times. (17, 460:461; 465:466)

Tactful communication was another necessity that emerged throughout this theme. Some students recommended that teachers should "be careful how you say things" (16, 484), "think before you say somethin' ...make sure you know what you said" (9, 321:322), and "don't embarrass their students by [pause] exploiting their scores in class" (30, 440). Kevin recommended, "you gotta kind of say things in a way that's not really calling them out, necessarily, but is being like, you know, in further, you know, situations you might wanna be careful" (23, 752:754). Or, as Lauren explained,

be honest but be like, tactful and to consider their feelings because [pause] like you need to, if you lie about it or if you try to like say it in a nice way or like a sugar coated way, like the right message doesn't always get across. But, also to say it in a way that is nice and....like you can be honest without being mean. (19, 456:458, 462)

Thus, using tact when communicating and realizing that verbal communication is not taken lightly appears to be another way that teachers may help deter hurt feelings. This is closely connected to the following theme, which deals with being positive and forward-thinking when delivering criticism to students.

*Be Positive and Offer Ways for the Student to Improve*

The third theme involves the need for using constructive criticism when providing feedback or evaluative messages to students. While students understand that criticism is necessary for improvement, they expect all negative evaluations to include at least one positive, and a few ways that they can improve for the next assignment. As Sarah posited,

there is such a thing as constructive criticism and I feel like for every negative comment you have to say to someone, maybe you should try to mix it in with positive ones....there's a difference between criticizing someone and degrading them, I think there's a fine line and I learned that in this semester there's a fine line, 'cause I've been criticized before, but I've never felt so low. (5, 509:513).

Similarly, other students feel that teachers should “have a solution for the student to follow, don't just say the hurtful thing and then have nothing for them. If you feel like they're doing something wrong, have a solution that you think they should do” (3, 549:558), and “just maybe, just with a constructive criticism type of thing. You know, list things you can do” (24, 529). Kelly recommended, “when there is a negative, try to make it into a positive. Show them how they can do better in the future instead of just saying you did horrible this time and, you know, good luck” (29, 410:412).

Consequently, students felt that positive encouragement would help alleviate any fear that they may have about talking to their professors, “I would say just be up front with students and let them know how you are feeling....if there's something that they're doing good 'cause that encourages them to keep going instead of being- feeling like they

can't go and talk to their instructor and being afraid of their instructor" (6, 437:441).

With this lack of fear, they gain comfort which may help them feel closer to their teachers. This ties in directly with the following theme, which focuses on the students' desire for teachers to have a balanced relationship with them.

*Balance Professionalism and a Personal Relationship*

A fourth theme highlights the ways that students perceive the teacher-student relationship—on one hand, they believe that a teacher should be professional and direct, but on the other hand, they desire at least a minimal personal relationship with them.

Lupe explained, "I guess there's kind of a fine balance between keeping a good classroom learning atmosphere in the sense that you don't want kids just talking all the time and joking around, um, so keeping order there and also being like rude. So, to find that balance is kind of a tough thing for some people" (4, 454:457). Tamika shared that this balance is important because without it, "it blurs the line and for me it wastes time because I wanna use you as a resource, I wanna tap you....and I want to ask more questions, but you just wanna tell a story about a movie you saw, then I feel shut out to your intelligence and your expertise" (10, 1035:1038).

Overall, there appears to be a fine line between professional and personal relationships, but one student recommends handling this by,

maybe just like have a real conversation with them [students], like actually sit down...I feel like students don't respond when they feel like they're being talked to like by a superior, they're just like yeah. Yes. Yes. Uh-huh. Like you just answer like that, you don't answer the way you would if you were talking to like

one of your friends. If they would talk to you in that way, I feel like more would get accomplished, but the fact that you're a teacher and you're superior and like kind of the way that you come across to them may factor into your grade, students are immediately just brought back and like kind of closed off because they don't want anything to affect that. (7, 319:326)

In doing so, students may be more likely to feel at ease in their interactions and less likely to become hurt by certain communicative behaviors. In some situations, however, teachers are faced with a situation where they must confront or question a student's motives. In the following theme, students explain how their feelings may become hurt by one-sided communication.

*Listen to the Students' Side of the Story*

Being a teacher brings a forth a certain amount of judgment, whereby teachers must determine if a student's motives are good/bad or right/wrong. This unique situation brings with it, in the students' eyes, a responsibility to engage in transactional—as opposed to linear—communication. Thus, this theme articulates the need for teachers to listen to a student's side of the story before making a final judgment concerning the situation. As Deshondra and Eric argued, “at least give the student a chance to explain their side of the story” (21, 425), and

make sure that they listen to the student before accusing them of something. I understand a lot of time students make up excuses and have elaborate stories to tell and stuff like that, but I do think that that's just a respect thing, 'cause I think by the time a student's in college like they have, you know, they're an adult too,

like they can discuss things, like it's not the time to like point the finger...I mean there are times when you have to exercise discipline and step in and say that what you did was wrong, but I do think that they need to make sure to be like open-minded and listen to everything first. (8, 325:331)

Students believe that their feelings may be spared in controversial situations by simply being given the opportunity to explain themselves. Especially, as Aaron explained, teachers often incorrectly assume that students are intending to act disrespectfully. He said,

what you think they're doing might not always be what you think they're doing, like with me talking to other students, they might think oh I'm talking about like my night, other things, but sometimes we're actually talking about the class and you always think that we're doing something wrong. (32, 276:280)

Correspondingly, Rebecca proposed that teachers ask for the students' side of the story to help them in their own judgment, arguing that a student who has negative motives will not be able to answer important questions, nor be willing to complete extra steps. She noted,

I guess I just wish that the professor would just take the time to ask questions about it, you know, even just through asking questions and saying, like, oh I'm sorry about that, you know. I, I'm sorry about your grandma dying, you know, where was she from? Or something like that....usually you can kind of get a sense of whether the student is lying or not. You know, you can just start asking questions or you can give an extra assignment and if the student is willing to do

the extra assignment. Like, if a student made an excuse to get out of the first assignment, they're not going to be willing to do an extra assignment to get those points back. (22, 682:685, 689:692)

By asking questions and listening to the students' story, it is likely that teachers will be able to identify the students' motives. This may also help them save face by showing that they are willing to take the students' word into account before making judgment about them. The importance of face-saving is also evident in the final theme of advice provided by the students.

#### *Consider Students' Backgrounds and/or Cultures*

The final theme of advice that students have for teachers concerning communicating without being hurtful calls for the teacher to consider the students' background and/or culture when communicating with them, forming perceptions of them, and interpreting their behavior. As Maria expressed,

I think first and foremost we need to consider a student's background. Culturally, socially, whatever influences the way they take um in messages, obviously, and the way they [pause] are being addressed. Um, how [pause] the interaction takes place. All of that has to be taken into consideration because there's some very drastically different cultural, uh, scenarios that affects how students feels. Um, every student's coming from a different background and if she had taken into [pause] consideration how I communicated with superiors, especially, and how I interacted in a group environment, the whole interaction might have gone differently. (11, 468:475)



Danielle also stressed the importance of intercultural sensitivity stating, “I would like want them to know that like all of their students are people, too and they have like a history and a background. Sometimes, I feel like they just are like we’re just a herd of cows that are just like being shoved through” (20, 495:497). Similarly an International student mentions,

[sigh] you’re always handling with all different kinds of uh uh not only different kinds of culture but you know in United States there’s a lot of states here also, right? So there should be everyone has their living environment, what they have that they have their past and they have their own culture. They have their own, you know, motives and everything and just don’t I mean uh it’s really good to uh remain- uh, maintain relationships between student and teacher, but if you go really, really personally, you might really hurt some, someone’s feelings. (33, 423-428)

Thus, students hope that teachers will take their individual differences into account when communicating with them. Failure to do so may ultimately lead to hurt feelings following interactions. In the following section, I explore the perceived impact of these hurtful messages.

#### Perceived Impact of Hurtful Messages

To better understand how students feel about the offending teacher and the course they were enrolled in with the teacher following the communication of a hurtful message, I decided that it was necessary to explicitly ask them about the impact this experience had on them. Participants went into great detail concerning the impact that they perceived

these hurtful messages to have on various facets of their education. Thus, research question seven was addressed with three themes specifically pertaining to the perceived impact of hurtful messages communicated by teachers: motivation, affect learning, and relationship satisfaction. Each of these themes is discussed with depth in the sections that follow.

### *Motivation*

One theme that emerged from the students' discussions of the impact of hurtful messages on their classroom experience is that of motivation. Motivation was represented in two ways in this data. Several students cited a loss of motivation following the communication of a hurtful message by their teachers, whereas others argued that the hurtful message actually motivated them to work harder to prove their teachers wrong. I discuss each of these positions in depth in the sections that follow.

### *Decline in Motivation*

Various students remarked on the decline in motivation that they felt following the hurtful message. Most of this change in motivation was reflected in the quality of their work, their participation in class, and their attendance in the class. As Richard recalled,

Um I hate going to class. Um, I usually leave about 15 minutes early every day just 'cause she, like you get nothing out of the class, for me at least, so eith- I mean, I guess I could say that I'm really just unmotivated to be there, I think I c- 'cause I don't need her, I don't need her class to pass this time, so it's kind of like why am I here? So I would say very unmotivated to be there. (27: 356-359)

Along the same lines as Richard, Samantha said that her motivation for the class “deteriorated” (26: 480). Specifically, “I did skip more classes ‘cause I could just kinda feel myself preparing to drop the class” (26: 480-481). Mark also mentioned losing motivation to attend class, as he stated that he would rather attend a course where the teachers behaved as though they cared for their students. In his words, “A lot of times I didn’t go to class, like I didn’t come for a certain amount of time. I really had no reason to. I decided I was better off spending my time studying for another class instead, classes where the teachers actually cared about us and how we’re doing” (34: 213-215).

A lack of participation in the classroom was also a reported outcome of resistance following a hurtful message. Many students argued that they felt scared or hesitant to participate in class because of the initial hurtful message that had been communicated. As Sarah disclosed,

I didn’t communicate, so I’m sure it seemed like I didn’t participate in the class, like I know I probably didn’t get any participation because I didn’t wanna talk and when you don’t wanna talk, like of course like especially like [sigh] it just kills me because like you know and then it made it seem...like I didn’t know a lot...I was uncomfortable talking and I didn’t wanna say anything and like ‘cause of what one person thought about how I spoke. (5: 462-467)

In much the same way, many students recalled “not saying anything in class...just showing up, doing the work, and leaving” (1: 373-374), or they stated that they “didn’t talk in class” (25: 384-385), “couldn’t focus, was scared to go to the class” (33: 395), or

“made the class just kind of like I don’t wanna be here and so I’m not gonna give any effort” (12: 321-322).

For some students, a visible change in their participation was evident, as they physically removed themselves from certain situations or attempted to not make eye contact with their teachers. As Danielle explained,

I would just sit at the back of the classroom like the very, very back, couldn’t see me, um I always avoided eye contact at all times, umm, and that always like hurt me because like for me to learn I always have to pay like really close attention to the person, um and I would just like go out of my way to like avoid him....it was just like okay like I’m not gonna do this anymore and it was just I-I like do better when I feel like the people believe in me and I felt like he didn’t believe in me and so that kind of made me doubt myself, but at the same time I kind of wanted to prove to him that like I could do better, but I just kind of could never get past it (20: 435-438, 483-487).

Amie also explained that she changed her behavior from being an active participant in the classroom to “...really in the class, I didn’t do anything. I [pause] sat in the back and pretended like I was taking notes on my computer, and surfed the web...I didn’t want to listen to her, I didn’t want to be in the class, she just took attendance, so I was there” (15: 482-483, 487-488). Additionally, Maria said, “I don’t put myself up front anymore. I-I physically move myself towards the back so that maybe I’m not, if I’m not speaking up, I’m not noticed as much” (11: 415-416).

As each of the aforementioned exemplars illustrate, following the communication of a hurtful message by their teachers, students often lost motivation for attending the course, participating in the course, and succeeding in the course. On the other hand, the following section illustrates a different approach, as other students used their feelings of hurt to become motivated to prove that their teachers were wrong in their assumptions about them.

#### *Determination-Based Motivation*

A second emergent theme in regard to motivation was that of determination-based motivation, or a students' motivation to succeed in the course with the purpose of proving their teacher wrong. Students, such as Cicely, used their feelings of hurt to work harder than they had previously been working:

It actually made me want to work harder in the class, just to like to prove him wrong, but um that was almost like my hard work was like sometimes for like nothing, I felt like it didn't, like I put all this work into it but like it wasn't what he wanted, or it wasn't the right way, so um, I don't know—I think it made me want to work harder” (7: 301-304).

Similarly, Brandon said that his teacher's hurtful message caused him to put more work into his assignments. He said, “Uh, I wanted to stick it to her, so I mean, if that's what she wanted, it worked 'cause I ended up putting a lot more work into it, I thought I did a really good job” (17: 343-344). Rachel also argued that she became, “pretty motivated, just because I need my mark and I needed a good grade and I did receive a good one, so I did what I needed to do” (16: 477-478).

While many students discussed becoming motivated to prove their teachers wrong, others mentioned becoming motivated to work harder to prove their self-worth and prevent future hurtful messages from being communicated by their teachers. Charles was particularly fearful of receiving another hurtful message, as he said, “I just really didn’t do-know what to do, so I had to study, if I don’t she’s gonna say to me something like that, right? And she-and I didn’t wanna study, I lost my motivation for that, but I had to do it either kind of like self-healing and stuff like that” (33: 341-343). Kathryn also mentioned becoming motivated to do well in the course due to being afraid of the teacher. As she commented,

It didn’t make me want to show him right away that, you know, I am capable of doing all these great things, but it scared me into doing it so that the motive was different um than what it is in a different setting umm maybe a teacher who, you know, I thoroughly enjoy, I have learned from, um and I just I, you know, they’ve helped me out and they I see that true love for um their students that they have and for their students to grasp the concepts. (14: 616-621).

Thus, for some students motivation was lost, but others used their feelings of hurt and fear to put more work into the course and prove to their teachers and to themselves that they are capable of succeeding in the course. Congruent to the loss in motivation for many students is the decline in affective learning—for the course and the teacher—that several of them reported experiencing. This particular impact will be described in the following section.

### *Affective Learning*

A second theme that was explicitly discussed in my interviews with the students is that of affective learning. This concept is generally discussed as having two components: affect for the course, and affect for the teacher. Both of these components were present in the interviews, as students discussed a decline in their affect for their teachers, as well as the course, major, and—in some instances—college in general. Each of these elements is discussed, in the students' own words, in the sections that follow.

#### *Affect for the Course*

Several students commented that the hurt that they felt following the hurtful message contributed to a loss of enjoyment for the course that they were enrolled in with the offending teacher. In addition to this, many students mentioned a decrease in their desire to major or minor in the course subject area, whereas others chose to drop the course and take it with a different instructor. Furthermore, a few students recalled questioning whether they should remain enrolled in college, in general. Overall, there was a negative tone concerning the ways that students felt about the course after the hurtful message was communicated.

One of the assertions made by students about hurtful messages in the classroom was that the occurrence of a hurtful message can change the entire tone of the course in just an instant. Amie mentioned that experiencing a hurtful message on the first day of class affected her, especially because her peers had told her that this teacher always hurts students' feelings. As she described, “and so when you're told a professor is gonna [pause] be that way or that this is his typical behavior uhh, you now, it didn't make me

want to, it it made me from that day one dread the class” (14: 610-612). In another instance, Rebecca explained the way that a teacher’s behavior can change students’ perceptions about the class. She stated,

I really was interested in it and I’ve taken a different [subject] class, um, and I really enjoyed it, and I feel like, I would’ve enjoyed this one, but it was just kind of a [pause] I don’t know. Like I said just kind of the teacher, I feel like the professor has a lot to do with the class. Like, a lot [pause] a lot to do with the way you think about the class. I just thought bad things about the class after that. (22: 639-642)

Kendra also commented on her feelings about the course she was taking, as she stated, “I feel like that experience really just overshadows the whole experience of the class and I um don’t recommend the class to anybody because of her” (2: 315-316). This comment provides a summary of the general attitudes that students had about the courses that were taught by the offending teacher.

Another course-related theme that emerged in the data is the idea that students began to dislike or lose confidence the course, as well as their majors and/or minors after receiving a hurtful message from one of their teachers. As Carla recalled, “I don’t know, it ended up making me hate [subject] altogether....well, [subject] will never be my major, my minor, or anything [laughs]” (1: 87, 477). Stephanie mentioned that she dropped her minor because of the incident that occurred because she was afraid that she would have similar struggles in her other minor courses. Specifically, “But then I decided to just be done with the minor because I didn’t wanna have to deal with it anymore ‘cause I was



worried that it would carry over into other classes in the minor” (6: 297-298). Dominic also expressed frustration over having to drop a course because he could not receive the help that he needed. As he claimed, “like even thinking about it now gets me so mad. Just that I dropped a class because I couldn’t get the help that I wanted” (26: 591-592). Similarly, Jose mentioned that he is reconsidering his choice of major because of the way that his professor communicated with him. As he explained,

It became even more of an extreme of that where it’s just this class is a complete joke...I’m not getting anything out of this except for um they’re shying me away from being an [major] because of now I’ve seen how what was one of, what was supposed to be one of our distinguished professors, how they handle situations with students and I don’t know that I wanna be involved in that. (12: 315-321)

Akin to Jose’s experience, Kelly also mentioned being fearful of her major:

Um my confidence level—like with like my [subject] and my [subject] stuff like with [major] at all like um with what I’m thinking about going into it’s like I have to take...a different [subject], I’m thinking about [area], um, and um just with that even like I’m worried about it? Like it’s the most basic one and I didn’t have huge trouble with the first [subject] and so like after that like my confidence level in that subject completely dropped, like I don’t feel like I can do it anymore. (29: 531-537)

Along with a loss of affect for the course, several participants mentioned a decrease in enjoyment for college, in general, and others recalled questioning whether they should remain in college. Dominic recalled questioning the way the college is run,

“yeah the overall like [college name] and that and all that, I was just, I would question it like how it’s run, is it is it a either like succeed or we don’t care about you uh type of attitude” (31: 375-376)? Danielle also mentioned the way that the hurtful message caused her to look at college in a negative way. She explained,

It’s kind of given me a negative take on college, like it’s like made me not like really wanna come back here as much and it like it affected like my work in other classes because I used to give like a hundred and ten percent for everything, but now it’s just kind of like okay, I just need to get this done. I need to graduate. I need to like leave this state ‘cause I hate it [laughs]. (20: 469-473)

As these exemplars indicate, students attributed their perceptions of the course, the major/minor area, and college to the ways that their teachers communicated with them. With such a large responsibility being placed on the teacher in these scenarios, it is clear that affect for the course was directly tied with students’ affect for their teachers.

This form of affect is discussed in the following section.

#### *Affect for the Teacher*

Along with a reported decrease in affect for the course, their major, and/or college, many students described disliking their teachers after they communicated a hurtful message. This decrease in affect was reflected in the way that students evaluated their teachers on the end-of-semester evaluation forms, as well as the way that they perceived their teacher and the likelihood that they would take another course with their teacher if given an option. Overall, it appeared that students lost respect for their teachers and began to perceive all of their teachers’ future behaviors as negative, as well.

As it pertains to the end-of-semester teaching evaluation, many students reported rating their teachers negatively, emphasizing that they were not satisfied with the way these teachers handled the classroom and/or that they would not take another course with the teacher if given the opportunity. As Carla remarked,

Well when it came to her knowledge for the course, of course I gave her a good grade 'cause she, she knew what she was doing, but as far as like whenever it said did she, was she accommodating to you, I h, I was like no, no and I was like and then it said something about um....anything that had to do with helping me outside of class or going around each other's schedule I gave her like an like a totally disagree, like a 0. (1: 349-354)

Similarly, Eric said that he “marked her down in the areas um that I thought were [pause] suitable for marking her down [chuckles]” (21: 365-366). Mark also utilized the end-of-semester teaching evaluation to express his feelings about his teacher. As he remembered,

I absolutely slammed him on the review, the uh end of semester thing. The evaluation. I wrote a few paragraphs sharing exactly how I felt about him on some of the questions. So, I pretty much wrote him a bad evaluation, I talked with friends and then, of course, you know I went to the online forum and slammed him there, too...When I was on there I saw other examples of the same thing I'd experienced, like you know students look there before they sign up for class, so I wanted to make sure that they all knew not to take him. (34: 192-198)

Sarah also utilized the evaluation forms to share her feelings with her teacher, but she described doing so to prevent future hurt feelings in other students. According to Sarah, “We do those evaluations and said what I had to say that I want him to know from a personal standpoint how I took it...I don’t want him to do I to another student, like that’s what I’m most like worried about is that someone else is gonna have to go through this” (5: 427-430). Much like Sarah, Lauren utilized the evaluation form to let her teacher know that she had been hurt by her remarks. She described what she wrote on these forms:

And so I wrote on there um, “Earlier in the year I was in your office and I, you called me, you said that I wasn’t intellectually curious and it really offended me. I just wanted you to know because I feel like sometimes the words that you use and the way that you use say them, you’re trying hard not to hurt people’s feelings, but instead you hurt them and I just want in the future for you, this to not happen again, because it really offended me. (19: 197-206)

Charles also described using the evaluation form to share his “true feelings.” (33: 261). He further explained, “I just didn’t want to [nervous laugh] see her like, you know, um [pause] I didn’t wanna recommend this teacher to one of my friends like you know had to take that [subject] class” (33: 391-393).

Students also shared their perceptions of the teacher apart from the teaching evaluation form. Many of them described viewing their teachers as “unapproachable” (13: 404); “on her high horse for no reason” (17: 404); and “not very professional” (12: 216). For many of the students, these perceptions were quite different from their original

perceptions of the teacher prior to the hurtful message. As Cicely illustrates, “I thought he was a jerk and like full of himself and immediately switched from him being proud of something and him being like too big headed...like he was superior to everyone and just had a big head” (7: 231-234). Rebecca also had a strong opinion about her teacher as she stated, “I know that I would never wanna take his class, a class with him again...I know people who are taking the class with him, and every time I hear somebody say his name...I’m just like, ugh” (22: 576, 580).

Other students openly questioned their teachers’ abilities to teach and relate to students. As Sarah said,

I just felt like that like I don’t think he communicates well, like for him to be teaching us—a [subject] class—I feel like he didn’t do a good job of communicating so it’s kind of hard for me to like respect [him] and like [his] all [his] degrees that [he] brags about and [he] doesn’t even know how to communicate so obviously there’s some classes [he] needs to go take... (5: 321-326)

Deshondra also felt that she couldn’t “take much of what he said quite as seriously anymore because I felt like in this like personal issue he couldn’t back up what he had to say so how do I know that like anything else he says is going to be really legitimate” (8: 229-232).

The experience of the teachers was also called into question when compared with the behaviors that they communicated in the classroom. As Amie said, “For being a teacher for how long she was, I don’t think she was a very good teacher. [pause] I mean

she said she had at least, I think, five or six years under her belt, so I expected her to be more student-friendly” (15: 402-404). Similarly, Erin pointed out that intelligence doesn’t necessarily equate effective teaching, as she remarked, “I thought she was very smart, but that she couldn’t teach or relate to students at all. And didn’t want to help them learn more” (28: 327-328). As a matter of fact, some students went so far as to suggest that they would rather have a “boring” teacher than one who communicates in a hurtful way. Samantha, for instance, asserted:

I think I would’ve done better in the class overall, I mean, even if I had a different teacher who was probably boring and maybe didn’t give as good of speeches as he did, I still, because of the grade and the fact that I would’ve been probably doing better and getting more concrete answers on what I needed, would’ve-I wouldn’t have dropped it. (26: 525-528).

Needless to say, students had many opinions regarding their perceptions of their teachers following the occurrence of the hurtful message. Not only did they argue that the hurtful messages negatively impacted their perceptions of the offending teacher, but they also mentioned the ways that it impacted their relationship with the teacher. The impact that the hurtful message had on the students’ perception of relationship satisfaction with their teachers is discussed in the following section.

#### *Relational Satisfaction*

A final theme regarding the impact of hurtful messages on students’ classroom experiences deals with the students’ perceptions of relational satisfaction with their teachers. Regardless of the length of time that students reported knowing their teachers

before the hurtful message occurred, each of them reported dissatisfaction with the teacher-student relationship. For students who felt that they initially had a positive relationship with their teachers, they reported the dissolution of the relationship following the hurtful message. On the other hand, students who had not yet developed a relationship with their teachers remarked that this development would be unlikely. One interesting diversion from this theme occurred for students who reported that their teachers attempted to apologize or correct the hurtful message. Each of these students reported a positive outcome in terms of relationship satisfaction. Each of these scenarios is explored in the paragraphs that follow.

### *Relationship Dissolution*

Upon receiving a hurtful message from one of their teachers, many students recall experiencing a change in their perception of relational satisfaction. For most, this change caused them to distance themselves from the teacher and end the relationship as soon as they could. Kendra explained the difference between her relationship with the offending teacher and with others teachers who had never hurt her feelings. She said, “I don’t really have anything to do with her...nonexistent...I mean with other instructors, now we’ll run into each other and stuff and we can, you know, have small talk or just see where each other’s what’s new and stuff but um, with her, I wouldn’t do that, I wouldn’t even talk to her” (2: 234, 242, 249-251). Akin to this sentiment, others described their relationship with the offending teacher as, “nonexistent” (27: 332), arguing that “It was done. Like I didn’t try to build a relationship with him at all” (29: 508), because “I just don’t wanna see her again” (33: 396).

Other students mentioned the ways that they exhibited their relationship dissatisfaction to show the teacher that they were hurt by the interaction. Sarah described the way that she would choose to ignore her teacher if their paths were to cross in the future. As she said, “I don’t ever wanna see the man, like if I see him on the street today, I’d probably walk right by him. I have no respect for him” (5: 350-351). Jorge shared a similar description, as he said “Just if she’s walkin’ towards me and nod or she nods or if anything just I’ll look at her, I’ll glance at her and just keep walkin’ straight” (9: 245-247). Stephanie and Mark also emphasized that they try to stay away from the offending teachers as much as possible. As Stephanie said, “I was afraid of her honestly....I don’t see her or talk to her ever....I just tried to stay away” (6: 294, 303, 306); whereas Mark emphasized staying away from his teacher as a direct result of a loss of respect:

From there on really I had zero respect for him. Once you do that to a student, they don’t have no respect for you anymore....He is terrible and I would never recommend him to anyone. I would never take his class again. I would tell people to stay far away. I stayed far away. After that I said screw that, I’m not gonna waste my time seeking him out for help. (34: 165-166, 170-173)

As Cicely’s explanation summarizes, “If it could’ve happened differently, I think we’d have like a better student-teacher relationship” (7: 242-243).

### *Personal Factors*

Along with the dissolution of the current and future teacher-student relationship, many students cited ending the relationship due to a loss of respect for the teacher in terms of their professionalism. Many students argued that the hurtful messages were



unprofessional, a form of disrespect, immature, and that they caused them to feel uncomfortable with the teacher and their relationship with that teacher.

Mandie described her relationship with her teacher as being a “war,” compromised by the teacher’s lack of professionalism in embarrassing her in front of the class. As she said,

I totally looked down on her as um a professional professor. Um, I guess my opinion of it was I would never treat someone like that and um we all work with people we don’t like um we all go to class with people we really don’t care for, but you don’t say those things to them. I think that there is just a certain level of professionalism...I just didn’t know what to think of her and things definitely got bitter...our attitudes toward each other, everybody could really tell it was like okay, this is full on war at this point. (3: 370-374, 385-387)

Tamika shared a similar perspective, as she stated, “I definitely lost some respect for her because um, while it does take a lot of effort and I’m not perfect at it, you really ought to filter yourself. You really oughta not mess with people’s heads just to mess with them and I felt hurt and deflated” (10: 666-668). Other students shared similar concerns about the offending teachers’ personalities. Maria, for instance, commented that she has

...Never been comfortable with that professor since and it’s been a year and a half...I’ve had about three classes with her and I have never felt like I could come to her and address her and and be, um, myself with her because I always have this lingering over my head...so, the teacher-student relationship has never clicked

enough so that I felt, um, that I could succeed with her classes. (11: 160-164, 168-169).

Jamal also felt a strain in the teacher-student relationship, as he said, “I just didn’t think her personality was that great, you know, anybody that does that in front of everybody, I really can’t say many good things about her really. She does know what she’s talking about in terms of her teaching ability, but on a personal level, nah” (13: 335-337).

Other students remarked that they could not feel secure in allowing the teacher-student relationship to continue, as they felt like they were “always walking on like pins and needles...always had to watch my back” (1: 372-373). This was especially the case for Kathryn who had a very strong opinion about the hurtful interaction that she had with her teacher:

I mean, it was disgusting was what his behavior turned into, it was really just [pause] uh it wasn’t not only did a professor [pause] was a professor saying this, but a human being, or are they really? Are they really saying this to me? Because that’s, that’s pretty sad, it’s pretty, pretty disgusting that they really would treat somebody like this. (14: 498-501)

### *Salvaging the Relationship*

An interesting theme that emerged concerning relationship satisfaction occurred for participants who noted that their teachers had attempted to apologize or otherwise correct the hurtful message. Only three participants reported receiving some form of corrective feedback from their teachers, but these participants were overall positive in tone when speaking about the relationship that they had with the offending teacher.

Lauren utilized the end-of-semester teaching evaluation form to let her teacher know that she had been hurt by her message. Following the receipt of this teaching evaluation form, Lauren explained that her teacher sent her a personal e-mail apologizing for offending her. Upon receiving this e-mail, Lauren said,

I really felt that she cared about her students, I mean, when she said that, I mean, you could tell in class that she cared about her class and like she cared about what she was teaching. But like, the fact that she did that really showed that she really like cared about, like, me personally and if my feelings were hurt 'cause I would never see her again. And it wasn't like I, and I hadn't written it on the department one [evaluation], so she wasn't doing it like for herself. (19: 371-375).

Similarly, Emily explained that her teacher's attempt to apologize to her for the hurtful message allowed her to understand that her teacher did not intend to hurt her. Rather, "Um [pause] well, 'cause I knew it wasn't intentional, so I wasn't like 'Oh my gosh, he's such an ass,' you know?" (25: 379-380). Furthermore, Lupe explained that her teacher's corrective actions allowed her to better understand her teacher's personality and learn how to communicate more effectively with him. As she said,

I guess before the hurtful message, I wouldn't have been, so I wouldn't have known how to, you know, best relate to him or um I wouldn't have known how to kind of put on that business face before I went to talk to him and after it, I knew better how to communicate with him, if that makes sense. (4: 313-316)

These exemplars indicate that there is a potential for teachers to salvage their relationships with students following a hurtful message.

As evidenced by the exemplars, a common term that was used among the participants was *respect*, as many students cited a loss of respect for their teachers, both personally and as professionals. This loss of respect may be an underlying factor for the relationship dissatisfaction experienced by students. To further investigate the impact of hurtful messages that were reported by students in this phase of the study, I created a survey instrument that would assess the relationships among these variables and the degree of hurt that was experienced by individual students. The development of this instrument is described in the following section.

#### Instrument Development

The results derived from this phase of the study are valuable in that they illustrate, in depth and in their own words, the types of hurtful messages that students reported receiving, as well as the ways that they feel these hurtful messages have impacted their experience in the classroom. In order to evaluate the extent to which hurtful messages relate to their classroom experience, however, we must go one step further and conduct a quantitative analysis. Thus, research question eight was designed to determine which items and scales would best measure the themes that were presented in the qualitative results. In order to answer this question, I considered the purpose of this study, as well as the opinions of my colleagues. During my data conference, my colleagues and I agreed that *RQ<sub>5</sub>* was important in that it served as the best means to identify the variables that should be measured in the second, quantitative, phase of my study. Because this research question focused specifically on the students' own perceptions of the impact that hurtful messages had on their classroom experience, it served as an excellent basis for choosing

variables to measure in the second phase of this study and simultaneously understand the extent of their impact.

As discussed in the section above, students reported hurtful messages as specifically impacting their relationship satisfaction with their teacher, their affective learning, and their motivation for the class. Furthermore, based on what I learned during my discussions with my participants, students who mentioned that they were extremely hurt or humiliated by their teachers appeared to have stronger opinions about their teacher and the situation. To consider this correlation, I decided to also measure the degree of hurtfulness of a message. Also, as evident in previous sections of this chapter, face theory played an interesting role in the interactions between teachers and students. Specifically, participants mentioned the ways that violations of their face needs appeared to be one of the reasons that they felt hurt by these interactions, and many of them commented on the teachers' lack of tact and solidarity when violating their face. Therefore, I decided that a measure for face theory was also necessary.

Upon determining the variables that I would measure in the second phase of this study, I decided to consult existing literature to determine if I would be using existing scales or creating new scales to measure each variable. It was at this stage that I found that each variable that was identified had been previously, and reliably, measured in literature. As a result, I constructed a survey using the following scales:

1. Degree of Hurt (Young, 2004),
2. Affective Learning (McCroskey, 1994),
3. Motivation (Christophel, 1990),

4. Relational Satisfaction (Modified version of Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998),
5. Instructional Face-Support (Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003).

This survey was used to measure the final research question and three hypotheses of this study. The results of the second phase of this study are discussed in the following chapter.

### Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the results of the first phase of this study. In doing so, I have addressed each of the eight research questions, which covered the following topic foci:

1. The types of hurtful messages that students perceive to be communicated by their teachers,
2. The connection between hurtful messages and teacher misbehaviors,
3. The ways that students respond to their teachers following the communication of a hurtful message,
4. The role of face in the hurtful message interaction,
5. Advice that students have for teachers concerning ways to communicate without being hurtful,
6. The perceived impact that hurtful messages have on students' classroom experiences, and
7. The strategy that was used to construct the survey for the second, quantitative, phase of this study using data from this first phase.

The results of the second phase of the study are presented in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE IMPACT OF HURTFUL MESSAGES

The data in this chapter focuses more specifically on the relationships and differences between types of hurtful communication, degree of hurtfulness, and students' perceptions of relational satisfaction, affective learning, student motivation, and instructional face-support. There were 208 participants in this phase of the study (77 males; 131 females), and the results of their surveys support the assertion that hurtful messages *do* impact students in a negative way, and that the degree of hurtfulness of the messages may impact students' classroom experiences; specifically, as it pertains to their learning, motivation, and satisfaction with their relationships with their teachers. In the previous chapters, I outlined one research question and three hypotheses that guide the second phase of this study. This chapter details the results of the ninth research question and three proposed hypotheses to provide a better understanding of the ways that hurtful messages affect students emotionally and impact their classroom experience.

### *Research Question*

*RQ<sub>9</sub>*: How, if at all, does the type of hurtful communication create differences in the degree of hurt perceived by students? Because this was a question of difference with one nominal (categorical) independent variable and one interval (continuous) dependent variable, a one-way ANOVA was run. The one-way ANOVA revealed that the type of hurtful communication that students reported experiencing does create significant differences in the degree of hurt perceived by students,  $F(8, 199) = 6.25, p < .00$ . Because the results were significant, Tukey post-hoc tests were run and revealed significant differences between those who received hurtful messages of discrimination

( $M= 5.61$ ,  $SD= 1.09$ ) and those who encountered messages of refusal to accommodate ( $M= 4.06$ ,  $SD= 1.53$ ), false assumptions ( $M= 3.66$ ,  $SD= 1.23$ ), and misunderstood motives ( $M= 3.75$ ,  $SD= 1.17$ ). There were also significant differences between those who received hurtful messages of public embarrassment ( $M= 5.40$ ,  $SD= 1.41$ ) and those who were reported refusal to accommodate ( $M= 4.06$ ,  $SD= 1.53$ ) and false assumptions ( $M= 3.66$ ,  $SD= 1.23$ ). Thus, those who received messages of discrimination and public embarrassment experienced more emotional hurt than those who received messages of refusal to accommodate, false assumptions, misunderstood motives. Based on these results, it appears that discrimination is the most hurtful type of message and that false assumptions are the least hurtful. No significant differences were found for messages of disregard ( $M= 4.54$ ,  $SD= 1.20$ ), inappropriate jokes ( $M= 4.3$ ,  $SD= 1.55$ ), or one-sided accusations ( $M=4.44$ ,  $SD= 1.05$ ). Table 5 illustrates the mean degree of hurtfulness of each type of hurtful messages. The type of hurtful message is presented, along with the number of participants that were hurt by each type of message, and the average degree of hurtfulness (on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being the most hurtful) of each type of message. The types of hurtful messages are organized from most hurtful to least hurtful.

Table 5: Degree of Hurtfulness of the Types of Hurtful Messages

<b>Type of Hurtful Message</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Degree of Hurtfulness</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Discrimination	18	5.61	1.09
Public Embarrassment	24	5.40	1.41
Deconstructive Criticism	43	5.17	1.35
Disregard	52	4.54	1.20
One-Sided Accusations	8	4.44	1.05
Inappropriate Jokes	10	4.30	1.55
Refusal to Accommodate	17	4.06	1.53
Misunderstood Motives	8	3.75	1.16
False Assumptions	28	3.66	1.23



### *Hypotheses*

*H<sub>1</sub>*: The degree of hurtfulness of a message will be negatively related to students' perceptions of relational satisfaction with their teachers. Because this was a test of relationship, a Pearson's product moment correlation was run. The analysis yielded a significant correlation. The degree of hurtfulness correlated negatively with students' perceptions of relational satisfaction, ( $r = -.25, p < .00, R^2 = .06$ ). This correlation indicates that students who felt a higher degree of hurt following their teachers' communication were less satisfied with their teachers (see Table 6). Therefore, *H<sub>1</sub>* was supported.

Table 6: Correlation Matrix for *H<sub>1</sub>*

	C1	C2
C1	1.000	
C2	-.254**	1.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .00 level

*H<sub>2</sub>*: The degree of hurtfulness of a message will significantly relate to (a) affective learning, and (b) student motivation. Because this was a test of relationship, a Pearson's product moment correlation was run. The analysis yielded two significant correlations. The degree of hurtfulness correlated negatively with affective learning ( $r = -.29, p < .00, R^2 = .09$ ) and student motivation ( $r = -.22, p < .00, R^2 = .05$ ). These correlations indicate that students who felt a higher degree of hurt following the communication of a hurtful message had lower levels of motivation and affect for the teacher and the course they were enrolled in with that teacher (see Table 7). Thus, *H<sub>2</sub>* was supported.

Table 7: Correlation Matrix for  $H_2$ 

	C1	C2	C3
C1	1.000		
C2	-.222**	1.000	
C3	-.293**	.589**	1.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .00 level

$H_3$ : Students' perceptions of instructional face-support will significantly relate to (a) degree of hurt, (b) affective learning, (c) motivation, and (d) relational satisfaction. Because this was a test of relationship, a Pearson's product moment correlation was run. The analysis yielded various significant correlations. Students' perceptions of their teachers' use of tact correlated positively with relational satisfaction ( $r = .14, p < .05, R^2 = .02$ ). Students' perceptions of their teachers' use of solidarity as face-support correlated negatively with degree of hurt ( $r = -.28, p < .00, R^2 = .08$ ), and positively with affective learning ( $r = .48, p < .00, R^2 = .23$ ), motivation ( $r = .43, p < .00, R^2 = .19$ ), and relational satisfaction ( $r = .61, p < .00, R^2 = .37$ ). Finally, students' perceptions of their teachers' use of approbation correlated positively with affective learning ( $r = .17, p < .05, R^2 = .03$ ), motivation ( $r = .22, p < .00, R^2 = .05$ ), and relational satisfaction ( $r = .31, p < .00, R^2 = .10$ ). The first correlation indicates that students who believed that their teachers were tactful in their communication of a hurtful message were more satisfied with their relationship with the teacher following the hurtful message. The second correlation indicates that students who perceived that their teachers showed solidarity during the hurtful event were less hurt by the message and had more motivation and affect for the course and their teacher. The final correlation illustrated that students who perceived that their teachers used approbation when communicating the hurtful message were more motivated,

satisfied with the teacher-student relationship, and had more affect for the course and the teacher who communicated the hurtful message (see Table 8). Thus,  $H_3$  was supported.

Table 8: Correlation Matrix for  $H_3$

	C1	C2	C3	C4
C1	1.000			
C2	.223**	1.000		
C3	.267**	.442**	1.000	
C4	-.026	-.281**	-.005	1.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .00 level

### Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the results of the second, quantitative, phase of this study. The ninth research question and three hypotheses specific to this phase of the study were tested to provide a better understanding of the ways that hurtful messages affect students emotionally and impact their motivation, affective learning, and relational satisfaction. The results of this chapter suggest that:

1. The various types of hurtful messages do create differences in the degree of hurt experienced by students,
2. The degree of hurtfulness of a message is negatively related to students' motivation, affective learning, and relational satisfaction with their teachers,
3. Students' perceptions of their teachers' use of tact during the communication of a hurtful message correlates positively with relational satisfaction,
4. Students' perceptions of their teachers' use of solidarity during the communication of a hurtful message correlates negatively with degree of hurt and positively with affective learning, motivation, and relational satisfaction, and

5. Students' perceptions of their teachers' use of approbation during the communication of a hurtful message correlates positively with affective learning, motivation, and relational satisfaction.

The results of the first and second phase of this study are discussed with more depth in the final chapter of this dissertation. In addition to a discussion of the results, the following chapter includes the implications of the conclusions of this study, suggestions for practical application, directions for future research, and a discussion of the limitations of this study.

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to extend teacher misbehavior research via an investigation of the teacher misbehaviors that are perceived as threats to students' face needs, thus contributing to feelings of hurt in students. Traditionally, the outcome of the communication that occurs between teachers and students has primarily focused on content-related dimensions and less on relational dimensions. As such, a secondary purpose of this study was to highlight the importance of understanding both the content and relational dimensions of teacher-student communication, especially the role of emotion in this communication process.

This chapter serves as summary of the study's results and their connection to existing theory and literature. This was a large study with two separate phases of data collection, whereby the results from the first phase of the study directly influenced what I chose to measure in the second phase of the study. To present data in a clear manner, I have chosen to organize this chapter topically. Because some topics were introduced in the first phase of the study, but further explored in the second phase of the study, the research questions and hypotheses are not discussed in the order that they appear in the first four chapters. Rather, they are organized based on specific topics. Furthermore, because  $RQ_8$  was asked specifically to determine which variables should be measured in the second phase of the study, this research question is not discussed in the current chapter but was discussed in "Chapter Four". The specific topics—and their corresponding research questions and hypotheses—that are covered in this chapter include:

1. The types of teacher misbehaviors that students perceive as being hurtful ( $RQ_1$ ,  $RQ_2$ ) and the degree to which these behaviors are perceived as being hurtful ( $RQ_9$ ),
2. How students perceive their identities to be threatened following hurtful communicative behaviors ( $RQ_4$ ),
3. How students communicatively respond to hurtful messages ( $RQ_3$ ) in an effort to restore their identity ( $RQ_5$ ),
4. How hurtful behaviors impact the content and relational dimensions of the teacher-student relationship ( $RQ_7, H_1, H_2, H_3$ ),
5. The significance of this study,
6. The implications of the conclusions,
7. Suggestions for the practical application of the results derived from this study ( $RQ_6$ ),
8. The limitations of this study, and
9. Recommended directions for future research.

Each of these topics is discussed, in depth, in the sections that follow.

### Hurtful Messages in the Teacher-Student Relationship

Prior to this study, research focusing on hurtful messages was restricted to the contexts of family and romantic relationships. Existing typologies of hurtful messages outside of these contexts were general and meant to encompass a variety of relationships without any contextual specificity. For this study, I chose to extend knowledge of hurtful

messages into the context of instructional communication by discovering the specific themes of hurtful messages that occur within the teacher-student relationship.

*RQ<sub>1</sub>* of this study was asked to determine the different types of hurtful messages that students perceived as being communicated by college teachers. Nine specific types of hurtful messages emerged from my interviews with 34 students. These hurtful messages included: *deconstructive criticism*, or messages that are insensitive, are not constructive, and/or imply that the efforts of the student do not matter to the teacher; *inappropriate jokes*, or teasing or making fun of students, especially when students do not find the jokes to be funny or in good taste; *false assumptions*, or messages that are stated in a negative tone and are communicated when teachers make incorrect presumptions about students' performance and/or dedication to the course; *public embarrassment*, or messages that occur in front of individuals other than the teacher and student, and humiliate or otherwise make the student feel uncomfortable; *disregard*, or teachers that appear to be impatient, do not respond to e-mail in a timely manner, or treat students as a number rather than an individual with specific concerns; *one-sided accusations*, or reprimanding students without hearing their side of the story; *misunderstood motives*, or messages that show that the teacher did not understand the student's behavior; *refusal to accommodate*, or a refusal to cooperate with students' needs and extenuating circumstances, implying that students' efforts do not matter; and *discrimination*, or focusing negatively on characteristics that students have and may not be able to change—such as gender, race, class, or other group memberships.

As is evident in the existing research on hurtful messages, the underlying cause of hurtful messages appears to be the perception that a message violates an individual's expectations for a particular relationship. In the case of teacher-student communication, students have specific expectations for the ways that teachers should communicate and behave. When teachers violate these expectations, they are said to be enacting "teacher misbehaviors." While not all teacher misbehaviors are hurtful, the results of  $RQ_2$  of this study indicate that there are two types of teacher misbehaviors that may be perceived as hurtful by students: incompetence and offensiveness.

Teachers are perceived as being incompetent when they lack the ability to embrace basic teaching skills, such as showing caring for the course and their students, appreciating student input, and helping their students succeed (Kearney, et al., 1991). When teachers communicate in such a way that they are perceived by their students as being uncooperative, unhelpful, uncaring, or impatient, they are demonstrating incompetence. As a result, students feel hurt by this particular type of communication. Similarly, teachers who are perceived as being offensive behave in ways that are discouraging, humiliating, or otherwise condescending to their students (Kearney, et al., 1991). Students may become hurt by offensive teacher misbehaviors, as these behaviors focus on the negative characteristics of students and/or their work, and imply that the efforts of the student do not matter.

Although both incompetent and offensive teacher misbehaviors were perceived as hurtful by the students who participated in this study, there were no indications that the third type of teacher misbehavior, indolence, was perceived as hurtful. Indolence is



considered a behavior that can be described as a teacher being “absent-minded” in the classroom. The fact that indolence was not considered a hurtful behavior suggests that students become hurt by teacher misbehaviors that deal with the more relational aspects of teaching that require feedback and judgment rather than the more content-oriented aspects of teaching, such as organizing class and setting due dates and requirements for assignments. This emphasis on the relational aspects of teacher-student communication further illustrate the need for teachers to “think about the relationships they have with students beyond those that are clearly inappropriate” and understand that students view their communication with teachers as relational and not merely role-based (Frymier & Houser, 2000, p. 217).

It is considerably important to understand the types of hurtful messages that take place in the context of teacher-student communication; however, the results of past literature seem to indicate that the degree of hurtfulness of these messages is one of the most essential indicators for interpreting outcome-based variables. As much of the literature contends, it is the degree of hurtfulness of a particular message that dictates an individual’s response to the hurtful message, the likelihood of the offender becoming aware that they hurt the individual, and the status of the relationship following the hurtful message (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b; Feeney & Hill, 2006; Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998; Young, Kubicka, Tucker, Chavez-Appel, & Rex, 2005).

The results of  $RQ_9$  indicate that there are differences in the degree of hurt experienced by students based on the types of hurtful messages that they perceived to be communicated by their teachers. Specifically, students who received hurtful messages of

discrimination experienced a significantly higher amount of hurt than students who received messages of refusal to accommodate, false assumptions, or misunderstood motives. Similarly, students who received hurtful messages of public embarrassment were significantly more hurt than students who reported receiving messages of refusal to accommodate and false assumptions.

While there are significant differences among each types of hurtful message it is important to understand that, regardless of difference, each type of hurtful message evoked some degree of emotional pain in the students. Based on this knowledge alone, it is important to give each type of hurtful message similar attention and realize that each has the ability to affect students emotionally, relationally, and instructionally. As Table 5 in “Chapter Five” illustrates, each type of hurtful message differs in the degree of hurtfulness students reported feeling following the hurtful message; however, even the least hurtful of the messages was located in the middle of the spectrum (1=least hurtful, 7=most hurtful) of hurtfulness. The types of messages in order from most hurtful to least hurtful are, as follows: discrimination ( $M= 5.61$ ); public embarrassment, public embarrassment ( $M= 5.40$ ), deconstructive criticism ( $M= 5.17$ ), disregard ( $M= 4.54$ ), one-sided accusations ( $M=4.44$ ), inappropriate jokes ( $M= 4.30$ ), refusal to accommodate ( $M= 4.06$ ), misunderstood motives ( $M= 3.75$ ), and false assumptions ( $M= 3.66$ ). It is also worthy to mention that 66% (or 137 out of 208) of the participants experienced one of the four most hurtful types of messages. This may indicate that students who were extremely hurt by a message were more inclined to participate in the study, or that these are the most prevalent types of hurtful messages communicated from teachers to students. In the

next section, I further discuss the reasons that these types of messages are perceived as hurtful by students.

#### Face Threats, Face Support, and Facework

Perhaps one of the greatest keys to understanding how hurtful messages operate in the teacher-student relationship is realizing that individuals have particular identity (face) needs when they are enacting the role of student, and that they have certain expectations for the ways teachers should communicate with them to help them manage these identity needs. The results of  $RQ_4$  suggest that, analogous to other well-researched relationships, students attempt to manage both positive and negative face needs in situations where they must communicate with their teachers (Kerssen-Griep, 2001; Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003; Metts & Cupach, 2008; Sabee & Wilson, 2005). When these face needs are threatened, students may become angry, embarrassed, or hurt.

The results of this study are congruent with Kerssen-Griep, Hess, and Trees' (2003) contention that students expect teachers to provide three forms of facework to help them manage their face needs: solidarity (fellowship), tact (autonomy), and approbation (competence). These forms of facework are manifested in their opposite form in this study—in other words, when teachers communicated in such a way that they were not demonstrating solidarity, tact, and approbation, students' face needs for fellowship, autonomy, and competence were threatened. These face threats led to feelings of hurt for the students who encountered them.

The first of these face needs, competence, was threatened when students perceived that their teachers implied that they were incapable of succeeding in the course,

their major/minor, or their future careers. Students typically perceived their face need for competence as being threatened when they received feedback from their teachers. The second face need, fellowship, was threatened when students perceived that their teachers viewed them as unimportant, merely subordinates, or as enemies. The last face need, which deals with autonomy, is threatened when students perceive that their teachers judge them based on stereotypes or previous experience with other students, rather than treating them as unique individuals.

The results of  $H_3$  indicate that the violation of students' face needs of competence (approbation), autonomy (tact), and fellowship (solidarity) occurs during the communication of a hurtful message. Students who perceived that their teacher violated their face need for competence experienced a decline in motivation, relational satisfaction, and affect for the course and teacher. Interestingly, students who received this type of face threat did not experience a degree of hurt that was statistically significant. This may suggest that students expect to receive negative criticism so it is not the communication of criticism that is hurtful to a student, rather the way that the teacher chooses to communicate this criticism. Ultimately, threats to students' face needs for competence did result in a decline in the content and relational variables that were measured in this study. This indicates that, although threats to competence face were not necessarily more hurtful than other forms of face threats, the communication of these face threats did negatively impact the students.

In support of the idea that the way that a teacher communicates feedback may determine how hurt students feel following the communication is the second result of  $H_3$ .

This result indicates that students who perceived that their teacher violated their face need for fellowship by not showing solidarity were more hurt by the message, and had lower levels of affective learning, motivation, and relational satisfaction. This particular result supports the notion that students place an important emphasis on individuality within the teacher-student relationship and do not view this relationship as being solely role-based. Thus, students place an extraordinary emphasis on the tone and language that teachers use to communicate feedback.

The final result of  $H_3$  illustrates that students who believed that their teachers violated their face needs for autonomy were less satisfied with the teacher-student relationship, but their degree of hurt and levels of motivation and affective learning were not affected. This result suggests that a teacher who supports a students' need for autonomy by communicating in a tactful way is more likely to be able to maintain a relationship with the offended student following the hurtful message. This argument is congruent to the assertion above concerning the ways that teachers choose to handle the communication of a potentially hurtful topic.

Ultimately, these results may suggest the possibility that—while hurtful messages are impactful as it pertains to students' motivation, affective learning, and relational satisfaction—the use of solidarity when communicating harsh messages to students may be the most noteworthy deterrent to the perception that these messages are hurtful. This appears to be congruent with the claims made by Thweatt and McCroskey (1998), whom argue that teachers who are highly immediate are consistently seen as more caring even

when they communicate misbehaviors, though it is “very doubtful...that immediacy would overcome serious teacher misbehaviors” (p. 356).

Once a students’ face needs have been threatened, the results of  $RQ_3$  and  $RQ_5$  suggest that they enact various corrective facework strategies in the form of responses to these hurtful messages. These responses are consistent with previous literature on the types of responses that individuals use following the communication of a hurtful message as three main types of responses were found in this study: active verbal, invulnerable, and acquiescent responses (Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, & Alexander, 2005).

Corrective facework was used with two main purposes: (1) thwarting the communication of another hurtful message in the future, and (2) rectifying the hurtful situation. Students utilized corrective facework to avoid future hurtful messages when they felt especially hurt or attacked by their teachers’ communication. This type of facework was achieved through active verbal responses, such as attack, silence, and asking for or providing an explanation. On the other hand, students who felt that their grades were at stake or that they had no other choice than to accommodate the teacher typically chose to attempt to rectify the situation. This strategy of facework was inclusive of invulnerable and acquiescent responses, such as laughing, crying, giving in, and apologizing to the teacher.

The use of corrective facework strategies, as described by the participants in this study, is congruent with claims made by previous researchers arguing that individuals who are deeply hurt choose to “pull away or lash out” (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b; Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998; Young, Kubicka, Chavez-Appel, & Rex, 2005) and were

more likely to discuss their feelings with the offender (Feeney & Hill, 2006). The implications of this are also analogous to those of previous researchers of hurtful messages, who argue that the offender may not realize that they are communicating a hurtful message. It is only when an individual becomes hurt enough to provide an active response that they may become aware of this hurt (Feeney & Hill, 2006). In turn, this lack of awareness by the offender may be incorrectly perceived by the hurt individual as evidence of the offender's "failure to care," further aggravating the feelings of hurt (Feeney & Hill, 2006). This possibility highlights the need for teachers to pay attention to the behavioral changes in their students via their responses to communicative interactions. By recognizing the possibility that students have become hurt by something that was said or done, teachers may be able to communicate solidarity to students by showing understanding, caring, and respect. In the following section, I discuss the impact that hurtful messages had on the students that participated in this study.

#### The Impact of Hurtful Messages in the College Classroom

The results of *RQ7*, *H1*, and *H2* connect with previous arguments that posit that teacher misbehaviors "are behaviors in which teachers should not engage because they are likely to adversely affect student motivation" (Kearney, Plax, Hays, & Ivey, 1991, p. 250), have a significant impact on student affect for the teacher (Banfield, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006, p.), and negatively influence the ways that students think and act (Kearney et al., 1991). As the data indicates, students felt that the occurrence of hurtful teacher misbehaviors impacted their motivation, affective learning, and relational satisfaction.

In terms of the impact of hurtful messages, the degree of hurt that students felt upon receiving the hurtful message related to their motivation, affective learning, and relational satisfaction. As the results of  $RQ_7$  explain, an increase in feelings of hurt led to a decrease in motivation, affective learning, and relational satisfaction for the students. Thus, regardless of the type of hurtful message or the face support/threats involved with this hurtful message, the degree of hurt appeared to be the main factor in determining whether a student would experience negative consequences. Furthermore, the results from the first phase of the study aided in the interpretation of the statistical results, as the participants' rich descriptions provided insight into exactly how these content (motivation and affective learning) and relational (relational satisfaction) variables were impacted by the hurtful message.

The first of these variables is motivation. As far as motivation is concerned, students appear to experience one of two forms of motivation following a hurtful message. The first is decline in motivation that may be reflected in the quality of their work, their participation in the class, and/or their attendance in the class. The second is determination-based motivation, where a students' motivation to succeed increases, with the purpose of proving their teacher wrong. While students described being motivated to prove their teacher wrong, they mentioned the dreadfulness of this type of motivation and described it as being an incorrect form of motivation.

The second of these variables is students' perceptions of affective learning which is comprised of their affect for the teacher and for the course. Students discussed experiencing an overall decline in affective learning upon receiving a hurtful message.



Specifically, many students expressed that a hurtful message contributed to a loss of enjoyment for the course and, in some cases, a loss of interest in their major, minor, course subject area, or college in general. Students also described losing their affect for the teacher and developing a disdain for being within a physical proximity of that teacher. For these students, a decrease in affect is signified as a loss of respect for the teacher, and the perception that the teacher's future behaviors are negative, as well.

Finally, hurtful messages also had an impact on students' satisfaction with the relationship they had with the offending teacher. Students reported dissatisfaction with the teacher-student relationship, regardless of whether their relationship with the teacher began as a positive one or whether this was the only hurtful message that was communicated by the teacher. Students who were hurt on the first day or week of class—before a relationship had the chance to develop—explained that the development of a relationship with this teacher would be unlikely. However, it is interesting to note that students who reported that their teachers attempted to apologize or otherwise correct the hurtful behavior felt that the relationship had been or could be salvaged.

These results further indicate that, although hurtful messages are detrimental to students' motivation, affective learning, and relational satisfaction with their teachers, there is potential for correcting the aftermath of these hurtful messages. For the most part, however, students and teachers must be willing to view each other as individuals and engage in open dialogue about their concerns and feelings. This study is crucial in taking the first step of recognizing that hurtful messages do occur in this relationship and

have a significant impact on the offended individuals. Further significance of this study is described in the paragraphs that follow.

#### Significance of the Study

When considering the results of this study, the significance appears to be threefold. First, the results of this study have added to the existing knowledge of the effects of teacher misbehaviors on college students by considering the relational consequences of teacher misbehaviors. Second, the results of this study have added to our existing knowledge of hurtful messages by extending this body of literature to the instructional communication context. Finally, the results of this research extend Face Theory by demonstrating how face threats between teachers and students can lead to hurt feelings which, in turn, can hinder the movement of the teacher-student relationship from a sociological level to a psychological level.

#### *Contribution to Teacher Misbehavior Literature*

The first contribution made by this study is that it adds to the existing literature concerning teacher misbehavior. Few studies have focused on the negative behaviors that teachers engage in, and fewer studies consider the ways that teacher misbehaviors affect students (Kearney, Plax, Hays, & Ivey, 1991). Of these studies, however, teacher misbehaviors have been recognized as having a negative influence on students' affective learning (Banfield, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006; Dolin, 1995; Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009; Toale, 2001), cognitive learning (Dolin, 1995; Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009), motivation (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009; Zhang, 2007), communication satisfaction (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009), and participation (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2009).

Unfortunately, all of these outcomes deal with the content-oriented aspects of teacher-student communication and fail to consider the relational outcomes of teacher misbehaviors. Accordingly, this study focused specifically on including relational outcomes as a consequence of teacher misbehaviors. Furthermore, this study considered the emotional consequences of teacher misbehaviors, as well. As a result, it was recognized that certain teacher misbehaviors that are offensive or indolent result in various levels of emotional pain, or hurt feelings. The more hurtful the misbehavior was perceived, the less satisfied students reported being with their relationship with the offending teachers.

#### *Contribution to Hurtful Messages Literature*

The second contribution made by this study is that it extends the existing literature on hurtful messages in human relationships. To date, our knowledge of hurtful messages has been confined to the context of interpersonal relationships, such as romantic partners and family members. This is the first study that has considered hurtful messages as they pertain to the communication that occurs in the instructional context. As such, this study goes beyond the general typology of hurtful messages contributed by Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, and Alexander (2005) and contributes a context-specific typology of the types of messages that are considered hurtful by students. This is an especially important contribution as previous research indicates that hurtful messages differ across contexts, so it is illogical to assume that what is considered hurtful in one context will be perceived as hurtful in another (Feeney, 2004; Mills, Nazar, & Farrell, 2002).

It is also reasonable to suggest that this study contributes to our existing knowledge of the types of responses that offended individuals communicate following the receipt of a hurtful message. The results of this study solidify the notion that offended individuals respond to hurtful messages in a variety of ways, but that the responses that individuals perceive to have available to them are largely dictated by the power differential that exists in the relationship and the degree of hurtfulness of the message (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006; Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998; Young, Kubicka, Tucker, Chavez-Appel, & Rex, 2005).

#### *Contribution to Face Theory*

This study contributes to our knowledge of face and facework in two ways. The first is an extension of Face Theory via an understanding of the way that the occurrence of face threats relate to emotions, such as hurt, and how they interfere with the development of the teacher-student relationship. The second is by exposing a weakness in the theory terminology as it pertains to corrective and preventive facework. Although previous applications of Face Theory to the instructional context illustrated the ways that face threats and instructional face-support relate to students' motivation, involvement, and learning, they did not consider emotional and relational consequences of face threats and/or a lack of instructional face-support. However, as Cupach and Metts (1994) argued, "the quality and longevity of relationships and the psychological health of the relational partners" are endangered by the occurrence of face threats. This statement holds true in this study, as there is an explicit emphasis placed on the ways that students

become emotionally hurt when teachers threaten their face, as well as the relational dissatisfaction that occurs following these hurtful face threats.

Additionally, previous applications of instructional face-support were strengthened as the conclusions arrived at in the results of this study are congruent with the notion that the three forms of instructional face-support—approbation, solidarity, and tact—were identified as significant (Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003). In previous literature, these forms of instructional face-support were said to be predictors of student motivation, interaction, and attentiveness (Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003). In this study, approbation was shown to be significantly related to affective learning, motivation, and relational satisfaction; solidarity was correlated negatively with degree of hurt and positively with affective learning, motivation, and relational satisfaction; and tact was shown to be positively related to relational satisfaction.

Furthermore, the results of this study expose a weakness in terminology; specifically, as it pertains to corrective and preventive facework. By definition, “face threatening acts can be avoided or minimized before they occur through the use of preventive facework” (Cupach & Metts, 1994); whereas, “on other occasions, face threats are not anticipated and the loss of face must be remediated through corrective facework” (Cupach & Metts, 1994). While analyzing the data in this study, a disagreement occurred regarding the facework that is used with the purpose of preventing a future hurtful message once the initial message has occurred. Based on the aforementioned definitions, this facework would not be considered preventive because the initial hurtful event had already occurred; however, it would not be considered corrective either, as the possibility

of a future hurtful message is anticipated because of the initial hurtful event. For the purpose of this study, this strategy was categorized under the corrective facework theme; however, the lack of “fit” within the definitional constraints of this typology merits further attention. In this regard, this study extends our knowledge of the ways that face and facework are at play in the college classroom and exposes a potential weakness in the terminology used in the facework component of this theory. The implications of this knowledge are discussed in the following section.

#### Implications of Conclusions

As the results of this study signify, students *do* view their communication with teachers to be relational. As much of the previous literature in instructional communication suggests, a vast majority of teachers view their relationships with students as sociological or role-based. In sociological communication, individuals communicate with each other based on what is expected in their particular roles (Miller & Steinberg, 1975). This particular type of communication transaction is congruent with customer-employee relationships. For teacher-student communication, this may consist of basic communication concerning academics, assignments, class participation, and the like. The results of this study, however, seem to indicate that students view their relationships with teachers beyond this role-based set of expectations and expect their teachers to treat them as individuals, rather than consumers. In instances where students recalled being treated “as a number” or as though they “did not matter,” they felt hurt by this communication and described being dissatisfied with their classroom experience. This seems to suggest that teachers should work to interact with students on a

psychological level by treating them as individuals with unique experiences. When teachers assume that all students are the same or that they are all attempting to lie, cheat, or act in disrespectful ways, it is perceived as unfair and hurtful. By interacting with students on a psychological level, teachers demonstrate solidarity with the student. Solidarity may allow trust and respect to develop between teachers and students (Frymier & Houser, 2000) and many types of hurtful messages may be avoided.

Unfortunately, the move from sociological communication to psychological communication appears to be hindered by hurtful messages and face threats, so much that many students prefer to distance themselves or sever all ties with the offending teacher. This conclusion brings forth the importance of teachers understanding that students' feelings *do* become hurt during some teacher-student interactions. While a few teachers may be communicating hurtful messages on purpose—perhaps in hopes of motivating an under-performing student to work harder—it seems plausible to suggest that most teachers do not realize that students are interpreting their communication as hurtful. While this is largely an issue of *perception*—what one student perceives as hurtful, another may not—the value in this study is that it highlights the fact that students do view their communication with their teachers as relational to some degree. As a result, many of them value their teachers' thoughts and opinions and, thus, become hurt when they feel that their teachers do not value the relationship (or show solidarity) as much as they do. This alone supports the need for teachers to realize the power of their words and consider the impact of their communication before sharing messages of feedback, assumption, and judgment.

Because many teachers may not realize that their communication is capable of being perceived as hurtful, they may be unknowingly communicating hurtful messages to their students. The students' responses to hurtful messages that are discussed in this study may serve as a tool for teachers to begin acknowledging occasions when they may have inadvertently hurt a student's feelings. The responses that students described in the first phase of this study highlight the contention that there is a behavioral change in students who believe they have received a hurtful message from a teacher. In instances where students do not openly discuss their feelings with their teacher, they are enacting such behavioral changes as avoiding their teachers, removing themselves from the front of the classroom, as well as acting defensively, crying, being silent, leaving the classroom or office, asking for explanations, or providing explanations. If a teacher notices a sudden behavioral change in one of their students following an interaction, there is a possibility that the student was hurt by the interaction. As a result, the teacher should be willing to engage in open dialogue with the student and ask them about their feelings. This open line of communication may serve as an explicit indicator of psychological communication and help students feel that they are being treated as trusted and respected individuals. As a result, this attempt at open communication may be beneficial to relational maintenance or repair of the teacher-student relationship. Specific suggestions for teachers and students are provided in the forthcoming section.

#### Practical Application

As I suggested throughout this chapter, this study is valuable in that it provides various critical pragmatic stepping stones for both teachers and students. Because



communication is a process, no one individual is to “blame” for the outcomes of interactions; rather, both teachers and students should use the results of this study to work to become more effective communicators and relational partners. In the following sections, I share suggestions for both teachers and students.

### *Suggestions for Teachers*

The conclusions derived from this study provide two practical suggestions to teachers concerning the communication of hurtful messages. First, as teachers, we should attempt to prevent the occurrence of hurtful messages. Second, as teachers, we should become attentive to students’ individual need and concerns. Table 4 in “Chapter Four” includes a list of advice, along with several exemplars, provided by students on the topic of preventing hurtful messages in the classroom derived from *RQ*<sub>6</sub>. These simple guidelines are reasonable and illustrate how minor adjustments to our communication may prevent long-term negative consequences for our students. Behaviors as simple as smiling at our students, offering them suggestions for improvement, and letting them know when our obligations may hinder us from responding to e-mail in a timely manner are all potential deterrents of hurtful messages. The key, as represented in the qualitative and quantitative results of this study, is showing solidarity and unity with the students. By letting them know that they are not “in it alone,” and that we understand their personal and professional struggles, we are doing a great deal to build trust and show that we care.

Secondly, many of us are not intentionally communicating hurtful messages to our students, but unless the message is intensely hurtful, students are not likely to make

us aware of their perceptions of our communication. Thus, it should be one of our goals to foster positive relationships with our students by viewing them as unique individuals. When we become attentive to the behavior of our students, it will become easy to identify behavioral changes that may indicate that a student has been hurt by something that we have said or done. Behaviors such as attack, silence, crying, and physical distancing, may all serve as indications that we have offended a student. In these instances, we should take a moment to create a safe and open dialogue with our students allowing them to feel as though they can share their concerns with us. As with many relationships in other contexts, a simple question about their feelings may go a long way.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that 71% (148 out of 208) of the students who participated in the second phase of this study reported being hurt by a teacher in a class of 50 students or fewer, and 74% (154 out of 208) of students reported being hurt in a freshman or sophomore level course. The implications of these statistics point to the fact that the majority of hurtful messages are occurring in small courses at the beginning of the students' college experience. This may indicate that students are having difficulty adjusting to the transition from high school to college due to the differences in expectations and support. This is an important area where teachers can make a difference by being clear in their expectations of students and working to help them make a smooth transition from high school students to college students. Demonstrating caring for the students by showing that we understand their struggles may shift the perceptions of these messages from hurtful to helpful. This, of course, is not solely the responsibility of teachers. Thus, suggestions for students are provided in the following section.

### *Suggestions for Students*

In terms of practical suggestions for students, the conclusions of this study seem to point to two main ideas. The first is in regard to the attributions that students make concerning hurtful messages that they perceive to be communicated by their teachers. The second deals specifically with the need for students to approach their teachers concerning their feelings. When individuals become hurt, one of the first things that they do, mentally, is begin making attributions for the reason that the hurtful message was communicated. Unfortunately, it is easy to assume that teachers purposely communicated a hurtful message and that they do not care for the well-being of their students. However, most college teachers sincerely care about the interests of their students and may not realize that their communication is being perceived as hurtful. As I mentioned above, the data in this study suggests that a majority of the hurtful messages occur in freshman and sophomore level courses of 50 or fewer students. This may indicate that students who are new to the transition into college may not be aware of the differences in relationships that occur between teachers and students at the collegiate level versus the high school level. Many students enter college hoping for the same close-knit relationships that they had with their high school teachers—especially in a small class where these relationships seem feasible to build—but do not realize that teachers may view the relationship in a role-based manner. Thus, students may be taking the behaviors of their teachers too seriously, at times, leaving the teacher completely oblivious to the hurt feelings that they are experiencing.

Secondly, while many teachers do not realize that some of their communication is being perceived as hurtful, other teachers may be communicating in a harsh manner in hopes of motivating their students to improve. It is impossible to speculate a teacher's motives for communicating a hurtful message, just as it is difficult for teachers to interpret students' motives at times. Thus, the only way that a student will become privy to the reasoning behind a teacher's communication is by creating an open dialogue with the teacher. While it may be daunting to approach a teacher who holds a superior position of power, it is important to realize the benefits of doing so. By sharing feelings with the teachers, students will be given the opportunity to hear the teachers' side of the story and share their own views. Similarly, the teacher may become aware that their communication is being perceived as hurtful and may apologize or adjust their communication to prevent future hurtful messages from occurring. This is a highly positive outcome when compared to spending the entirety of the semester feeling dissatisfied with the teacher-student relationship, losing motivation for the course, and becoming disinterested in the teacher and the course. The simple act of communication may resolve the problem and create a positive outcome from an otherwise painful experience.

As the advice shared in this section of the dissertation indicates, the present study contributed greatly to our knowledge of hurtful messages in the teacher-student relationship. Despite this contribution, there were several limitations to the study. These limitations are discussed in the following section.

### Limitations

While this study contributes greatly to our understanding of the teacher-student relationship, it is not without its limitations. There are two main limitations that should be addressed. A first limitation deals with the sample that was used in this study. While the convenience sample used was considered acceptable because it specifically targeted the audience that I wished to study, it was also a limitation. Due to the geographic location that this study was primarily conducted, a majority of the participants were Caucasian students aged 19-24. While this study was not created with specific attention to differences across cultures, it would benefit from a more diverse sample that includes more Hispanic, African-American, and Asian students, as well as more non-traditional students. It is my contention that there are likely many differences in regard to the type of messages that young Caucasian students perceive as hurtful as opposed to those perceived as hurtful by minority or non-traditional students.

A second limitation of this study is the emphasis placed on students' *perceptions* of hurtful messages. In many ways, a perception-based study is significant because the impact of communication is less focused on the intent of a message and more on the perception of that message; however, in this study, it should also be considered a limitation. Unfortunately, by focusing solely on students' perceptions of hurtful messages, I was unable to witness the interaction to determine whether students' recollections of what was said or done matched the teachers' actual behavior. It is possible that, in instances where students were particularly hurt or offended, students may exaggerate or internalize specific details of the hurtful message based on the strong

emotions that they are feeling. This study would benefit from an element of observation, or a call for participants that require bringing a copy of an e-mail or written evaluation with them to the interview for comparison. I do not doubt that students receive hurtful messages in the classroom; however, an understanding of what the teacher actually communicated to the student and how students perceived that communication would be a valuable addition to this research.

While this study was not without limitations, these limitations did not negate the value of this study; rather, these limitations provide an impetus for further research conducted in the area of hurtful messages, teacher misbehaviors, and the teacher-student relationship as a whole. Further directions for future research in these areas are provided in the following section.

#### Directions for Future Research

The results and implications of this study pave a strong foundation for future research concerning hurtful messages in instructional communication. Several possible directions for future research include investigations in the areas of: (a) sex, (b) attributions, (c) corrective behavior, (d) awareness, and in other instructional contexts such as (e) physician/patient communication. In the paragraphs that follow, I discuss each of these possibilities in hopes of providing a vast landscape for further inquiry and scholarship.

Sex is one potential area for continued examination of hurtful messages in the teacher-student relationship. Although the present study did not focus on sex as a potential variable, the descriptive statistics of the second phase of the study indicate that

this may be a fruitful area for further consideration. In the second phase of this study, there were 77 male participants and 131 female participants; however, when prompted about the sex of the teacher whom they perceived as being hurtful, 133 male teachers and 75 female teachers were reported as being communicators of hurtful messages. This set of statistics seems to indicate that female students are either (a) more likely to feel comfortable admitting their feelings of hurt to an outside researcher, or (b) are more susceptible to becoming hurt by a teacher's remark. Similarly, it is also apparent that male teachers are more frequently reported as being hurtful, which may have interesting implications concerning the ways that they communication with their students.

An additional area to consider for future research is that of attributions. As existing literature states, students tend to make biased attributions of teacher behaviors by over-emphasizing internal causes to their behaviors, regarding teachers as responsible for various classroom outcomes (Christophel, 1992; Kearney, Plax, Allen, & Ritter, 2004). With this emphasis on the teacher, it is important to understand the attributions that students make when they believe that they have received a hurtful message from a teacher. As the exemplars provided in phase one of this study imply, many students perceive the teachers' messages as hurtful because they feel that the teacher is purposely being rude or offensive, or that the teacher does not care about the students or the courses that they teach. This attribution may specifically relate to the ways that students choose to respond to the hurtful message, as well as the degree of hurtfulness that they feel as a result of the hurtful message.

Another possibility for future research is an investigation of the type and impact of corrective behaviors on students' perceptions of hurtful messages. As expressed in "Chapter Three," 57% (119 or 208) of the participants in the second phase of this study believed that their teachers were aware of the fact that they communicated a hurtful message, but only 11% (23 out of 208) of students believed that their teachers had attempted to apologize or correct the hurtful message after it was communicated. As Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans (1998) suggest, many relationships may be strained by a hurtful message, but they are able to be repaired with open communication. Unfortunately, if teachers are not aware of the fact that they communicated a hurtful message or if they are aware but do not attempt to engage in corrective behavior, the teacher-student relationship may sustain long-term damage.

Furthermore, focusing on teachers' knowledge of hurtful messages in the teacher-student relationship would be another interesting area for future research. The results of this study imply that students perceive teachers as being aware that they are communicating hurtful messages; however, there is no existing evidence that teachers realize that they are communicating hurtful messages to students. An investigation of teachers' awareness of and/or reasons for communicating hurtful messages to their students would be a valuable addition to this ongoing line of research.

A final area for research development as it pertains to hurtful messages would be studying hurtful messages in other relationships that may be considered instructional. Specifically, the communication that occurs between physician and patient may be viewed as instructional due to the amount of information that is relayed from physician to



patient concerning health and body issues. If hurtful messages have an impact on the patient that is similar to that experienced by students (relational dissatisfaction), many implications arise concerning the quality of communication in health care and the possibility that patients may distance themselves from their physicians following a hurtful message. This relational distancing may increase their chances of not being screened for an illness before it progresses and/or suffering from an illness without seeking help. These implications alone suggest that this avenue of research necessitates further exploration.

#### Summary

My goal for the present study was to extend our knowledge of the effects of teacher misbehavior on the classroom experience of college students. To do so, I focused specifically on the teacher misbehaviors that students perceive as being hurtful and the role that face and instructional face-support plays in students' perceptions of hurtful messages. In this investigation, it became apparent that two general types of teacher misbehaviors (incompetent and offensive) act as threats to students' face needs for competence, fellowship, and autonomy. When threats to fellowship occur, students become hurt. The various types of hurtful messages differ in their degree of hurtfulness which dictates various content and relational outcomes for the offended student. Specifically, an increase in hurtfulness results in a decrease in relational satisfaction, affective learning (concerning the course and teacher), and motivation for the student.

Based on the results and implications of this study, it is my goal for teachers to become better equipped to recognize when their communicative behaviors may have

been perceived as hurtful by students. This recognition should lead to open communication and dialogue between the teacher and student and, hopefully, contribute to the avoidance of potential long-term risks of negative relational and/or content-related outcomes for the student. Furthermore, it is my hope that teachers begin moving from sociological communication to a more psychological form of communication with their students. By recognizing that each student is an individual and has their own specific experiences, culture, and concerns, hurtful messages may be avoided.

A secondary goal of this study is to empower students by assuring them that it is acceptable for them to approach a teacher who they believe has hurt their feelings and share their feelings with that teacher. Students entering college for the first time out of high school may not realize that instruction is different at the collegiate-level and that this may require an adjustment. Similarly, some students may become sensitive to the ways that teachers communicate without realizing that their teachers are not placing the same emphasis on their own words or behaviors. It is my hope that students will become more willing to step forward and create open dialogue about their feelings with their teachers, as well. In doing so, both teachers and students may experience positive improvements in their relationships with each other and the outcome of their collegiate academic experience.

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## APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF PILOT STUDY

In a pilot study, I (Maresh, 2007) collected data through interviews with 10 students who believed that they were recipients of hurtful messages communicated by college teachers. In my research announcement, I included criteria for potential participants that required they be at least 19 years of age and, at some point, have received a message from a college teacher that they perceived as being hurtful. The pilot study generated a great deal of interest from students, as 62 current and former college students responded to the research announcement in the first two months of it being posted. This number alone illustrates the pervasiveness of hurtful messages in the college classroom.

The purpose of the pilot study was to determine whether students experience hurt feelings following communication with teachers and, if so, what types of communicative behaviors are being perceived as hurtful. In addition to this immediate goal, I sought to understand the varying ways that students choose to respond, if at all, to their teachers following the communication of a hurtful message. Since I was not certain that students felt hurt following particular teacher behaviors, this was an exploratory study. Because of the exploratory nature of this pilot study, I utilized Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, and Alexander's (2005) general typologies to help me interpret my interview data. By doing so, I ensured that my analysis was compatible with the existing research on hurtful messages that was conducted in the context of other interpersonal relationships. The results of the pilot study (as reported throughout "Chapter Two" of the current study) were useful in identifying the various facets of hurtful messages in the

teacher-student relationship, selecting the theoretical framework for the dissertation, and extending and refining the questions in the interview guide.

## APPENDIX B: PHASE ONE INFORMED CONSENT FORM



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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Exploring Hurtful Communication from College Instructors to Students:  
A Mixed Methods Study**

The purpose of this study is to learn more about hurtful messages that instructors communicate to students and how students respond to these messages.

Participation in this study involves an interview that focuses on the hurtful messages that were communicated to you by an instructor(s). To participate in the study, you must meet the following criteria: be at least 19 years of age, have been a receiver of at least one hurtful message communicated by an instructor, and have been enrolled in a course with the instructor at the time the hurtful message was delivered. Participants will answer a series of questions designed to elicit a description of the hurtful messages communicated by instructor(s), your response to these messages, the frequency of messages received from the same instructor, as well as how you talked about the hurtful messages with others.

This process will take place in a private office in the Communication Studies Department on the fourth floor of Oldfather Hall at the UNL campus or on the phone or at another place you choose. The interviews will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Your responses during the interview will be tape-recorded to ensure accuracy and if this is OK, please check the box at the end of this form. We believe that there is a minimal risk that you may possibly become upset from recalling, talking, or thinking about the hurtful messages that you have received from instructors. If discomfort is a result of your participation, you will be referred to the UNL Psychological Consultation Center if you are a UNL student and will be recommended to seek out counseling if you are a non-student. If you do feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, you are free to omit answering questions and/or withdraw from the study at any time as your participation is completely voluntary. Withdrawal from the study will not adversely affect your relationship with the investigator, the Department of Communication Studies, or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits for which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a Communication Studies student, you will receive extra credit for your participation, at the discretion of your instructor. If you choose not to participate, there are alternative options for obtaining this extra credit

through additional research opportunities or a non-research opportunity. Each alternative option will count for the same credit and will take relatively the same amount of time and energy as completing this questionnaire. Although there is no direct benefit from or compensation for participation in a study, there is a potential benefit of increasing understanding of your communication with instructors upon receiving hurtful messages from them.

Your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. All consent forms and materials will be kept in a locked drawer in the principal investigator's office. After three years, the consent forms and materials will be removed from the drawer and immediately destroyed. Results of this research may be presented at professional conventions and included in journal articles.

Please feel free to voice any and all questions you may have before or during the completion of the interview and questionnaire. If you would like additional information concerning this study after it is complete, please feel free to contact the investigator by phone, mail, or email. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigators or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

---

*Signature of Research Participant*

---

*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the researcher to audiotape this interview

Sincerely,

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## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Exploring Hurtful Communication from College Instructors to Students  
Interview Protocol**

I am from the Communication Studies Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and I am your interviewer today. I am currently working on a research project for my dissertation that focuses on hurtful messages that students perceive teachers communicate to them and how students respond to those messages. To participate in this interview you must be at least 19 years of age and have, at some point, experienced hurt feelings from a message or interaction with a college teacher and you must have been enrolled in a course with the teacher at the time the hurtful message was communicated. Does this describe you?

First, I want to take you through the informed consent form and procedures for the study so that you clearly understand your rights today. Let's do that first.

-----  
Okay, now I would like to find out a bit about you. I am going to ask you a series of demographic questions. A few of these questions will be asked in ranges, so please select the range that best describes you:

\_\_\_\_\_ Male    \_\_\_\_\_ Female (I will simply make note of the appropriate sex)

Age: [19-24] [25-29] [30-35] [35-40] [40-45] [Over 45]

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Year in college and/or highest level of education: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

In regard to the course you were enrolled in with the teacher that hurt your feelings, what department is this course part of: \_\_\_\_\_

Was this course upper or lower division: \_\_\_\_\_

What grade did you receive in this course: \_\_\_\_\_

How long has it been since you received a hurtful message from this teacher: [Less than 6 months] [Between 6 months and 1 year] [1 year-3 years] [Over 3 years]

-----  
I now would like to ask you some questions about your experiences related to the hurtful message(s) you received from your teacher. We know that many of the messages we receive from our teachers are informative and helpful. Remember that there is no right or wrong answer to my questions. Communication is considered hurtful when it elicits feelings of emotional or physiological hurt in the receiver. Thus, I want to understand your experiences with the hurtful messages you have received from teacher. What will be the most help to me is if you can tell your story with as much detail as you feel comfortable sharing with me.

Obviously you may end up talking about a teacher that I know. Thus, please know that I do not need to know the name of the teacher.

I want you to tell me about your experiences with hurtful messages as if it were a story. When you read a story, it is usually told in chapters. Let's say that the hurtful communication occurred in Chapter 2. The time leading up to the hurtful message is Chapter 1, and the time after the hurtful message is Chapter 3.

- 1) Let's begin with Chapter 1. Please begin by telling me what you believe led up to the teacher's hurtful message.
  - Describe exactly what was going on before the hurtful message?
  - How did you perform your role as a student in this class before the hurtful message (i.e., attendance, participation, grades, etc.)?
  - How did you feel about the course before the hurtful message?
  - How did you feel about your teacher before s/he communicated this message?
  - How would you describe your relationship with this teacher before the incident?
  - How did you communicate with your teacher before the hurtful message?
  - Were there any other incidents that occurred prior to the hurtful message?
  
- 2) Let's move on the Chapter 2. Please tell me about a specific time when your teacher communicated in a way that hurt your feelings.
  - How long had you known your teacher at this point?
  - Where or how was this hurtful message communicated?
  - Who else was there, if anyone, at the time you received the hurtful message?
    - How, if at all, did any of these people respond to this event?
    - How did you feel about the way that the other people responded?
  - Describe in as much detail as you can what your teacher did or said.
  
- 3) Reflect specifically on the hurtful message. What are some reasons that you felt this message was hurtful to you?
  - How did you feel when your teacher did/said this?
  - What was your first thought after the teacher did/said this?
  - If you could describe this message using a word other than hurtful, what would that word be?
  
- 4) What are some reasons that you can think of as to why you believe teacher may have communicated to you in this way?
  
- 5) How, if at all, could your teacher have communicated this message differently—in a way that is not hurtful? Reword the message.



- 6) Let's move on to Chapter 3. Please describe in as much detail as you can for me what you did or said after your teacher communicated this hurtful message to you.
  - What did you say or do, if anything, that involved the teacher?
  - How did the teacher respond to this initiative?
  - What did you say or do, if anything, that involved others?
  - How did you deal with the hurt feelings you experienced?
  - How satisfied are you with what you did or said?
  - What, if any, steps did you take to ensure that this would not happen again?
  - How did this situation turn out?
- 7) At this point, what are your perceptions of this teacher?
  - How did you feel about your teacher after s/he communicated this message?
  - How did you communicate with your teacher after the episode happened?
  - How if at all, do you communicate with this teacher today?
  - How would you describe your current relationship with this teacher?
  - How does your relationship with this teacher compare to most other teachers?
- 8) How aware do you think your teacher is that s/he hurt your feelings? Explain.
- 9) Describe for me the ways, if any, that this hurtful message impacted you and your classroom experience.
  - How did you perform your role as a student in this class after the hurtful message (i.e., attendance, participation, grades, etc.)?
  - How did you feel about the course after the hurtful message?
  - How motivated did you feel to attend class, attend office hours, and/or complete assignments?
  - How did this hurtful message affect your learning, if at all?
  - Why did it impact you in this way?
- 10) If you could share some advice with teachers about communicating with students in ways that do not hurt their feelings, what would you tell them?
- 11) If you could share advice with students about communicating with teachers whom they believe hurt their feelings, what would you tell them?
- 12) What else should know about hurtful messages and teachers that I have not asked you?

## APPENDIX D: PHASE TWO INFORMED CONSENT FORM



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Exploring Hurtful Communication from College Teachers to Students:  
A Mixed Methods Study**

The purpose of this study is to learn more about hurtful messages that college teachers may communicate to students and the impact that this communication has them. Participation in this study involves an online questionnaire that focuses on the hurtful messages that were communicated to you by a teacher(s), the feelings of hurt that you experienced as a result of these messages, as well as how you feel about your relationship with that teacher, how much you liked the teacher and the course, and how motivated you were to participate in their course after the hurtful message. To participate in this study, you must meet the following criteria: (a) be at least 19 years of age, (b) feel that you have been the recipient of at least one form of hurtful communication from a college teacher, and (c) have been enrolled in a course with the teacher at the time the hurtful communication was delivered.

This process will take place at a time that is convenient for you by filling out a survey on the QuestionPro website (<http://hurtfulcommunication.questionpro.com>). The time spent on the questionnaire will be approximately 20-30 minutes. You may experience some discomfort when recalling the hurtful communication that you received from your teacher. If you do feel uncomfortable at any time, you are free to omit answering questions and/or withdraw from the study at any time as your participation is completely voluntary. Withdrawal from the study will not adversely affect your relationship with the investigators, the Department of Communication Studies, or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits for which you are otherwise entitled. If discomfort is a result of your participation, you will be referred to the UNL Psychological Consultation Center if you are a UNL student and will be recommended to seek out counseling if you are a non-student. If you are a Communication Studies student, you will receive extra credit for your participation, at the discretion of your instructor. If you choose not to participate, there are alternative options for obtaining this extra credit through additional research opportunities or a non-research opportunity. Each alternative option will count for the same credit and will take relatively the same amount of time and energy as completing this questionnaire. Although there is no direct benefit from or compensation for participation in a study, there is a potential benefit of increasing

understanding of your communication with teachers upon receiving hurtful messages from them.

Your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. All consent forms and materials will be kept on a private, encrypted website that is only accessible by the principal investigator. After two years, the consent forms and questionnaires will be permanently removed from the website. Results of this research may be presented at professional conventions and included in journal articles.

Please feel free to voice any and all questions you may have before or during the completion of the questionnaire. If you would like additional information concerning this study after it is complete, please feel free to contact the investigator by phone, mail, or e-mail. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Clicking on the "I Agree" button indicates that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented.

Sincerely,

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I Agree.

## APPENDIX E: SURVEY

**Demographic Questions**

**Please fill-in or select the appropriate response to each of the following demographic questions.**

1. What is your sex?
  - Female
  - Male
  
2. What is your age?
  - 19-24
  - 25-29
  - 30-35
  - 35-40
  - 40-45
  - Over 45
  
3. What is your ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What is your current classification?
  - Freshman
  - Sophomore
  - Junior
  - Senior
  - Graduate Student
  - Not currently a student
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

**For the following questions, reflect specifically on a hurtful message that you received from a specific college teacher while you were enrolled in their course.**

6. Name the department or area the teacher that you received the hurtful message is from: \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. What level was this course?
  - Lower-Division (Freshman/Sophomore, 100-200 level, or equivalent)
  - Upper-Division (Junior/Senior, 300-400 level, or equivalent)
  - Graduate (Masters, Doctoral, Post-Doc, or equivalent)

8. How many students were in the course?
- Under 50 students
  - 50-100 students
  - 100+ students
9. What was the title of the teacher who hurt your feelings?
- An Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor
  - An Instructor or Graduate Teaching Assistant
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
10. What was the sex of the teacher who hurt your feelings?
- Male
  - Female

**You may believe that your teacher hurt your feelings more than once. Please respond to these questions by thinking about *the most hurtful instance you experienced.***

11. Please describe an instance where a college teacher communicated in a way that hurt you emotionally or physiologically. In this description, include specific information about what the teacher did or said, what you did or said, and why you felt this communication was hurtful.
- A. What did your teacher say or do?
  - B. What did you say or do?
  - C. In your opinion, why was the message hurtful to you?
12. In the instance you described above, where did this communication occur?
- In the teacher's office, with no one else around
  - During class, in front of other students
  - During class, with no one else around
  - After class, with no one else around
  - After class, in front of other students
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you believe that your teacher was aware that they hurt your feelings?
- Yes, I believe s/he was aware.
  - No, I don't believe s/he was aware.
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you believe that your teacher attempted to apologize, minimize, or otherwise correct their hurtful message?

Yes. Please describe the ways that they did so: \_\_\_\_\_

No.

### Questionnaire

**In the previous section, you described an instance where a teacher hurt your feelings. Please answer the following questions with that teacher and instance in mind. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you may stop filling out this questionnaire.**

1. Which of the following *best* describes the type of hurtful message that you received?
  - A. My teacher refused to accommodate me and/or my needs
  - B. My teacher provided me with de-constructive or harsh criticism.
  - C. My teacher issued false assumptions about me.
  - D. My teacher communicated in a way that showed a disregard and/or lack of caring for me.
  - E. My teacher joked about me in an inappropriate manner.
  - F. My teacher publicly embarrassed me.
  - G. My teacher accused me of cheating.
  - H. My teacher misunderstood my motives.
  - I. My teacher discriminated against me.

2. How hurtful was this message? Please circle the number toward either word which best represents how hurtful the message was to you:

Not at all hurtful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Extremely hurtful
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------------

3. How much emotional pain did you experience as a result of this message? Please circle the number toward either word which best represents your answer:

It did not cause any emotional pain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	It caused a great deal of emotional pain
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--

**For the following questions, please indicate your reaction to the teacher that you discussed in Question #1. Choose the number or letter that corresponds to your feelings. Note that in some cases the most positive score is “7” while in other cases it is “1”**

4. Overall the teacher I had in the class was:

Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
Valuable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Worthless
Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair

Positive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Negative
----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------

5. If I had the opportunity, my likelihood of taking future courses with this teacher would be:

Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likely
Possible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Impossible
Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable
Would	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Would not

**For the following questions, please indicate your reaction to the teacher that you discussed in Question #1. Choose the number or letter that corresponds to your feelings. Note that in some cases the most positive score is “5” while in other cases it is “1”**

6. How well did this teacher meet your needs?

Poorly	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely Well
--------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

7. In general, how satisfied were you with your relationship with this teacher?

Unsatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely Satisfied
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------------------

8. How good was your relationship with this teacher compared to most?

Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

9. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship with this teacher?

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Very Often
-------	---	---	---	---	---	------------

10. To what extent did your relationship with this teacher meet your original expectations?

Hardly at all	1	2	3	4	5	Completely
---------------	---	---	---	---	---	------------

11. How much do you respect this teacher?

Not much	1	2	3	4	5	Very much
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

12. How many problems were there in your relationship with this teacher?

Very few	1	2	3	4	5	Very many
----------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

**For the following items, please circle the number toward either word which best represents your position after the teacher hurt your feelings. Note that in some cases the most positive score is “1” while in other cases it is “7.”**

13. How did you feel during the class that you were taking with the teacher that hurt your feelings?

Motivated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unmotivated
Interested	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninterested
Involved	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninvolved
Not Stimulated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stimulated
Don't want to study	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Want to study
Inspired	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninspired
Unchallenged	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Challenged
Uninvigorated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Invigorated
Unenthused	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Enthused
Excited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not Excited
Aroused	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not Aroused
Not Fascinated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fascinated

**Please respond to the questions below (even if some seem redundant) indicating the degree to which you think each describes your feelings.**

14. When your teacher communicated this hurtful message to you, to what degree did your teacher:

Work to avoid making you look bad.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Leave you free to choose how to respond.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Make sure that s/he doesn't cast you in a negative light.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Seem unconcerned about your feelings.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Let you know that s/he thinks highly of you.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Leave you without a choice about how to respond to the evaluation.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Show understanding.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much



Sound like s/he disapproves of you.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Make you feel pushed into agreeing with his/her suggestions.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Show that s/he cares about your learning experience.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Express blunt criticism about your performance in the class.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Make you feel like you can choose how to respond to the feedback.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Make you feel like an important member of the class.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Make it hard for you to propose your own ideas and in light of his/her feedback.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
Seems attentive to you as an individual.								
Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much

### Confirmation

Thank you for your participation in my study, titled “Exploring Hurtful Communication from College Teachers to Students: A Mixed Methods Study.” If you will be receiving extra credit for your participation in this study, please fill out the appropriate box below. Also, if you would like to receive a report of the results of the study once it has been completed, please leave your e-mail address in the available box below. *Any identifying information about yourself (including your name, email address, etc.) will be kept separate from your survey answers, so your identity will remain confidential.*

If you are receiving extra credit for your participation in this survey, please type your name, the name of your teacher, and the course number in the box below (Ex: Michelle Maresh, 311):

If you would like to read the results of this study once they are available, please type your e-mail address into the box below: