College Teaching

Communicating Charisma in Instructional Settings: Indicators and Effects of Charismatic Teaching

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Within their classrooms, instructors may engage in a variety of behaviors including those perceived to be charismatic. Though researchers have uncovered instructor behaviors that have been postulated to theoretically represent charisma in the classroom, to date no quantitative data have been presented to support these claims. The current study examined 237 students' perceptions of their instructors and confirmed that teachers may communicate charisma through nonverbal immediacy, humor, caring, and confirmation. Results are discussed as they pertain to charismatic teaching's influence on students' intrinsic motivation and students' perceptions of their learning.

Keywords: charismatic teaching, cognitive learning, instruction, intrinsic motivation

Within their classrooms, instructors may behave in ways that students perceive to be charismatic as a way of positively influencing the learning environment. For example, by being charismatic, instructors may reduce student resistance (Bolkan and Goodboy 2011b) while simultaneously increasing students' perceptions of learning, positive emotional responses regarding a course and its content, state motivation, and communication satisfaction (Bolkan and Goodboy 2009). Unfortunately, though much has been written about the impact of charismatic individuals, "little attention has been directed towards identifying, through empirical research, the specific distinguishing behavioral attributes of charismatic leaders" (Conger and Kanungo 1994, 442). Thus, despite a variety of research projects having undertaken the task of examining charisma, little is known about what people do to be perceived as charismatic because only a few studies have provided information related to specific behavioral components regarding what people do to communicate charisma to others (Levine, Muenchen, and Brooks 2010)—this is especially true in the instructional context.

The current study was concerned with what instructors do to communicate charisma in the classroom. In the spirit of this inquiry, one study has sought to uncover specific behaviors associated with students' perceptions of charismatic teaching. In this study, Bolkan and Goodboy (2011a) asked students what their instructors did in their classrooms to facilitate perceptions of charisma. The researchers found that students largely perceived their instructors to be charismatic when they were nonverbally immediate (e.g., behaved in ways that led to perceptions of decreased physical and psychological distance), humorous, caring, and confirming (e.g., communicated that students are a valuable part of the learning environment). However, despite articulating behaviors postulated to associate with charisma, researchers have yet to substantiate that these represent the theoretical construct in question. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to determine if the teaching behaviors noted above are empirically linked to a larger construct of charismatic teaching.

Literature Review

Charisma is typically defined as a quality attributed to leaders based on the behaviors they employ in their interactions with subordinates (Conger and Kanungo 1987). In the organizational literature, where the construct has been

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studied extensively, it is generally conceived of in one of two ways: as a subcomponent of transformational leadership, or as a stand-alone concept. Proponents of the subcomponent conception usually argue that charisma is the most important component of transformational leadership and state that it reflects attributes of people who are dynamic, self-confident, and who "have insight into the needs, values, and hopes of their followers" (Bass 1985, 46). Similarly, people who subscribe to stand-alone definition argue that charismatic leaders' capability lies in their ability to articulate themselves in an inspirational manner (Conger and Kanungo 1994) and in their care, concern, and respect for followers (Conger, Kanungo, and Menon 2000). In short, organizational scholars from both schools of thought typically define charismatic leaders as people who are dynamic communicators and sensitive to the needs of their followers.

Though much has been written about the various definitions of charisma, studies examining the behavioral attributes of charismatic leaders have been scarce (Conger and Kanungo 1994). Despite the fact that charisma requires the use of communication (Levine et al. 2010), the scales that scholars currently use to measure the construct fail to assess the communication behaviors associated with charisma. This is problematic because scholars have asserted that the way information is communicated has more to do with follower perceptions of charisma than does the content of what is communicated (Holladay and Coombs 1994). Thus, it should be clear that an important aspect regarding the study of charisma is the articulation of specific behaviors leaders engage in when communicating with their followers. Considering our interest in instructional communication, the above is particularly true in instructional contexts. Fortunately, research exists to guide our present inquiry. Though Levine and colleagues (2010) did not specifically ask students to report on instructors, the researchers examined students' perceptions of what it means to be charismatic. Results of their analyses revealed that, similar to the research cited above, participants largely perceived charismatic people to be both dynamic and sensitive to the needs of others. Specifically, in response to the question "what are the communication behaviors that are enacted by someone who is deemed to be charismatic," students defined charismatic individuals as talented speakers who displayed optimism and enthusiasm through behaviors such as eye contact, humor, and smiling. Additionally, charismatic individuals were described as empathetic and were the type of people who were responsive to others, asked others to share their ideas/opinions, and possessed the ability to listen well.

Mirroring these results in an explicit study of instructional communication, Bolkan and Goodboy (2011a) found that when students were told to respond to a prompt based on Bass's (1985) definition of charisma with examples of instructors' communication behaviors, they principally reported that their instructors were charismatic when they communicated in ways that were both dynamic and sensitive to others. Specifically, Bolkan and Goodboy (2011a) revealed that students largely perceived instructors to communicate charisma through *nonverbal immediacy* (i.e., displaying nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact, smiling, gesturing, and vocal variety that reduce physical and psychological distance; Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey 1987), *humor* (i.e., using humor frequently and successfully in the classroom; Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield 1991), *caring* (i.e., showing concern for the welfare of the students and their success; Teven and McCroskey 1997), and *confirmation* (i.e., communicating to students that they are recognized and acknowledged as valuable and significant individuals; Ellis 2000).

Importantly, connections between the behaviors indicative of charisma mentioned in the instructional context have been noticed in classrooms before (Witt, Schrodt, and Turman 2010). For example, according to Ellis (2000), "if teacher confirmation is communicated in the classroom, then psychological closeness (teacher immediacy) between teachers and students should develop," and "teacher caring is likely to be perceived" (278). Moreover, Banas and colleagues (2011) claimed a strong association between humor and immediacy and also argued that humor is related positively to instructor credibility (i.e., caring). Thus, despite these four behaviors being distinct, they are frequently employed in conjunction with one another, and their collective use in the classroom may be appropriately described as reflecting a core set of behaviors underlying charismatic teaching.

Rationale and Hypotheses

Though support exists to make the claim that specific behaviors are indicative of charisma in the classroom, empirical evidence of their relationship to a latent variable does not yet exist. Therefore, the current study was conducted to ascertain if nonverbal immediacy, humor orientation, caring, and confirmation could be considered subcomponents of a larger construct of charismatic teaching.

> H1: Instructor nonverbal immediacy, humor orientation, caring, and confirmation are subcomponents of a larger latent variable of charismatic teaching.

Because of their ability to transform the nature of their work environments to encompass individuals' goals, charismatic leaders are thought to motivate others through their ability to emphasize intrinsic motivation while de-emphasizing extrinsic motivation (Conger 1999). In the instructional context, intrinsic motivation refers to student engagement in learning as an end in itself (Pintrich et al. 1991). Students who are intrinsically motivated prefer to

engage in the learning process because it is interesting and/
or enjoyable as opposed to doing so for extrinsic reasons
such as grades or the approval of others (Ryan and Deci
2000). By behaving in ways that are perceived to be charis-
matic, instructors may pique students' interest and enjoy-
ment and therefore stimulate their intrinsic motivation.
This is important because intrinsic motivation has been
shown to lead to high-quality learning (Ryan and Deci
2000). As a way of demonstrating predictive validity, a
goal of the current study was to determine if the variables
related to charismatic teaching would influence intrinsic
motivation. Moreover, because charismatic leaders tend to
deemphasize extrinsic rewards (Conger 1999), it was our
contention that charismatic teaching would not influence
extrinsic motivation (e.g., learning as simply a means to an
end; Pintrich et al. 1991).

> H2: Charismatic teaching (i.e., nonverbal immediacy,
> humor orientation, caring, and confirmation) is associated
> positively with intrinsic motivation.
> H3: Charismatic teaching (i.e., nonverbal immediacy,
> humor orientation, caring, and confirmation) is not associ-
> ated with extrinsic motivation.

In addition, it was our contention that the promotion of
intrinsic motivation would be beneficial to students in their
learning environments while the promotion of extrinsic
motivation would not. This assertion has support from
research in student performance where mastery/intrinsic
goal orientations (but not extrinsic goal orientations) have
been related positively to cognitive and self-regulative
strategies for learning (Pintrich 1999) and intrinsic motiva-
tion (but not extrinsic motivation) has been correlated with
students' final grades (e.g., Pintrich et al. 1993). Thus, we
hypothesized that:

> H4: Intrinsic motivation is associated positively with
> students' perceptions of their learning.
> H5: Extrinsic motivation is not associated with students'
> perceptions of their learning.

Finally, research has revealed that charisma in the class-
room is linked to students' perceptions of their learning,
which focuses on students' perceptions of the acquisition
and use of classroom information (Bolkan and Goodboy
2009). As it pertains to the specific variables in our study,
there is ample research to suggest that students' perceptions
of their learning are associated positively with nonverbal
immediacy (e.g., Witt, Wheeless, and Allen 2004), humor
(e.g., Ziv 1988), caring (e.g., Teven and McCroskey 1997)
and teacher confirmation (e.g., Goodboy and Myers 2008).
Therefore, it is likely that these behaviors will have direct
effects on students' perceived learning.

> H6: Charismatic teaching (i.e., nonverbal immediacy,
> humor orientation, caring, and confirmation) is associated
> positively with students' perceptions of their learning.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

After gaining approval from the institutional review board,
participants were solicited from upper and lower division
communication studies courses from a Northeastern and a
Western University. Participants were 130 men and 137
women (one unreported) who ranged in age from 18 to 44
($M = 20.23$, $SD = 2.68$). Sixty three students were fresh-
men, 73 were sophomores, 81 were juniors, and 47 were
seniors (four unreported). Participants were compensated
with minimal extra credit and reported on the instructor
they had previous to the class (in their weekly schedule) in
which the data were collected. This method of sampling
was originated by Plax and colleagues (1986) and is a com-
mon survey data collection method in instructional commu-
nication because it ensures that students report on a variety
of instructors from many disciplines.

Measures

Nonverbal immediacy was measured using the *Revised Non-
verbal Immediacy Measure* (McCroskey, Richmond,
Sallinen, Fayer, and Barraclough 1995). This measure is com-
prised of 10 items and asks students to report the extent to
which their instructors utilize behaviors that decrease physi-
cal or psychological distance. Example items include "Uses a
monotone/dull voice when talking to the class" and "Smiles
at the class while talking." Responses could range from (0)
never to (4) *very often* ($M = 2.70$, $SD = .68$, $\alpha = .83$).

Humor was measured using the *Humor Orientation
Scale* (Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield 1991). This
measure contains 17 items and asks students to report on
the degree to which their instructors successfully and fre-
quently use humor in the classroom. Example items include
"Being funny is a natural communication style with my
teacher" and "My teacher tells stories and jokes very well."
Responses could range from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5)
strongly agree ($M = 3.18$, $SD = .89$, $\alpha = .95$).

Caring was assessed with the subscale of goodwill from
McCroskey and Teven's (1999) measure of credibility.
This scale has six items anchored with semantic differen-
tials including "Cares about me/Doesn't care about me"
and "Has my interests at heart/Doesn't have my interests at
heart." Responses range from (1) to (7) ($M = 4.88$,
$SD = 1.29$, $\alpha = .88$).

Confirmation was assessed using the *Teacher Confirma-
tion Scale* (Ellis 2000). This measure contains 16 items and
asks students to report on behaviors that instructors use to
communicate that they are demonstrating interest, responding
to questions, and using an interactive teaching style. Because
we were interested in the overall impact of teacher confirma-
tion, we summed the scale in this study (e.g., Hsu 2012).
Example items for this scale include "Communicates that he/

she believes students can do well in the class" and "Makes an effort to get to know students." Responses could range from (0) *strongly disagree* to (4) *strongly agree* ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .71, \alpha = .92$).

Motivation was measured using the *Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (*Pintrich et al. 1991), which assesses students' intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientations toward a particular course. Each motivational orientation was measured using four items with response options ranging from (1) *not at all true of me* to (7) *very true of me*. Examples of items from the scale of intrinsic motivation include "In this class, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things" and "The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible" ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.43, \alpha = .84$). Examples of items from extrinsic motivation include "Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now" and "The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade" ($M = 5.50, SD = 1.38, \alpha = .82$).

Students' perceptions of their learning were measured using the *Revised Learning Indicators Scale* (Frymier and Houser 1999). This measure contains seven items and asks students to report on their thoughts and behaviors that are linked to student learning. Response options range from (0) *never* to (4) *very often*; examples include "I feel that I have learned a lot in the class" and "I think about the course content outside of class" ($M = 2.57, SD = .83, \alpha = .86$).

RESULTS

To test our hypothesis that charismatic teaching is a function of nonverbal immediacy, humor, confirmation, and caring, we used a statistical technique called confirmatory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis allows researchers to examine if their proposed models are appropriate based on the data provided by participants. Our first analysis examined nonverbal immediacy, humor, confirmation, and caring. The data revealed that our model fit the data relatively well ($x^2 = 3220.74$, $df = 1121$, $p < .01$, $NC = 2.87$, $RMSEA = .08$, $SRMR = .06$, $CFI = 1.0$), suggesting that nonverbal immediacy, humor, confirmation, and caring were perceived by students to be distinct behaviors based on the items used to measure each construct.

After confirming that each of the variables under study was perceived to be distinct, we sought to determine if we could group them together in meaningful ways. Confirmatory factor analysis allows researchers to do this by testing whether it is more appropriate to consider nonverbal immediacy, humor, confirmation, and caring as representative of individual sets of behaviors, or if it is more appropriate to group them together into higher-level concepts. First, we tested a model with two higher-order concepts representing

TABLE 1
Correlation Analyses

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Nonverbal Immediacy	—						
2. Teacher Confirmation	.69**	—					
3. Humor Orientation	.71**	.67**	—				
4. Teacher Caring	.46**	.66**	.51**	—			
5. Intrinsic Motivation	.22**	.37**	.29**	.31**	—		
6. Extrinsic Motivation	.08	.09	.12*	.18**	.22**	—	
7. Cognitive Learning	.37**	.54**	.44**	.46**	.48**	.19**	—

Note. $* = p < .05$, $** = p < .01$ (two-tailed).

As predicted, results reveal that immediacy, humor, confirmation, and caring were highly associated with one another. Moreover, these variables were moderately associated with intrinsic learning and students' perceived cognitive learning.

the hypothesized delivery and relationship subcomponents of charismatic teaching. This model fit the data relatively well ($x^2 = 3218.54$, $df = 1122$, $p < .01$, $NC = 2.87$, $RMSEA = .08$, $SRMR = .06$, $CFI = 1.0$; $\Delta x^2 = 2.20$, $df = 1, p > .05$), with delivery being predicted significantly by both immediacy and humor, and relationship being predicted significantly by confirmation and caring.

Next, we tested whether it would be appropriate to combine nonverbal immediacy, humor, confirmation, and caring into a single higher-level concept of charisma. Though results revealed that this model fit the data relatively well ($x^2 = 3274.63$, $df = 1123$, $p < .01$, $NC = 2.92$, $RMSEA = .09$, $SRMR = .06$, $CFI = 1.0$), it fit worse compared to the model with four distinct variables ($x^2 = 53.89$, $df = 2, p < .01$) and the model with two higher-level variables ($x^2 = 56.09$, $df = 1, p < .01$). Thus, results of our data analysis suggest that the best interpretation of the data is that nonverbal immediacy, humor, confirmation, and caring should be considered distinct behaviors that combine to form two higher-level constructs of delivery and relationship (see table 1 and figure 1).

Though we found that nonverbal immediacy, humor, confirmation, and caring did not represent a single higher-level construct, we decided to test if it would be appropriate to consider the two higher-level concepts of delivery and relationship to reflect a single concept of charismatic teaching. To examine this prediction we conducted a test of the model represented in figure 2 which simultaneously tested hypotheses one through six. Results of our analysis indicated that our model fit the data relatively well ($x^2 = 293.29$, $df = 114$, $p < .01$, $NC = 2.57$, $RMSEA = .08$, $SRMR = .07$, $CFI = .95$).

Confirming hypothesis one, the results indicate that the four variables under study reflect two higher-level variables of delivery and relationship which, in turn, reflect a larger variable of charismatic teaching. Hypothesis two predicted that charismatic teaching would be associated with intrinsic motivation, whereas hypothesis three predicted that
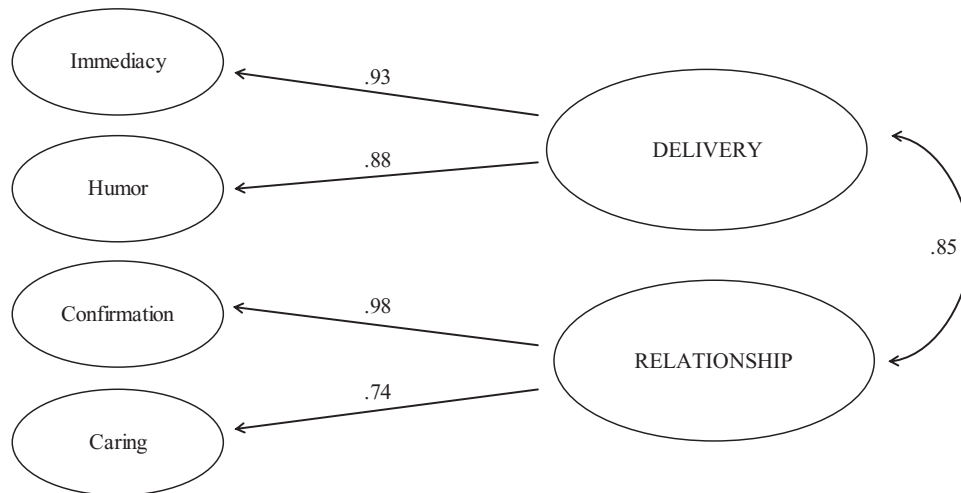
FIGURE 1   Second-order confirmatory factor analysis.
Note. Paths are standardized and significant at $p < .01$. For the sake of parsimony, paths from each of the items to the indicators of charismatic teaching are not shown. Standardized paths represent correlations between the variables of immediacy, humor, conformation, caring, and the higher-level variables. This model suggests that the four observed variables are better represented by two sets of highly correlated underlying constructs (i.e., delivery and relationship).

charismatic teaching would not predict extrinsic motivation. Figure 2 shows that charismatic teaching had significant associations with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Therefore, hypothesis two was confirmed and hypothesis three was not. Hypotheses four and five predicted that intrinsic motivation would be associated with students' perceptions of their learning while extrinsic motivation would not. As can be seen in figure 2, the significant path from intrinsic motivation to cognitive learning and the nonsignificant path from extrinsic motivation to cognitive learning reveal that these hypotheses were confirmed. Finally, hypothesis 6 predicted that charismatic teaching would be associated with students' perceptions of their learning; this hypothesis was confirmed.

DISCUSSION

Charismatic leaders are perceived to be effective (Holladay and Coombs 1994), and perceptions of charismatic leadership are associated with a variety of positive organizational outcomes including satisfaction with leaders, positive perceptions of leader performance (Fuller et al. 1996), and increases in company profits (Rowold and Laukamp 2009). Based on the findings from this study and others, the same positive effects seem to benefit charismatic teachers in the classroom. Specifically, findings from the current study suggest that instructors' charismatic behaviors are associated with students' perceptions of their learning both directly and indirectly through their association with intrinsic motivation.
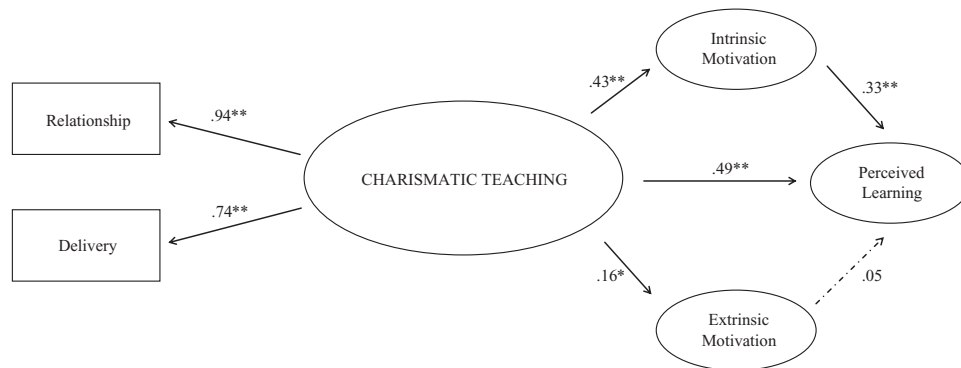

FIGURE 2   Structural regression model.
Note. All paths are standardized and solid paths are significant. $* = p < .05$, $** = p < .01$. Dashed paths are nonsignificant. Total $R^2 =$ Students' Perceived Learning (.42), Intrinsic Motivation (.19), Extrinsic Motivation (.03). The paths on the left side of the figure reveal that the relationship and delivery components from figure 1 are best represented as combining to influence a single, higher-level factor of charismatic teaching. The values for the paths between these variables and charismatic teaching represent correlations. On the right side of the figure, the paths between charismatic teaching and the outcome variables represent regression coefficients and show the associations between each of the variables represented by ovals.

This study was the first to empirically verify that nonverbal immediacy, humor, caring, and confirmation may appropriately reflect charismatic leadership in the classroom. Thus, our findings confirm the conclusions of previous researchers claiming that the behaviors we measured in this study are employed together frequently (e.g., Banas et al. 2011; Ellis 2000; Witt et al. 2010) and support our first hypothesis predicting that their collective use in the classroom may be appropriately described as reflecting a core set of charismatic teaching behaviors (Bolkan and Goodboy 2011a). As mentioned in the literature review, delivery style and relational closeness seem to be at the heart of these charismatic teaching behaviors. Thus, our results corroborate the findings of researchers who have claimed that charismatic behaviors may include those that reflect self-confidence and energy (Bass 1999; Conger 1999) while also incorporating behaviors that reflect friendliness and care for others (Conger et al. 2000; Holladay and Coombs 1994). That said, our study indicates that if teachers want to be perceived as charismatic in the classroom, they should consider employing behaviors that are associated with building relationships with students and delivering their content well. To do this, instructors should employ nonverbal immediacy, humor, caring, and confirmation in their classrooms.

Engaging in these behaviors is important because, as results of our second hypothesis show, there is a link between charismatic teaching and students' intrinsic motivation. As was alluded to, the reason intrinsic motivation is important in the classroom is because, in support of our fourth and fifth hypotheses, it is linked to students' perceptions of their learning whereas extrinsic motivation is not. This may be the case because, unlike extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation promotes activities that lead to learning such as setting goals for studying, monitoring personal attention while studying, and rereading portions of a text while studying (Pintrich 1999). Alternatively, the behaviors of charismatic teaching may be associated with intrinsic motivation because they influence students' perceptions of instructors as warm and caring. Students who feel relationally secure with teachers report more positive attitudes, motivation, and engagement in school because it creates a sense of security and connectedness, which promotes students' sense of self-worth and competence (Ryan, Stiller, and Lynch 1994).

However, as we predicted in our third hypothesis, the same relationship does not seem to exist between charismatic teaching behaviors and students' extrinsic motivational orientations. Though charismatic teaching was significantly related to extrinsic motivation, the impact of charismatic teaching on this variable was minor ($R^2 = .03$). Thus, our results are largely in line with researchers who claim charismatic leaders de-emphasize extrinsic rewards and instead focus on intrinsic rewards (Conger 1999) and

lend credence to our claim that nonverbal immediacy, humor, caring, and confirmation are indicative of charismatic teaching.

Finally, in support of our sixth hypothesis, results point to the notion that charismatic teaching was significantly and directly associated with students' perceptions of their learning. That said, the results of our study help us make the argument that charismatic teaching is an important and positive component of students' educational experiences independent of its influence on student motivation.

Together, results from our study support the notion that charismatic teaching may be a function of instructors' nonverbal immediacy, humor, caring, and confirmation. By communicating in ways that maximize these perceptions for their students, instructors may promote students' perceptions of their learning both directly and through their influence on students' intrinsic motivational orientations. Although the behaviors measured in this study have been known to be beneficial in the classroom, our results highlight the importance of enacting these behaviors in conjunction with one another to promote charismatic teaching and maximize student learning outcomes.

Limitations and Future Directions

As with any study, the current investigation had its limitations. First, one of the limitations is that charisma in this context reflects the perceptions of one culture's perspective. It could be the case that other cultures do not perceive the behaviors we outlined as representative of charisma in the classroom. Future researchers may consider examining student-teacher interactions in a variety of cultures to determine if the results we found in the current study generalize to cultures outside of the United States.

Another limitation concerns our reliance on previous definitions of charisma in the classroom. We argued that perceptions of charisma occur as a result of instructors' nonverbal immediacy, humor, caring, and confirmation. However, this does not mean that other behaviors cannot lead to perceptions of charisma. Future researchers may consider examining other variables to determine the scope of what may be considered charismatic teaching.

Finally, another limitation is our inability to conclusively claim causality in relation to the variables under investigation. Though researchers who study structural regression models state that they "describe relationships of dependency – usually accepted to be in some sense causal – between latent variables" (McDonald and Ho 2002, 65), it is difficult to prove causality without other tests such as those manipulating temporal precedence (Kline 2005). Future researchers may consider testing the relationships in this study using experimental methods to more strongly demonstrate causality.

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