

# Organizational Orientations in an Instructional Setting

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*Research on organizational orientations has determined that workers can be categorized into three groups on the basis of their trait orientations toward working in organizations: "upward mobiles," "indifferents," and "ambivalents." Because workers' organizational orientation is predictive of their success, we reasoned that students' orientation would be similarly predictive of their motivations, perceptions of teacher credibility and immediacy, affect toward the teacher, subject matter, and school, and cognitive learning. The results indicate that students' orientation toward school may be akin to those of workers in organizations. For the most part, upward mobile students were associated with greater success in school and perceived their teachers as more credible and immediate. Indifferent and ambivalent students were more negatively associated with success in school and reported their teachers to be less credible and immediate.*

*Keywords:* Organizational Orientation; Teacher Credibility; Nonverbal Immediacy; Motivation; Affective Learning

Frymier, Shulman, and Houser (1996) examined organizational empowerment in the instructional setting. They reasoned that not unlike the supervisor/subordinate relationship where employees have highly variable orientations toward work, students have highly variable orientations toward school. Some students seem committed to learning as much as they can. Some students seem to just want to get by. Still others seem to be hostile to the whole school experience. While adults' performance and communication at work are influenced by their orientations toward work, students' performance and communication may be similarly influenced by their orientations

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toward school. The purpose of this research was to determine if students who report varying orientations toward school are associated with their perceptions of their communication behavior and/or instructional outcomes. The foundation for this research was based on theory and research related to organizational orientations.

#### *Organization Orientation Theory*

Work is a necessary component of American society. However, when confronting work, people do not necessarily approach work in the same manner (McCroskey, Richmond, Tomson, & Smith, 2005). For some, the stereotypical American dream may be to become a well-known multimillionaire, while others may view the American dream as having the finances to raise a family (Richmond, McCroskey, & McCroskey, 2005). How people approach work may impact how they behave inside that situation. For example, people determine which type of job would be desirable based upon their degree of communication apprehension (Daly & McCroskey, 1975; McCroskey & Richmond, 1978). Communication scholars have similarly found that the work orientation of an individual can influence the behavior of the individual in the workplace (Goodboy and McCroskey, 2004; McCroskey et al., 2004; Presthus, 1958; Pruden, 1973; Richmond et al., 2005).

Presthus' (1958) theory of organizational orientations focuses on the varying orientations toward work exhibited by employees in an organization. The theory proposes three organizational orientations: (a) upward-mobile, (b) indifferent, and (c) ambivalent. While Presthus originally believed organizational culture to be the basis of those orientations, current research suggests that orientations are based on individual personality and temperament differences and as a result, these orientations are traits. This means that individuals' orientations remain consistent across organizations and time (Presthus, 1978; Richmond et al., 2005). Recently, this perspective has received empirical support (McCroskey et al., 2004; Presthus, 1958; Pruden, 1973). Pruden (1973) research using satisfaction, career anchorage, alienation, cosmopolitanism, and organizational rank also support the idea that the three orientations are separate constructs.

*Upward mobile orientation.* Presthus (1978) describes upward-mobiles as rule- and/or procedurally oriented individuals who identify with the organization's goals and work hard to achieve those goals. Upward mobiles see the organization's authority as legitimate, exhibit high loyalty toward the organization, and tend not to question the organization's rules and decisions. Upward-mobiles want to succeed in an organization and advance in the hierarchy of the organization's structure, considering work relationships important to their advancement. McCroskey et al. (2004) found upward-mobility to be positively correlated with job satisfaction, self-reported immediacy, assertiveness, all three of the credibility factors (competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill), and extroversion. Goodboy and McCroskey (2004) found that upward-mobility was positively related to self-reported immediacy and job satisfaction, while being negatively related to ambivalence.

*Indifferent orientation.* Presthus (1978b) describes indifferent individuals as persons who view their lives as separate from work. Indifferent individuals see their relationship with the organization as a business exchange where the organization receives a set amount of time of labor in exchange for a paycheck. According to the theory, indifferent individuals have low identification with the goals of the organization and low loyalty to the organization. Being indifferent is not necessarily negative; in fact, a large proportion of people are indifferent individuals (Richmond et al., 2005). Indifferents view work as a way to obtain the financial resources to make a positive life for themselves and their families. They work to live rather than live to work (Richmond et al., 2005, p. 86). McCroskey et al. (2004) found indifference to be negatively correlated with job satisfaction, assertiveness, and all three of the credibility factors (competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill). Goodboy and McCroskey (2004) found indifference was positively related to Machiavellianism and ambivalence, but negatively related to immediacy and job satisfaction.

*Ambivalent orientation.* Presthus (1978a) describes ambivalent individuals as introverts who do not adapt well to organizations. Presthus notes that ambivalent individuals are generally intelligent, cosmopolitan, and generally specialize in a specific area. These individuals look negatively upon top-down authority, and they often express complaints against the organizational structure, rules, and operations. Presthus argues that these individuals have value because while the upward-mobile accepts the organization's status quo and the indifferent blindly follows, the ambivalent will continue to critique the organization's policies, rules, regulations, and operating procedures. McCroskey et al. (2004) found that ambivalence is negatively associated with job satisfaction, self-perceived immediacy, responsiveness, extroversion, and all three credibility factors (competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill). Goodboy and McCroskey (2004) found that ambivalence was positively related to Machiavellianism, but negatively related to nonverbal immediacy and ambivalence.

### *Motivation*

Motivation is one's desire to engage in a chosen behavior. While *trait* motivation refers to one's desire over time and across situations, *state* motivation refers to one's desire at a particular time and in a given context. In the instructional arena, Richmond, Lane, and McCroskey (2006) summarize the current view of student motivation as "students learning the content they want to learn, when they want to learn it (p. 179)." We believe that student orientations toward school are likely to be associated with their motivations to learn. Moreover, we know that students' state motivation to learn is positively correlated with teachers' use of immediacy behaviors (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier & Shulman, 1995; Richmond, 1990). Moreover, perceptions of teacher caring (one of three components in source credibility) has been found to be positively correlated with teacher immediacy and

students' affect for both the teacher and the subject matter (Teven & McCroskey, 1997).

### *Nonverbal Immediacy*

Immediacy is the degree of perceived physical or psychological closeness between people. The immediacy principle states that "people are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer" (Mehrabian, 1971, p. 1). Teachers' use of nonverbal immediacy has shown to be consistently related to students' affective learning (Allen & Shaw, 1990; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1980), affect toward instructor (Allen & Shaw, 1990; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001), affect for the course (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001), behavioral commitment (Allen & Shaw, 1990), state motivation (Chesebro and McCroskey, 2001; Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier & Shulman, 1995; Richmond, 1990), and perceived cognitive learning (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001). Teachers' use of nonverbal immediacy has also been shown to influence the amount of contact, length of contact, and satisfaction of communication students have with teachers outside of the classroom (Jaasma & Koper, 1999; Knapp & Martin, 2002).

In an organizational context, Richmond and McCroskey (2000) found employees' use of immediate behaviors and their supervisors' immediate behaviors were reciprocated. Supervisors' use of immediate behaviors was positively correlated with all three dimensions of perceived supervisor credibility (competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill), social and task attraction, and a positive attitude toward their supervisor. These findings have been replicated in the instructional context with teachers and students (Baringer & McCroskey, 2000).

### *Source Credibility*

source credibility is the degree to which a receiver perceives a source as being competent, trustworthy, and/or caring (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Competence refers to perceived expertise and having high qualifications in the subject matter; trustworthiness refers to perceived character and honesty; and caring (also referred as "goodwill") refers to being perceived as having good intentions toward the receiver (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Only when a person is viewed as highly credible is it likely that the source will influence the views of the audience (McCroskey, 1971). The teacher, as a disseminator of information, becomes highly influential in the cognitive and affective learning process (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). Increasing recall (Wheless, 1975), competency, and caring influenced future message selection and affect for content (Wheless, 1974). Frymier and Thompson (1992) examined the relationship between teacher credibility and their use of affinity-seeking strategies. Among those strategies, nonverbal immediacy was positively correlated with student perceptions of both teacher competence and caring.

## Rationale

Organizational orientation theory was designed to help explain how people perceive and accommodate the culture of a work environment (Presthus, 1978c). The theory explains why people react to their supervisor or fellow employees differently. Based on individuals' organizational orientations, the theory predicts how individuals may react and subsequently accommodate to future interactions (Presthus, 1978a,b,c). Applying organizational orientation theory to the educational setting provides a way for communication scholars to better understand how students view school, react to their perceived role, and potentially behave in their educational environment. Furthermore, an educational setting may help provide means to a deeper understanding of organizational orientations. In the working world, if an employee does not work well within the organization (e.g., the ambivalent worker), the employee might be fired or transferred, or he/she might quit and find other employment. Similarly, when a student has difficulties adapting to a particular educational context or teacher, the student might be negatively sanctioned (e.g., poor grades or detention), or he/she might drop the class and perhaps even change majors.

The purpose of this study was to determine if students exhibit organizational orientations in the school environment, and, if so, how these orientations impact the perspectives of the student. The fundamental question to be tested in this research regards the predictive validity of the modified Organizational Orientation Scale (OOS) for the college instructional setting. Because previous research in organizations has found upward mobiles to be negatively associated with ambivalent and indifferent orientations, and indifferent and ambivalent orientations to be positively related, we might expect similar correlations in the instructional context. Therefore, the following hypotheses were posited:

- H1: The upward mobile orientation is negatively associated with the ambivalent and indifferent orientation.
- H2: Indifferent and ambivalent orientations are positively related.

Organizational orientations have been found to influence subordinates' perception of their supervisors' credibility (Goodboy & McCroskey, 2004; McCroskey et al., 2004). Credibility may have even larger implications in the instructional setting, where the goals of instruction are not to merely supervise, but to inform and persuade (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). Understanding the relationship between student orientation and perceived teacher credibility, then, becomes critical. Consistent with the orientations-credibility findings from organizational research, the following hypotheses were posited:

- H3: The upward mobile orientation is positively associated with student perceptions of instructor competence, trustworthiness, and caring.
- H4: The indifferent and ambivalent orientations are negatively associated with student perceptions of instructor competence, trustworthiness, and caring.

Prior research has examined how organizational orientations are associated with the nonverbal behaviors of people (Goodboy & McCroskey, 2004; McCroskey et al.,

2004). Applying organizational orientation theory to the classroom context, we would expect upward-mobile students to try and find value and affect in all classes regardless of content, and show it in the classroom. On the other hand, indifferent and ambivalent students would be less likely to demonstrate similar levels of affect. Applying the immediacy principle to the instructional setting, we can reason that teachers are more immediate toward those students who actively participate in class and make the effort to learn the content. Of the three student orientations, the upward-mobile student would likely have more favorable perceptions toward the class. Indifferents would be more likely to pay little attention, and ambivalents would be more likely to challenge the teacher and/or disrupt the class. The teachers are likely to be more immediate to the students who present more positive views of the class and the class content. Therefore, the following hypotheses are posited:

- H5: The upward-mobile orientation is positively associated with perceptions of teachers' nonverbal immediacy.
- H6: The indifferent and ambivalent orientations are negatively associated with perceptions of teachers' nonverbal immediacy.

Organizational orientations have been found to be a factor in work satisfaction (Goodboy & McCroskey, 2004; McCroskey et al., 2004). Organizational orientation theory might help explain why students perceive school either positively or negatively. In review, upward-mobiles try to identify with the rules and goals of the organization (Presthus, 1978c), indifferent individuals do not identify with the organization (Presthus, 1978b) and work for the paycheck (McCroskey et al., 2004), and ambivalent individuals reject the organization altogether (Presthus, 1978a). Understanding how the orientations of students relate to students' perceptions of school and classes may help explain the behaviors students exhibit in school. Presuming the student orientations are equivalent to the organizational orientations, and they produce similar affective outcomes identified in previous research, the following hypotheses were posited:

- H7: The upward-mobile orientation is positively associated with affect for instructor and affect toward the content taught.
- H8: The indifferent and ambivalent orientations are negatively associated with affect for instructor and affect toward the content taught.
- H9: Upward-mobile students hold more positive general and specific attitudes toward school than either the indifferent or ambivalent students.

In addition to these hypotheses, we advanced two research questions. The first of these research questions dealt with the relationship between student motivation and organizational orientations. Frymier and Shulman (1995) describe the frustration teachers have when students' state motivation is anywhere but learning. As Frymier and Shulman note, teachers can do little regarding outside-the-classroom factors impacting a student's state motivation, but the teacher can control the communication behaviors in the classroom. Identifying in-class factors which may affect students' state motivation could help teachers design instruction to reach previously unmotivated students. Understanding the relationship between students' orientation

toward school and their motivation to learn could help teachers target instruction more effectively. Therefore, the following hypothesis question was proposed:

RQ1: What is the relationship between each of the students' organizational orientations and their trait and state motivation to learn?

Since students' cognitive learning is an important outcome of instruction, the second research question inquired about the relationships between organizational orientations and cognitive learning.

RQ2: What are the relationships between organizational orientations and student perceptions of their cognitive learning?

## Method

### *Participants*

Volunteer participants were 413 (199 men, 208 women, six undisclosed) undergraduate students enrolled in communication courses at a Mid-Atlantic university. Participants ranged from sophomores to seniors (freshmen were not allowed to register for the classes and represented a wide range of majors, with only about 5% majoring in Communication Studies. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 42 years ( $M = 20.56$ ), and they were predominantly Caucasian, with less than 5% from other ethnic groups.

### *Procedures*

Participants completed a questionnaire which included nine measures. The participants were instructed to complete the self-report measure first, and then complete the other measures with regard to "the last class before this one" technique (Plax et al., 1986).

### *Measures*

The *Student Orientations Measure* (SOM) consists of three instruments modified from the *Organizational Orientations Measure* (McCroskey et al., 2004), each section measuring one of the organizational orientations, where respondents answer on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The measure consisted of 18 items measuring upward-mobile student orientation, 20 items measuring the ambivalent student orientation, and 12 items measuring the indifferent student orientation. The scales were modified to reflect an educational view rather than the business world, with certain words substituted for others. For example, the word "work" when used as a general noun was changed to the word "school." When used as a specific noun, 'work' was changed to read "class" or "classroom." The word "money" was changed to "grade," and when the item's context

was geared toward obtaining more money or "easy money," then the item's context was modified to reflect obtaining a higher grade or an "easy A."

The original alpha reliabilities for the scale were as follows: the upward-mobile = .84, ambivalent = .89, and indifferent = .79. In the current study, the alpha reliabilities were .82 for the upward-mobile ( $M=63.67$ ,  $SD=8.24$ ), .90 for the ambivalent ( $M=47.72$ ,  $SD=10.78$ ), and .87 for the indifferent dimension ( $M=33.56$ ,  $SD=8.22$ ).

The *Generalized Attitude Measure* is a six-item, bipolar measure where participants circled on a scale of 1-7 their agreement toward each adjective in response to a particular concept. For this study, the concept was "college." Reliabilities have generally been between .85 and .95 (McCroskey, 2006); for this study, reliability was estimated at .89 ( $M=35.75$ ,  $SD=5.82$ ). The *Generalized Belief Measure* is a five-item, bipolar measure where participants circled on a scale of 1-7 their agreement toward each adjective in response to a particular belief statement. For this study, the sentence read, "College is valuable to me." Reliabilities have generally been over .90 (McCroskey, 2006); for this study, reliability was estimated at .85 ( $M=30.99$ ,  $SD=4.98$ ).

The *Motivation Scale* (Richmond, 1990) is a five-item, seven-step bipolar scale measuring the motivation of the student. In order to measure both trait and state motivation, the scale was included twice but with different directions. To measure trait motivation, procedures similar to those employed by Frymier and Shulman (1995) were used. Specifically, participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "My feelings for studying for school in general are..." Using these instructions, Frymier and Shulman (1995) reported an alpha reliability of .86. The reliability for this study was .89 ( $M=23.16$ ,  $SD=6.64$ ). To measure state motivation, participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "My feelings for studying for the class prior to this one is..." Initial reliability for the state motivation measure was .94; for the current study, reliability was estimated at .92 ( $M=22.01$ ,  $SD=8.25$ ).

The *Nonverbal Immediacy Scale-Observer Report* is a 26-item, Likert-type scale (1=never to 5=very often) measuring the participants' perceptions of their teachers' usage of immediate behaviors. The scale had an initial coefficient alpha reliability of .92 (Richmond, McCroskey, & Johnson, 2003). The current study had a coefficient alpha of .91 ( $M=92.91$ ,  $SD=15.43$ ).

The *Source Credibility Scale* consists of 18 bi-polar items where the participants respond to their perceptions of their teacher. This scale consisted of three sections: (a) six items measuring the students' perceived competence of their instructor, (b) six items measuring the perceived trustworthiness of their instructor, and (c) six items measuring the perceived caring of their instructor. In the original study (McCroskey & Teven, 1999), the alpha reliability of the competence dimension was .85, the alpha reliability of the trustworthiness dimension was .92, and the alpha reliability of the goodwill dimension was .92. In the current study, the competence dimension had an alpha reliability of .92 ( $M=34.20$ ,  $SD=7.04$ ), the trustworthi-



ness dimension had an alpha reliability of .91 ( $M = 35.03$ ,  $SD = 6.52$ ), and the goodwill dimension had an alpha reliability of .89 ( $M = 29.45$ ,  $SD = 7.81$ ).

The *Affective Learning Scale* consists of four sets of four-item, bipolar scales where participants circled on a scale of 1–7 their agreement toward each adjective. The first two sets measured affective learning and included four items measuring affect for the content being taught and four items measuring the likelihood of taking future classes in the content. The second set measures affect for instructor and the likelihood of taking future classes with the instructor. Both sections have consistently produced alpha coefficient reliabilities over .90 (McCroskey, 1994). In this study, the affect for content measure had a coefficient alpha reliability of .90 ( $M = 40.40$ ,  $SD = 11.25$ ), and the affect toward instructor measure had a coefficient alpha reliability of .94 ( $M = 40.62$ ,  $SD = 12.68$ ).

The *Cognitive Learning Measure* consists of two questions asking participants to rate how much they learned in their previous class, and how much they could have learned with the ideal instructor (Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987). Students were asked to respond on a range of 0–9 for each item, with 0 meaning the student learned nothing and 9 meaning the student learned more than in any other class he/she had. The final score has a range of 0–9, where the higher numbers represent the potential learning lost from an ideal teacher to the actual teacher ( $M = 1.41$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ). Twenty-eight of the participants completed the scale incorrectly showing that their cognitive learning, even with a perfect teacher, was negative. These responses were deleted from the analyses. Correlations among all variables are provided in Table 1.

## Results

H1 predicted that the upward mobile orientations would be negatively correlated with the ambivalent and indifferent orientations. Upward mobile had a significant negative correlation with ambivalent ( $r = -.51$ ,  $p < .0001$ ) and with indifferent ( $r = -.57$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). H2 predicted that indifferent and ambivalent would be positively correlated. Indifferent and ambivalent orientations had a significant and positive correlation ( $r = .65$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Both H1 and H2 were supported.

H3 predicted that the upward mobile orientation would be positively correlated with student perceptions of instructor competence, trustworthiness, and caring. Upward mobile had a significant and positive correlation with competence ( $r = .23$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), trustworthiness ( $r = .24$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), and caring ( $r = .24$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). H4 predicted that ambivalent and indifferent would be negatively correlated with competence, trustworthiness, and caring. Ambivalent had a significant negative correlation with competence ( $r = -.27$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), trustworthiness ( $r = -.32$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), and caring ( $r = -.29$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Indifferent had a significant negative correlation with competence ( $r = -.22$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), trustworthiness ( $r = -.28$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), and caring ( $r = -.27$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Both H3 and H4 were supported.

Table 1 Correlations Between All Variables Examined

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<b>Student orientation</b>														
1. Upward mobility	X	.51	.57	.33	.32	.51	.30	.23	.26	.24	.19	.25	.10*	.11
2. Ambivalence	-.51	X	.65	.35	.45	-.49	.31	.27	.32	.29	.25	.31	.13	-.23
3. Indifference	-.57	.65	X	-.30	-.31	-.55	-.36	.22	-.28	-.27	-.24	-.35	.15	.17
<b>Satisfaction</b>														
4. Generalized belief	.33	.35	.30	X	.70	.37	.12	.36	.37	.30	.13	.20	-.06*	.13
5. Generalized attitude	.32	.35	.30	.70	X	.49	.19	.35	.42	.34	.18	.28	.07*	.17
<b>Motivation</b>														
6. Trait motivation	.51	.49	.35	.37	.39	X	.36	.24	.39	.29	.21	.25	-.17	.16
7. State motivation	.30	.31	.36	.12	.19	.36	X	.42	.39	.19	.66	.59	-.49	.41
<b>Teacher Credibility</b>														
8. Competence	.23	.27	.22	.36	.35	.24	.42	X	.72	.65	.21	.25	-.39	.40
9. Character	.26	.32	.28	.37	.42	.29	.39	.72	X	.69	.56	.39	.31	.44
10. Caring	.24	.29	.27	.20	.24	.29	.49	.65	.69	X	.64	.43	-.43	.51
<b>Affective/cognitive learning</b>														
11. Affect for instructor	.18	.25	.24	.13	.18	.21	.66	.64	.55	.64	X	.61	.56	.54
12. Affect for content	.25	.31	-.35	.20	.28	.25	.59	.25	.39	.43	.61	X	-.39	.33
13. Cognitive learning	-.10*	.13	.15	-.06*	-.07*	-.17	-.49	.39	.31	.43	-.56	-.39	X	.37
14. Teacher immediacy	.11	-.23	.17	.13	.17	.16	.41	.40	.44	.51	.54	.33	.37	X

Note. All values are significant,  $p < .05$  unless otherwise noted.

\*Nonsignificant finding.

H5 predicted that upward mobile would be positively correlated with perceptions of teachers' nonverbal immediacy. Upward mobile had a significant positive correlation with perceptions of teachers' nonverbal immediacy ( $r = .11, p = .03$ ). H6 predicted that indifferent and ambivalent would be negatively correlated with perceptions of teachers' nonverbal immediacy. Indifferent ( $r = -.17, p = .0006$ ) and ambivalent ( $r = -.23, p < .0001$ ) had significant negative correlations with perceptions of teachers' nonverbal immediacy. Both H5 and H6 were supported.

H7 predicted that upward mobile would be positively correlated with affect for instructor and affect for content. Upward mobile had a significant positive correlation with affect for instructor ( $r = .19, p < .0001$ ) and affect for content ( $r = .25, p < .0001$ ). H8 predicted indifferent and ambivalent would be negatively correlated with affect for instructor and affect for content. Indifferent had a significant negative correlation with affect for instructor learning ( $r = -.24, p < .0001$ ) and affect for content ( $r = -.35, p < .0001$ ), and ambivalent had a significant negative correlation with affect for instructor ( $r = -.25, p < .0001$ ) and affect for content ( $r = -.31, p < .0001$ ). H9 predicted that upward mobile orientation would have more positive generalized beliefs and generalized attitudes toward school than the indifferent and ambivalent orientations. Upward mobile had significant positive correlations with generalized beliefs about school ( $r = .33, p < .0001$ ) and generalized attitudes about school ( $r = .32, p < .0001$ ). Ambivalent had significant negative correlations with the generalized beliefs about school ( $r = -.35, p < .0001$ ) and generalized attitudes about school ( $r = -.45, p < .0001$ ). Indifferent had significant negative correlations with the generalized beliefs about school ( $r = -.31, p < .0001$ ) and generalized attitudes about school ( $r = -.31, p < .0001$ ). Thus, H7, H8, and H9 were supported.

RQ1 inquired about the relationships between each of the student orientations and their trait and state motivation to learn. Upward mobiles had significant positive correlations with trait motivation ( $r = .51, p < .0001$ ) and with state motivation ( $r = .30, p < .0001$ ). Ambivalents had significant negative correlations with trait motivation ( $r = -.49, p < .0001$ ) and with state motivation ( $r = -.31, p < .0001$ ). Indifferent had significant negative correlations with trait motivation ( $r = -.55, p < .0001$ ) and with state motivation ( $r = -.36, p < .0001$ ). Clearly, upward mobiles are highly positively motivated, but indifferents and ambivalents are highly negatively motivated.

RQ2 inquired about the relationship between student orientation and cognitive learning. A nonsignificant relationship was found between upward mobiles and cognitive learning ( $r = -.10, p = .06$ ). Ambivalents had a significant positive relationship with cognitive learning ( $r = .13, p = .01$ ). Indifferents also had a significant positive relationship with cognitive learning ( $r = .15, p < .01$ ). Importantly, the measure of cognitive learning was scored so that higher scores represent more loss of learning. Hence, negative scores indicate more learning, and positive scores indicate less learning. The above results indicate that upward mobiles perceived they had more learning (not statistically significant), and both ambivalent

and indifferents perceived that they had less cognitive learning. However, these were very weak relationships accounting for virtually no variance.

#### *Post Hoc Analyses*

Since the correlations between ambivalence and indifference were higher than expected when compared to previous research, an exploratory factor analysis using a Varimax rotation was used to ensure that the student orientations were separate dimensions of the construct. Table 2 (Student Orientation Factor Loadings) includes the factor loadings for each of the items in the student orientation scale. Results supported a three-factor model for the three orientations. Three factors emerged having an Eigenvalue over 1.0 and accounting for at least 5% of the variance. The first factor had an Eigenvalue of 12.47 accounting for 25% of the variance, the second factor had an Eigenvalue of 3.23 accounting for 6% of the variance, and the third factor had an Eigenvalue of 2.26, accounting for 5% of the variance. All other factors did not meet this criterion.

One item on the upward mobile scale, four items on the ambivalent scale, and no items on the indifferent scale had higher loadings on the other factors. Item 8 on the upward mobile factored higher on the ambivalent dimension. Items 3, 9, and 15 of the ambivalent measure had higher loadings on the upward mobile dimension, while item 15 had a higher loading on the indifferent dimension. With the predominance of items having their greatest strength with their expected construct, the strength of the items on the factors as well as the high correlations the student orientations had with the dependent variables in the study suggest the three orientations are separate constructs.

#### **Discussion**

This study sought to adapt the reliable and valid measure of organizational orientation (McCroskey et al., 2004) to students based on the Presthus (1958) theory of organizational orientations and apply the measure to determine how student orientations affect several instructional outcome variables. The results suggest overwhelming support for the application of the theory into the instructional realm. Students' orientations accounted for 13.30% of the variance of the dependent variables. The orientations also accounted for 26.42% variance of the predicted relationships (H1 and H2) between the orientations.

With the exception of cognitive learning, the results indicated that upward mobility was positively related to the outcome variables, while ambivalence and indifference had negative relationships with the outcome variables. These findings imply that upward mobile students have an advantage to succeeding in school. This finding certainly is not ground breaking, as of course a student who in various ways rebels constantly finds fault, and/or complains about school (ambivalent) or a student who simply does not find value or does not desire to go to school will have a more negative educational experience. However, the upward mobile orientation had

Table 2 Student Orientation Factor Loadings

Items	Factor loadings		
	Ambivalent	Indifferent	Upward mobile
Upward mobile			
1. I generally try my best to do what my teacher wants me to do.	-.19	-.14	.48
2. If I had the choice, I would choose the acceptance of my teacher over the acceptance of my peers any time.	.16	-.25	.28
3. One of my goals is to take a tough class and excel at it.	-.05	-.35	.50
4. I would like to be the top student in my class.	-.13	-.06	.58
5. I firmly believe that if I work hard enough, one day I will be right at the top.	-.23	-.07	.51
6. I am good at school and I love it.	-.22	-.34	.54
7. Most of all, I really want to be recognized for the excellent work that I do.	-.06	-.04	.58
8. I think moving up in school is not worth all the work you have to do.	-.41	-.23	.25
9. Sometimes I think I am a workaholic.	.01	-.16	.42
10. I want to take classes that can really teach me something.	-.24	-.11	.36
11. Everyone tells me I am a really good student.	-.11	-.18	.48
12. I want to take classes which have a lot of intangible rewards.	.02	-.02	.35
13. Ordinarily, I feel good about what I have accomplished when I am done with my day's work.	-.10	-.02	.48
14. I would be willing to work hard to be the top student in class.	-.16	-.18	.70
15. Since I am really good at what I do, I will be a top performer in class.	.03	-.15	.63
16. What I want most in a class is the possibility of learning something important.	-.14	-.17	.46
17. Any assignment worth doing is worth doing as well as I can.	-.21	-.18	.40
18. I am a very creative worker.	.10	-.18	.19
Ambivalent			
1. Other than a grade, the classes I have taken have had little to offer me.	.42	.33	-.16
2. The content in classes I have taken is of very low quality.	.47	.22	-.15
3. I have generally been satisfied with classes I have had.	.22	.07	-.36*
4. The schools I have attended wouldn't have cared less if I live or die—and I feel the same way about them.	.56	.10	-.13
5. I really dislike the rules and regulations I am forced to live with at school.	.63	.09	-.11
6. I am usually unhappy in every class.	.67	.14	-.10
7. Teachers and administrators at schools are incompetent.	.58	.10	-.13

Table 2 (Continued)

Items	Factor loadings		
	Ambivalent	Indifferent	Upward mobile
8. When I am at school, I wish I were somewhere, almost anywhere, else than where I am.	.47	.38	-.17
9. The procedures and regulations of schools I have attended have generally been quite reasonable.	.27	.06	-.30*
10. I find it difficult to adopt the demands of most schools.	.65	.12	-.03
11. Generally, I don't like the rules schools make me follow.	.62	.16	-.05
12. I don't really like most of the students and teachers I have at my school.	.69	-.04	-.04
13. I have attended really good schools.	.22	.02	-.40*
14. Most schools have unreasonable expectations for students like me.	.52	.17	-.02
15. Most of the time, a halfhearted effort is all I feel I need to give at school.	.59	.45*	.31
16. I really hate most schools and classes I have attended.	.73	.24	.26
17. One teacher is about like any other, a pain in the backside.	.62	.33	-.13
18. What I want most at school is to be left alone.	.62	.18	-.15
19. Frankly, I am smarter than most of my teachers.	.55	.04	-.08
20. I have been unhappy just about every class and school I have attended.	.63	.22	-.27
Indifferent			
1. My life begins when I get out of school.	.29	.37	-.20
2. If I found this class was not easy, I would look for an easier class.	.31	.44	-.27
3. A class is a class--everyone has to be somewhere.	.15	.61	.01
4. I am generally indifferent to classes. One class is about the same as another.	.32	.55	-.07
5. Generally, I just do as much as is required by my class.	-.07	.60	-.01
6. I sometimes skip classes, whether I am sick or not.	.10	.44	-.26
7. I don't care much about my classes, as long as I receive good grades.	.21	.68	-.29
8. When class is over, life begins.	.28	.64	-.16
9. One class is pretty much like any other class.	.12	.71	-.12
10. If I found out the class was difficult, I would quickly look for another class.	.34	.51	-.18
11. School is something I have to do, not something I want to do.	.35	.58	.18
12. When it comes to choosing a class, "show me the easy A!"	.24	.69	-.17

\*Item loaded on an unexpected factor.

substantially different outcomes compared to the ambivalent and the indifferent orientations.

Results supported the hypotheses suggesting that the upward mobile student would perceive their instructor to have a higher credibility, while the ambivalent and indifferent students would likely see their instructor to have a lower credibility. Upward mobile people, according to Presthus's (1978c) construct and supported in the organizational setting by McCroskey et al. (2004), see their supervisors, management, and organization as positive, good, and correct. The same likely holds true with student orientations. Students with the upward mobile orientation perceive their teachers to be competent in their subject matter, to be honest, and to care about their students. In essence, an upward mobile student will perceive their teacher as a smart person who wants her/him to learn the content and be successful. The ambivalent and indifferent orientation has the opposite effect. The more a student is ambivalent or indifferent, the more they will see their instructor as less credible.

Interestingly, the ambivalent student has a greater negative correlation with all three dimensions than the indifferent student. These findings also fall in line with the Presthus theory. Indifferents may have negative feelings of teacher credibility because they may see the teacher as having the same life view of their own: The teacher is teaching this class because he/she has too, and the teacher does not really care about how the student does in class.

Ambivalent students may have more negative views because they view the teacher to have more ill-will toward them. According to Presthus (1978a), ambivalents question top-down authority. Ambivalents question authority likely because of the credibility issue. If a student does not believe teachers to be knowledgeable in their content area, have the student's best interest at heart, or want the student to succeed, the student is often going to complain or reject the teacher's authority. One of the more intriguing items on the ambivalent dimension in the scale is the degree the participant believes he/she is smarter than the teacher. When people without any collegiate degree walk into a class believing they are smarter than their professors with doctorate degrees, a feeling of superiority against the instructional organization and complaining is likely to ensue.

Results also supported the predicted relationships between the student orientations and students' perceptions of teacher immediacy, suggesting that upward mobiles would perceive their teacher to use more immediate behaviors, while ambivalent and indifferent would perceive less immediate teacher behaviors. The upward mobile had a very small positive correlation with teacher immediacy accounting for 1% of the variance. Ambivalent and indifferent had negative correlations accounting for 5% and 3% of the variance, respectively. The student orientations accounted for the least amount of variance with the immediacy outcome than any other outcome. While these correlations are statistically significant, the social significance is doubtful.

The next set of hypotheses examined the relationships between the student orientations and satisfaction with school based on the attitudes and beliefs about

college. Upward mobiles had positive perceptions of college on both the generalized attitude (10% of the variance) and generalized belief (11% of the variance) measures. Ambivalents had negative perceptions of college on both the attitude (20% of the variance) and belief (12% of the variance). Similarly, indifferents had negative perceptions of college on both the attitude (10% of the variance) and belief (9% of the variance). Again, the upward mobile orientation tended to have positive views of college, the indifferents had negative perceptions of college, and the ambivalents had stronger negative perceptions of college. These findings are consistent with Presthus's theory. Upward mobiles would likely see college as the logical next step in their career or a natural challenge. Interestingly, ambivalent students have stronger negative perceptions than the indifferent students. Presthus (1978a) argues that ambivalent people tend to be intelligent and specialists in an area. These students may see themselves as masters of the content without a degree, and they see college as not a valuable tool but a waste of time. Indifferent students may see classes as a waste of time for a different reason: They have other things they would rather be doing, probably resulting in a less strong negative perception.

Upward mobility was found to have positive levels of affect for both content (accounting for 6% of the variance) and instructor (accounting for 4% of the variance). Similar to the previous outcome variables, the ambivalent orientation had a negative relationship with both affect for content (10% of the variance) and affect for instructor (4% of the variance), and the indifferent orientation had a negative relationship with both affect for content (12% of the variance) and affect for the teacher (5% of the variance). At first glance, the results for upward mobility appear small. However, when considering students were asked to report on the last class they had attended, a class potentially outside their major or outside their prime interest, the results show that the upward mobiles will likely find value and appreciate any class or teacher they have, regardless of the class. This suggestion is further supported and explained in more detail in the next discussion of the results with state and trait motivation. Both ambivalent and indifferent students have tendencies to dislike the content and the teacher, and again, these results are likely due to different reasons. Ambivalents likely dislike the teacher because they perceive the teacher to have less credibility and dislike being told what to do or how to think. Indifferent students enjoy things outside of school and work. Even if the indifferent student is training for their number one career choice, that student probably is not a fan of the content. The indifferent person chooses a career (and college for that career) so that he or she can afford to enjoy the activities outside of work.

Upward mobility was found to be strongly positively correlated with trait and state motivation. Upward mobility accounted for 26% of the variance of trait motivation and 9% of the variance for state motivation. Ambivalence and indifference were found to be strongly negatively correlated with trait and state motivation. Ambivalence accounted for 24% of the variance of trait motivation and 10% of the state motivation. Indifference accounted for 30% of the variance of trait motivation and 13% of the variance of state motivation. These results provide the greatest insight on why upward mobiles have larger advantages at school. Upward



mobile students simply will try hard and have a drive to succeed regardless of their situation. Similarly, indifferent students have an apathy issue, where they simply do not care. When a student has little drive to succeed, when faced with adversity, these students will look for a way out or do as little work as possible. Because indifferents feel that their life starts after school, they may be more likely to drop out of school or skip classes. Ambivalents, as Presthus (1978a) points out, tend to be intelligent and specialists in a certain area, and while they complain, they still have some sort of drive to succeed. Perhaps this is why ambivalents have more motivation than the indifferents. Unlike indifferents, ambivalents may specialize or have some interest in a content area at school, or perhaps they are involved in a school sponsored activity.

The ambivalent and indifferent trait and state motivation may provide a meaningful difference between orientation outcomes in instructional and organizational settings. According to the theory (Presthus, 1978a) and also suggested by McCroskey et al. (2004), in an organizational setting, ambivalents often have a more difficult time adapting to the organizational structure than indifferents. In the organizational setting, ambivalents will likely leave or be fired until they find a place in an organization fitting with their specialization and attitudes. However, in the instructional setting, the specialization or interest may be the link keeping them motivated to attend and stay in school.

Upward mobility was not significantly correlated with learning loss, but ambivalent and indifferent orientations were significantly positively correlated with cognitive learning loss. These findings coincide with Presthus's theory and the other results in this study. The ambivalent and the indifferent orientations are negatively related to all the outcome variables which help create lower levels of perceived learning loss. Considering that the ambivalent and indifferent orientations have high-moderate negative correlations with state and trait motivation, the ambivalent and indifferent oriented students are likely to place less effort into or take less seriously the learning activities as the upward mobile student. Keep in mind that the correlations between the student orientations and cognitive learning loss are small, accounting for at most 2% of the variance. This is most likely due to the fact that regardless of how a student perceives an activity, the student still has to participate, as the teacher, with legitimate power, is still in the classroom.

In conclusion, the findings of this study present a positive picture for the upward mobile student. These students appear to have positive perceptions of school (generalized belief, generalized attitude of school, and affect for content), positive perceptions of their teachers (teacher credibility, teacher nonverbal immediacy, and affect for teacher), and the predispositions to help them be successful at school (trait motivation and state motivation). For the 12–16 years people will be in educational institutions, upward mobiles probably enjoy school more and probably feel more success at school than their ambivalent and indifferent counterparts. Further, how students are oriented and behave at school are possibly decent predictors of how people will be oriented and behave in the workplace.

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