teacher's influence attempts. Such trust within the instructional setting is most likely to be affected by the way the teacher treats the student in everyday interactions, or from the student's vantage point, the way the teacher communicates with her or him in their continuing contacts with each other. If what the teacher says, and the way he or she says it, makes it appear to the student that the teacher has the student's best interests at heart, the level of trust is most likely to increase.

Students' trust of their teacher, therefore, is not likely to be a function of a single interaction (unless that interaction is unusually negative). Rather, normally it will be based on a continuing pattern of interactions. It will be founded on an overall impression of the teacher. A recent conceptualization suggests that such an impression exists and appears to mediate the impact of important types of communication behaviors. This conceptualization centers on perceptions of patterns of communication behavior and is referred to as Socio-Communicative Style (SCS: McCroskey & Richmond, 1996). This work integrates previous work relating to social style (e.g. Bem, 1974; Merrill & Reid, 1981; Snavely, 1981) with that which recognizes the central role of communication in such perceptions (e.g. Norton, 1983). The two central components of SCS are seen as "assertiveness" and "responsiveness."

Assertiveness is the "capacity to make requests, actively disagree, express positive or negative personal rights and feelings, initiate, maintain or disengage from conversations, and stand up for oneself without attacking another" (McCroskey & Richmond, 1996, p. 92). In contrast, responsiveness is the "capacity to be sensitive to the communication of others, to be a good listener, to make others comfortable in communicating, and to recognize the needs and desires of other" (McCroskey & Richmond, 1996, p. 93).

It is presumed that a teacher's communicative behavior is interpreted by students though the filter of their general perception of that teacher. Within this process new teacher communication behavior modifies the student's general perception of the teacher, and the general perception of the teacher helps the student interpret individual communication behaviors. Thus, while research which has accumulated over the past two decades has confirmed that increased nonverbal immediacy by teachers has substantial positive impact on student learning (McCroskey & Richmond, 1992), recent research suggests that this impact of immediacy may, at least in part, be a function of its modification of students' perceptions of the teacher's SCS (Thomas, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1994).

When a teacher's communication behaviors associated with assertiveness and/or responsiveness are perceived by their students, as we noted previously, this is referred to as the teachers SCS. This suggests the perception is reflective of observed behavior as opposed to some type of internal workings of the individual. This is consistent with Darling's (1990; Darling & Cluff, 1987) view of personal style as something that does not focus on "innermost workings of personality," or beliefs and values, but rather a "pervasive and enduring set of interpersonal behaviors" (p. 86). When one perceives her or his **own** assertiveness and responsiveness, on the other hand, this is called "Socio-Communicative Orientation" (SCO: McCroskey & Richmond, 1996; Thomas, et al., 1994). Since this perception is not necessarily based on one's perceptions of one's own behaviors, it is most likely heavily influenced by one's personality and other orientations toward human relationships. A person's SCS and SCO may or may not be highly correlated, since they are dependent on different sets of perceptions.

Within the instructional environment, students' perceptions of their teacher's socio-communicative style are very likely to have an impact upon the degree to which they trust

that teacher. Given that previous work indicates at least some positive communication behaviors (such as nonverbal immediacy, Thomas, et al., 1994) are positively associated with both assertiveness and responsiveness, therefore, we advanced two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1:   Perceived teacher responsiveness will be positively correlated with student trust for the teacher.

Hypothesis 2:   Perceived teacher assertiveness will be positively correlated with student trust for the teacher.

While the above hypotheses project direct, linear relationships between trust and the two dimensions of teacher socio-communicative style, there is reason to suspect that observed relationships may not be that simple and straightforward. Extensive research, particularly in the area of diffusion of innovations, suggests that people who see themselves as more similar to one another develop a higher degree of trust for each other and have much more impact on one another through their communication (cf. Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). Since such perceptions of similarity are highly affected by communication behaviors, we advanced a third hypothesis for this investigation:

Hypothesis 3:   Teachers who are perceived to have socio-communicative styles similar to the socio-communicative orientations of their students will receive higher trust ratings than those perceived as dissimilar.

METHOD

Participants

The 139 students who participated in this study were enrolled in an introductory communication course at a large eastern university. The students received extra credit in the class for participating in the study. Participation was voluntary and confidential. Similar extra credit was available for engaging in different tasks. The students completed the questionnaire during class time and provided no identifying data on the instrument.

The data were collected by means of a questionnaire that asked the student to respond in terms of the teacher of the class the student was taking *immediately before the class in which the data were being collected.* This procedure insured that data would be collected relating to a variety of teachers across a broad spectrum of the university rather than data only on a single teacher. This procedure was developed to study power in the classroom and has been shown to be an effective way of generating representative data in the instructional setting (Christophel, 1990; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986; Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney, & Plax, 1987).

Measurement

Three measures were employed in this study: (1) a self-report measure of trust the student had for the teacher, (2) a measure of the student's perception of the teacher's socio-communicative style, and (3) a self-report measure of the socio-communicative orientation of the respondent (student).

Trust. The Wheeless and Grotz (1977) Individualized Trust Scale (ITS) was used because it measures trust in a specific person, rather than trust in general. The ITS contains 15, seven-point, bipolar items drawn from Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz's (1970) and

McCroskey's (1966) credibility scales. This scale has been a reliable and valid measure of trust (Snavely, 1981; Wheeless, 1978; Wheeless & Grotz, 1977). The alpha reliability for the ITS in this study was .92.

Socio-Communicative Style. The respondents completed a 20-item measure of Socio-Communicative Style (Richmond & McCroskey, 1990) representing their perceptions of their teacher. This instrument includes 10 items measuring assertiveness and 10 representing responsiveness. The items are mixed on the instrument but have been found to generate two very distinct (uncorrelated) factors representing the desired dimensions. In the present study the obtained alpha reliability was .88 for assertiveness and .92 for responsiveness.

Socio-Communicative Orientation. The respondents completed essentially the same 20-item instrument as noted above, but the instructions were for them to do so "as you see yourself." The obtained alpha reliability was .91 for both assertiveness and responsiveness.

Data Analyses

Scores on trust and socio-communicative style were analyzed by simple Pearson correlation to test the first two hypotheses (that trust would be positively correlated with both assertiveness and responsiveness). To test the third hypothesis (that teachers who are perceived to have SCS similar to the SCO of their students will be trusted than those who are dissimilar), two 2-way analyses of variance employing general linear models procedures were conducted, one each for assertiveness and responsiveness scores. The classification variables were constructed by dividing the teachers into two categories based on a median split of their scores on assertiveness and responsiveness (separately for the separate analyses) and, similarly dividing the respondents into two categories based on a median split of their scores. This provided two levels of perceived teacher assertiveness (or responsiveness) and two levels of self-perceived student assertiveness (or responsiveness) for each analysis. Thus, there was a "similar" and a "dissimilar" student condition associated with both high and low levels of assertiveness (or responsiveness) for the teachers.

It should be recognized that use of the median-split technique is a "less than elegant" method of classification. Since, on this type of measure, most of the measurement error is expected to be associated with mid-range scores, this technique simply assigns half of that error to each classification. Obviously, this lowers statistical power and substantially increases the possibility of Type II error by reducing the size of the observed effect (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990). However, this method of classification has dominated previous research in this area (cf. Bem, 1974; Merrill, 1981) and effects associated with these variables have been sufficiently large to produce statistically significant effects even with relatively small samples. Since small effects would not be considered to have much social significance in this context, it was determined that the loss of power produced by the choice of the median-split technique was not sufficient to be a concern for the present investigation.

RESULTS

The first correlational analysis was between teacher responsiveness and student trust of the teacher. A significant linear relationship between these two variables was observed (r=.59, p<.0001) which showed approximately 35 percent shared variance.

The second correlational analysis was between teacher assertiveness and student trust of a teacher. A significant linear relationship between these two variables was also observed ($r=.27$, $p<.001$). This relationship was weaker than the one for responsiveness and trust and indicated only 7 percent shared variance.

The two analyses of variance that examined the impact of the similarity between the participants' responsiveness or assertiveness and their perceptions of their instructors' responsiveness or assertiveness on the participants' trust of their teacher both produced significant results. Results of the analysis involving responsiveness indicated an overall significant model (F (3,135) = 5.96, p. < .001). The effect for teacher responsiveness was significant (F (1,135) = 15.51, $p<.0001$, Omega square = .12). Students who perceived their teachers higher in responsiveness trusted those teachers substantially more (M = 86.64, SD = 15.10) than those who perceived their teachers less responsive (M = 77.33, SD = 13.80). There was no significant main effect for student's responsiveness on student trust ($F<1$). There was also no significant interaction between student and teacher responsiveness ($F <1$).

The results of the analysis involving assertiveness revealed an overall significant model (F (3,135) =3.39, p. < .02). Neither the effect for teacher assertiveness (F (1,135) = 1.27) nor the effect for student assertiveness (F (1,135) =1.32) were significant. However the interaction effect was significant (F (1,135) =5.42, p. < .02, Omega squared =.07). Table 1 reports the means for the four conditions. Examination of these means indicates the interaction observed was of the "crossover" type. Highly assertive students reported trusting highly assertive teachers much more (M =87.17) than they did less assertive teachers (M = 78.4). In contrast, less assertive students reported trusting less assertive teachers more (M = 81.39) than they did more assertive teachers (M=78.34).

TABLE 1

Trust Means and Standard Deviations by Assertiveness Condition

	Teacher High Assertive		Teacher Low Assertive	
	Student High	Student Low	Student High	Student Low
Mean	87.17 [abc]	78.34 [a]	78.40 [b]	81.39 [c]
S.D.	14.46	14.38	14.51	14.50

a,b,c Means with same subscript are significantly different p. < .05.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to determine the relationship between students' socio-communicative orientation and perceived teacher's socio-communicative styles with student trust of the teacher. It was found that the more responsive an instructor is perceived to be, the more the students trusts that individual, despite the responsiveness of the student. That is, while highly responsive student trust highly responsive teachers (as was expected), it was also found that much less responsive students also reacted with greater trust for highly responsive teachers. Simply put, the results of this study show that teacher respon-

siveness has a direct linear relationship with student trust for the teacher--the more teacher responsiveness, the more student trust of teacher. While this finding is completely consistent with previous research (Thomas, 1994; Thomas, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1994) and our first hypothesis, it does not provide support for our third hypothesis. Similarity of teacher and student responsiveness was not observed to enhance student trust of the teacher.

The results of the correlational analysis provided some support for our second hypothesis. There was a significant positive linear correlation between teacher assertiveness and the students' trust for that teacher, but the correlation was modest.

This result simply could be a function of a weak positive relationship. However, it could also mask a stronger *nonlinear* relationship. The results of the analysis of variance involving both teacher and student assertiveness indicated the latter was the case. Similarity of teacher and student was most associated with higher levels of student trust of the teacher, although trust was significantly higher when both teacher and student were highly assertive than when they were both less assertive. Dissimilarity was associated with the lowest levels of trust.

For teachers these results suggest a clear indication that exhibiting a high level of responsiveness is most likely to produce higher trust from their students, along with other associated positive outcomes. The indication for appropriate assertiveness behaviors is more complex. Since the most positive outcomes in terms of trust were associated with a higher level of assertiveness with more assertive students, clearly assertiveness is not a behavior that teachers should attempt to avoid. In a lecture context, where the communication is less personalized and students with all types of SCO are present, at least a moderately high level of assertiveness probably should be encouraged. It may help build trust with assertive students and is not likely to do harm with the less assertive. When communicating one-on-one with shy, reticent, or generally quiet or reserved students, ones who see themselves as unassertive, however, it appears that engaging in less assertive communication may be appropriate. Although, the results of this study give us no reason to expect *any* impact for reduced or increased assertiveness, a highly assertive teacher, in the eyes of these students, may be perceived as overpowering, even threatening. While this may not impact trust, it may have other negative effects which were not investigated here. Future research should examine the nature of the nonlinear relationship of trust with assertiveness of both the teacher and the student to determine if these speculations are justified.

The results of this study contribute to the growing literature which suggests that teachers who are both responsive and assertive are more likely to produce positive outcomes in the classroom. The current research, like most of the other research in this area, is limited because its results are correlational. Inferring causation from such data is speculative. Future research is needed in which specific teacher behaviors designed to increase and/or decrease perceived assertiveness and/or responsiveness are manipulated under conditions where causation can be determined directly.

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