CHAPTER 8

Affinity in the Classroom

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Teachers gain power and influence in the classroom in a number of ways. They influence others by the rewards they give and the punishments they use. They are seen as experts and, as a consequence, have students engage in the behaviors they recommend. They depend on students' recognizing that they, as teachers, hold a power position in the school different from others. And they bolster their interpersonal relationships with students, hoping that if students like them they will heed their instructions, pay more attention, participate more actively, and, in the end, learn more. This chapter is about this last strategy— influencing students through enhancing students' affinity for their teachers.

The observation that teachers who are liked by their students are more effective in classrooms than teachers who are disliked may seem obvious to many. But surprisingly, until recently, there has been little systematic examination of that presumption. In the past few years, however, scholars primarily in the field of communication have begun to carefully examine how teachers try to get students to like them and the consequences of those attempts. Reflecting this research is a recent national project sponsored by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). In its new national assessment for beginning teachers (PRAXIS), ETS noted that one of the characteristics of good teaching is the establishment and maintenance of teacher rapport with students (ETS Policy Notes, 1991). Rapport, in many ways, represents affinity.

This chapter reviews the recent literature on affinity with special
attention to the use of affinity as a technique for classroom influence. It is divided into three sections. In the first section the conceptual foundations for research on affinity-seeking are examined. This is followed by a thorough review of studies of classroom affinity-seeking. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of limitations and directions for future research.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF AFFINITY-SEEKING

The research initiatives summarized in this review had as their start a series of studies conducted by Bell and Daly (1984). Bell and Daly noted that in previous research regarding the ways people generate liking, scholars had adopted a piecemeal approach—one researcher would examine one technique that should engender liking, say the use of responsiveness, whereas another scholar would examine a different move, say ingratiation. Bell and Daly attempted to integrate those lines of research under the rubric of affinity-seeking that they defined as “the active social-communicative process by which individuals attempt to get others to like and feel positive about them” (p. 91).2

A careful look at this definition is instructive: First, the definition of the affinity construct highlights active rather than passive activity. This is critical, for most previous research related to interpersonal liking has focused on passive behaviors. For instance, there is plethora of research on physical attraction and its relationship to liking (Berscheid & Walster, 1974). In the classroom, there is clear evidence that physical attractiveness plays a major role in shaping at least initial perceptions of students. But the vast majority of that scholarship assumes attractiveness—it is not something people manipulate, it is not something that can be “used” to accomplish liking. But this is not always so. Parents dress their children for the first day of school knowing that teachers may not think well of a poorly dressed pupil. Teachers, too, actively manipulate their appearance by perhaps dressing better when meeting parents or attending a school board meeting. Why? Because they recognize that attractiveness has consequences. Attraction is not the only affinity behavior that has been treated as a passive activity. Research has, for example, consistently demonstrated a

1There is a large body of research on students’ evaluations of teachers. Liking for the teacher is one part of many of these evaluations. But, liking is not considered as strategic in that research. It is, consequently, not examined in this chapter. An interesting avenue for future research relating teacher evaluations to affinity would be to discover the strategies people use when coaching teachers on how to better achieve affinity in the classroom.

2Much of what follows about the definition of affinity seeking appears in a somewhat different form in Daly and Kreiser (in press).
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lationship between propinquity and the development of friendships.
People who live closer to each other are more likely to initiate relationships
with each other (Festinger, Schacter, & Back, 1950; Menne & Sinnett,
1971). But sometimes people actively seek to place themselves close to
others in order to create an opportunity for interaction. In the classroom,
teachers separate “cliques” hoping that distance may make the heart grow
weaker. Students who want the teacher to like them “hang” around the
teacher’s desk seeking closeness. This conception of an active rather than
passive approach to affinity represents an important move for research.

Second, the construct emphasizes the strategic nature of the different
behaviors incorporated in the typology. People strategically engage actively
in the behaviors described in the typology in intentional ways to obtain
predicted outcomes. For example, presenting a comfortable self, one
strategy included in the affinity typology, has very seldom been viewed as a
strategic activity—something someone intentionally does to affect others’
impressions of them. But people often do just that. A student enters a
classroom after hours to have a discussion with a teacher. The teacher, in an
attempt to ensure the student feels comfortable and liked, feigns an extra
degree of personal comfortableness—perhaps slouching against the wall,
sitting in a more than normal, relaxed position, and taking off his or her
jacket—doing things, in short, that he or she would not typically do in the
classroom environment.

Third, research on affinity-seeking and maintenance assumes that at any
one point in time there are various affinity strategies available to individuals
and that people have the capacity to choose among different strategies to
accomplish different goals. There is a strong assumption that people are, to
some varying degree, cognizant of their choices. Certainly people differ in
the number of strategies that come to mind at any one point in time and
certainly there are situational limits to strategy selection. But even given
these limitations, the presumption is that people can generally make choices
to engage, or not engage, in certain affinity strategies in some settings.

Fourth, affinity is centrally a communication construct. We compel
people to like us through our communication—verbal and nonverbal. The
behaviors described in the typology are accomplished interactively.

Finally, affinity research has a well-defined measure of its success—
liking. The goal of affinity is to generate, maintain, or enhance liking of one
person by another. Certainly, in some cases that liking may be transformed
into persuasion or learning. But at its core, the construct’s focus is
straightforward—liking is critical and affinity strategies are the ways people
attempt to generate that feeling in others. Why is affinity important in
educational contexts? What functions does affinity play in the classroom?
In the classroom context, teachers who increase their affinity behaviors
toward students should see, as a consequence, greater liking by students for
them. But more is involved. Liking should generalize beyond the teacher. Increases in teacher affinity behavior yields returns in student liking for the subject matter taught by the teacher (Andersen, 1979) as well as increased liking for the entire educational experience. This increased liking for subject matter and education, in turn, affects student's classroom academic performance. Greater affinity for a teacher also has consequences for teacher-student interactions. Students who like their teachers will be more involved in classroom exchanges, attend more to class materials, have less behavioral problems in the classroom, and be more willing to accept teachers' attempts to influence them.

There are many payoffs for teachers as well. First, increases in affinity-seeking behaviors by teachers can enhance the teacher's own self-esteem. As a teacher engages in more affinity-seeking behaviors, students respond more positively, which in turn enhances the teacher's feelings of effectiveness. This cyclical pattern is an important one, but one that has received little attention in the literature. Second, the liking achieved through affinity-seeking serves as a means for other strategic moves by the teacher. For example, Richmond (1990) argued that when positive relationships are cultivated between teachers and their students, "the availability of referent and expert power is much greater, thus opening many more communication options to the teacher for maintaining mundane control" (p. 194). Liking facilitates increased options available to the teacher.

Bell and Daly (1984) presented a four-stage model describing affinity-seeking in terms of antecedent factors, constraints, strategic activity, and target responses. The model appears in Fig. 8.1.

**Antecedent Factors.** There are three main antecedent factors in affinity-seeking behavior: interaction goals, motives for seeking affinity, and level of consciousness. Interaction goals are the aims people have in a social exchange. People may have only one goal in some conversations—to generate or maintain affinity. But often, they have multiple goals that must be juggled successfully for a competent performance. Conceptually, the importance of goals vary even as a single interaction proceeds. One might imagine a vector of weights associated with different goals at different points in time (see Fig. 8.2). Consider teaching a unit in history. The teacher has any number of goals (k1, k2 . . . , kn) she or he must juggle throughout the unit—goals such as affinity, persuasion, information giving, and information acquisition. At the start of the unit (Time 1) the primary goal of the teacher may be affinity—getting students to like her or him. The weight associated with affinity is large; the weights associated with the other goals are smaller. But quickly the lesson moves to an information exchange. Learning what students already know, discovering their interests, and so on require that the information component receive a stronger weight. And
Although affinity is still important, the weight assigned to it may be less now than at Time 1. As the exchange moves to Time 3, information giving may become the predominant goal—it is weighted more than the other goals. The teacher strategically decides how to communicate information—when to lecture, when to question, and so on. Yet affinity and information are still relevant. The point of this example is that in any interaction there are multiple goals that an interactant must juggle (Tracy & Coupland, 1990).

Affinity is central to any interaction. However, its relative weight may change both among interactions and within an individual exchange. In some cases, certainly, affinity may be the only goal of one or both of the interactants. But in most cases, there are multiple goals, one of which is...
affinity. More importantly, the general goals established by the interactants for an exchange may shape the choice of affinity strategies a person uses. Certain goals (e.g., disciplining vs. counseling) may affect the choices people make among the different affinity strategies. Further, there are conceptual weights associated with each affinity strategy at any point in time. In a typical exchange, various affinity strategies may be enacted simultaneously and sequentially. The context of the interaction, the purposes at hand, and the people involved may shape those weights. At the start of an academic year certain affinity strategies may play predominant roles (e.g., physical attractiveness, dynamism), but as the year goes on and relationships develop, others may become more, or just as central to affinity-seeking (e.g., openness, listening).

Parenthetically, the psychological weights interactants place on these goals and strategies may, in fact, serve as interesting cognitive measures of competence. It may well be that one could identify highly competent teachers, ask them to provide relative weights for different interaction goals at different phases of a conversation or instructional unit and then use their estimates as a baseline for instructional expertise. You would compare these “expert” weights to the weights assigned by less experienced or less competent instructors in an attempt to diagnose specific problems of inexperience or incompetency. Furthermore, it may be that competence in interaction is defined, to a large extent, in terms of timing. Highly competent interactants know when to initiate a particular strategy, when to shift weights associated with various strategies and goals, and when to avoid using some strategy. The capacity to time one’s moves appropriately may be a useful meter of competence. Zanna and Pack (1975) provided an example of this choice-making process. Female college students anticipated they were going to meet an attractive male who held either traditional or nontraditional views of the “ideal” woman. When anticipating a meeting with a traditional man, women tended to choose descriptions emphasizing femininity over intelligence; when the purported meeting was with a nontraditional man, women tended to highlight intelligence over femininity.

Bell and Daly (1984) also suggested that there are multiple motives for affinity. Indeed, it is interesting that in the field of communication there is a tendency to assume simple outcome measures—persuasion means attitude change, affinity means liking. But why do people want to persuade others, why do people want others to like them? We haven’t, as a discipline, done careful analyses of the motives for those outcome measures. In affinity, one can suppose that a very basic motive is the seemingly innate sociability of human beings; relationships demand affinity. But there are other potential motives as well. To accomplish persuasion, affinity is important; to
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accomplish instruction, liking for a teacher may be critical; to get others to listen and remember information, affinity may be key.

The issue of consciousness is a third antecedent. Clearly, there are cases when people consciously decide that they want to generate affinity in another and make clear choices among the strategies to accomplish that goal. But at other times, awareness may be less. Indeed, some affinity strategies may be so overlearned that people's conscious awareness of them is quite limited. In classroom environments, teachers may vary in how consciously they make use of different strategies. Some teachers may systematically decide to opt for one strategy over another; other teachers may be far less conscious of their decisions. Similarly, some strategies may require more conscious activity for their enactment than others. When examining awareness we need to think not only of the awareness of the initiator but also of the potential target. It may be that there are cases when the initiator is quite conscious of an affinity move that is beyond the conscious awareness of the target, and vice versa. For instance, suppose a teacher is meeting a class on the first day of school. The teacher, seeking to impress the class, tells jokes and interesting stories. But to some members of the class, the teacher's use of jokes and stories may not seem a consciously chosen alternative at all. They may suppose that this is how the instructor always teaches. Perhaps the most sophisticated of interactants knows how to both manipulate affinity strategies and manage the awareness of the other interactant.

**Constraints.** Both personal and contextual characteristics operate as constraints in Bell and Daly's (1984) model. Personal characteristics include "people's dispositions, social skills, and past experiences" (p. 94). Certain personality characteristics such as affiliation needs, loneliness, shyness, and self-monitoring, to name but a few, may affect the decision to initiate affinity, the choice of affinity strategies used by the individual, and the effectiveness of their implementation. Interactants' social skills may similarly impinge on affinity attempts. Highly skilled individuals may select different strategies and engage in them at different levels of effectiveness than their less-skilled counterparts. Experienced teachers may choose different strategies than inexperienced ones (Roach, 1991). Finally, people's attempts at any communication move are not abhistorical. What has worked before will probably be used again; what has failed miserably in the past will probably be studiously avoided. The allusion to overlearning may be relevant here. People who have successfully used a certain affinity strategy with great regularity in the past may come to be unaware that they use it at all. Indeed, the habitual nature of many communication behaviors, although perhaps efficient, may also be problematic. People get in trouble
when they cease attending to specific situational cues assuming that what worked in the past will work well now.

Contextual characteristics can also impinge on affinity behavior. Obviously, where and when the encounter takes place is important. Certain environments are more conducive to certain strategy moves than other environments. A noisy, crowded classroom may preclude some affinity moves and encourage others; interactively structured classes allow moves that would not be reasonable in lecture classes. The purpose(s) of an interaction impacts choices as well. Certain interactions may, by the nature of their purpose, preclude certain strategies. There are implicit, and sometimes explicit, requirements placed on interactants by the reasons for an exchange. In the instructional arena, an important contextual consideration is the nature of the teacher-student relationship. Although many interpersonal relationships such as friendship and marriage are voluntary, fewer teacher-student relationships are made by mutual agreement. Elementary and high school students are required to attend school and are not usually allowed to select their teachers. Consequently, teachers and students find themselves in a relationship that neither necessarily wanted. This can have a significant impact on affinity seeking by both the teacher and the student. But perhaps the most important of contextual characteristics are those having to do with the others involved in the conversation. What works with one person may not work with another. When teachers interact with students who are unfamiliar they may choose different strategies than when conversing with well-known students; teachers may opt for some strategies when dealing with students, other strategies when dealing with superiors; what is effective with children may not be effective with adults; students who are lonely may be more susceptible to certain moves than peers who feel almost overwhelmed by the number and quality of their relationships. The point is that affinity is truly an interactional variable. To study affinity, as has much of the research, as something associated with only one interactant misses perhaps the most interesting and basic question that scholars in communication need to examine: the inherent jointness of social interaction. It takes at least two people to make an interaction, and each person involved influences what happens. Space limitations preclude a full exposition of this issue. Suffice it to say that if we ever want to truly understand affinity processes we need to focus on the inherently interactive nature of the phenomena.

**Strategic Activities.** Four clusters of strategic activities in affinity seeking are identified by Bell and Daly (1984): strategy, length of enactment, sequencing, and quality of enactment. First, "individuals seeking affinity must decide on an optimal strategy or strategies in a given situation"
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(p. 94). People decide what they think works best in a situation. This assumption must be treated cautiously. There are many times when interactants do not make the effort to enact optimal choices—they perhaps don’t find the particular exchange important enough to maximize the likelihood of success. In some exchanges, people may even opt for minimally acceptable strategies—ones that will probably achieve, at best, only minimally satisfactory results, even though they know that there is the potential for better results with greater effort. Communication scholarship has not spent a good deal of time exploring the mundaneness of satisfactory communication outcomes. Everything does not always have to go perfectly and people know this in their daily lives. At other times, an exchange has an optimal outcome that is vitally important to the person. Communicators may behave very differently depending on the degree to which an optimal outcome is desired. Some teachers may work very hard to impress parents and administrators because these “adult” judgments count in their careers. Teachers try to optimize their affinity strategies in these cases. On the other hand, some teachers may not worry about optimal affinity strategies on a daily basis in their classrooms. Having students like them everyday may simply not be seen as that important by these teachers. They will engage in minimal levels of affinity seeking as a consequence.

Bell and Daly (1984) also emphasized the combinatory processes involved in affinity. Typologies describe various strategies available to an interactant but in most actual interactions these strategies are combined in many different ways. They are not independent of one another. When trying to generate affinity, people may integrate 5 or 6 or even 10 of the strategies in their attempt. The ways in which the different strategies are combined and the decision processes behind these combinations represent interesting avenues for future work. None of it has been done to date. In all fairness, affinity research is not alone in operationally assuming independence among strategies. Research on compliance (or, in classroom settings, BATs) share that problem.

Affinity-seeking strategies not only need to be integrated, they must also be sequenced. Sequencing supposes that there are better and worse patterns for arranging different strategies. In one sense, the issue of sequencing of strategies is similar to the vector model presented earlier (see Fig. 8.2) to describe multiple interaction goals. It is interesting how little attention has been paid to sequencing in communication research in terms of communication effectiveness, aside from some limited attention in the persuasion literature (e.g., foot in door, primacy). Yet sequencing is a very basic component of communication effectiveness—some moves work better when they follow others; some moves make little sense unless others precede them (Turcotte & Leventhal, 1984).
Finally, there is the issue of the quality with which affinity-seeking strategies are enacted. There are better and worse enactments of each strategy. This is important and it is something that has not been carefully examined by researchers. Most research simply asks people whether someone does or does not engage in a strategy (or how frequently the strategy is used). But that begs the question because if a person engages in a strategy but does it badly, then the outcome may not be the one anticipated. The quality of the enactment is as important as the fact that the strategy was enacted at all. It may well be that, in some cases, deciding not to enact a strategy because of the actor’s inability to do it well may be a strategy itself.

**Target Responses.** Bell and Daly (1984) suggested that the response of the other interactants must be carefully considered in affinity research. They suggest three sorts of responses: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. Affective responses include changes in the affinity that the target person feels toward the person enacting an affinity move. In the classroom environment this basically means liking for the teacher or student, depending on who is doing the affinity seeking. But it can also mean liking for the subject matter, liking for school, or even appreciation for education. Behavioral responses include the physical and verbal actions elicited by the affinity seeking activities. In the classroom this might include attendance, participation, and involvement. Cognitive responses include judgments, perceptual changes, and learning. In the research reviewed in this chapter, this tripartite of outcomes is regularly used.

**DEVELOPING THE TYPOLOGY OF AFFINITY-SEEKING**

The typology of affinity-seeking strategies was initially devised through an analysis of the responses of 22 small brainstorming groups. Some of the groups were comprised of elementary and secondary school teachers enrolled in workshops. Other groups were composed of undergraduate students. Group members were asked to “produce a list of things people can say or do to get others to like them,” or to “produce a list of things people can say or do to get others to dislike them.” Responses were content analyzed, categories were developed, and the typology of the 25 strategies was constructed. In a series of studies following that initial one, the typology was refined. The typology is presented in Table 8.1. One should note that when Bell, Daly, and Gonzales (1987) examined affinity maintenance strategies of adult married women they found eight additional
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| TABLE 8.1 |
| Classroom Affinity-Seeking Strategies |

1. **Altruism**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her tries to be of help and assistance to the student in whatever he or she is currently doing. For example, the teacher does things ranging from holding the door for the student, assisting him or her with studies, helping him or her get the needed materials for assignments, to assisting student with other social related tasks. The teacher also gives advice when it is requested.

2. **Assume Control**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her presents self as a leader, a person who has control over his or her classroom. For example, he or she directs the conversations held by students, takes charge of the classroom activities the two engage in, and mentions examples of where he or she has taken charge or served as a leader in the past.

3. **Assume Equality**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her presents self as an equal of the other person. For example, he or she avoids appearing superior or snobbish, and does not play “one-upmanship” games.

4. **Comfortable Self**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her acts comfortable in the setting the two find themselves, comfortable with him or herself, and comfortable with the student. He or she is relaxed, at ease, casual, and content. Distractions and disturbances in the environment are ignored. The teacher tries to look as if he or she is having a good time, even if he or she is not. The teacher gives the impression that “nothing bothers” him or her.

5. **Concede Control**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her allows the student to control the relationship and situations surrounding the two. For example, he or she lets the student take charge of conversations and so on. The teacher attempting to be liked also lets the student influence his or her actions by not acting dominant.

6. **Conversational Rule Keeping**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her follows closely the culture’s rules for how people socialize with others by demonstrating cooperation, friendliness, and politeness. The teacher works hard at giving relevant answers to questions, saying the right things, acting interested and involved in conversations, and adapting his or her messages to the particular student or situation. The teacher avoids changing the topic too soon, interrupting the student, dominating classroom discussions, and excessive self-references. The teacher using this strategy tries to avoid topics that are not common interests to his or her student.

7. **Dynamism**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her presents himself or herself as a dynamic, active, and enthusiastic person. For example, he or she acts physically animated and very lively while talking with the student, vary intonation and other vocal characteristics, and is outgoing and extroverted with the students.

8. **Elicit Other’s Disclosure**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her encourages the student to talk by asking questions and reinforcing the student for responding. For example, they inquire about the student’s interests, feelings, opinions, views, and so on. The teacher responds as if these are important and interesting, and continues to ask more questions of the student.

9. **Facilitate Enjoyment**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her seeks to make the situation in which the two are involved a very enjoyable experience. The teacher does things the students will enjoy, is entertaining, tells jokes and interesting stories, talks about interesting topics, says funny things, and tries to make the classroom conducive to enjoyment and learning.

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10. **Inclusion of Others:** The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her includes the student in his or her social activities and group of friends. He or she introduces the student to his or her friends, and makes the student feel like "one of the group."

11. **Influence Perceptions of Closeness:** The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her engages in behaviors that lead the student to perceive the relationship as being closer and more established than it has actually been. For example, he or she uses nicknames of the students, talks about "we," rather than "I" or "you." The teacher also discusses any prior activities that included both of them.

12. **Listening:** The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her pays close attention to what the student says, listening very actively. The teacher focuses attention solely on the student, paying strict attention to what is said. Moreover, the teacher attempting to be liked demonstrates that he or she listens by being responsive to the student's ideas, asking for clarification of ambiguities, being open-minded, and remembering things the student says.

13. **Nonverbal Immediacy:** The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her signals interest and liking through various nonverbal cues. For example, the teacher frequently makes eye contact, stands and sits close to the student, smiles, leans toward the student, makes frequent head nods, and directs much gaze toward the student. All of these motions indicate the teacher is very much interested in the student and what he or she has to say.

14. **Openness:** The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her is open. The teacher discloses information about his or her background, interests, and views. He or she may even disclose very personal information about his or her insecurities, weaknesses, and fears to make the student feel very special (e.g., just between you and me).

15. **Optimism:** The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her presents self as a positive person—an optimist—so that he or she will appear to be a person who is pleasant to be around. The teacher acts in a "happy-go-lucky" manner, is cheerful, and looks on the positive side of things. The teacher avoids complaining about things, talking about depressing topics, and being critical of self and others.

16. **Personal Autonomy:** The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her presents self as an independent, free-thinking person—the kind of person who stands on his or her own, speaks his or her mind regardless of the consequences, refuses to change behavior to meet the expectations of others, and knows where he or she is going in life. For instance, if the teacher finds he or she disagrees with the student on some issue, the teacher states his or her opinion anyway, and is confident that his or her view is right, and may even try to change the mind of the student.

17. **Physical Attractiveness:** The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her tries to look as attractive and professional as possible in appearance and attire. The teacher wears nice clothes, practices good grooming, shows concern for proper hygiene, stands up straight, and monitors his or her appearance.

18. **Present Interesting Self:** The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her presents self to be a person who would be interesting to know. For example, he or she highlights past accomplishments and positive qualities, emphasizes things that make him or her especially interesting, expresses unique ideas, and demonstrates intelligence and knowledge. The teacher may discreetly drop the names of impressive people he or she knows. The teacher may even do outlandish things to appear unpredictable, wild, or crazy. (continued)
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TABLE 8.1 (continued)

19. **Reward Association**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her presents self as an important figure who can reward the student for associating with him or her. For instance, he or she offers to do favors for the other, and gives the students information that would be valuable. The teacher's basic message to the student is "if you like me, you will gain something."

20. **Self-Concept Confirmation**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her demonstrates respect for the student, helps the student feel good about how he or she views himself or herself. For example, the teacher treats the student like a very important person, compliments the student, says only positive things about the student, and treats the things the student says as being very important information. The teacher may also tell other teachers what a great student the individual is, in hopes that the comment will get back to the student through third parties.

21. **Self-Inclusion**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her sets up frequent encounters with the student. For example, the teacher will initiate casual encounters with the student, attempt to schedule future encounters, tries to be physically close to the student, and puts him or herself in a position to be invited to participate in some of the student's social activities/groups/clubs.

22. **Sensitivity**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her acts in a warm, empathetic manner toward the student to communicate caring and concern. The teacher also shows sympathy to the student's problems and anxieties, spends time working at understanding how the student sees their life, and accepts what the student says as an honest response. The message is "I care about you as a person."

23. **Similarity**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her tries to make the student feel that the two of them are similar in attitudes, values, interests, preferences, personality, and so on. The teacher expresses views that are similar to the view of the student, agrees with some things the student says, and points out the areas that the two have in common. Moreover, the teacher deliberately avoids engaging in behaviors that would suggest differences between the two.

24. **Supportiveness**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like her/him is supportive of the student and the student's positions by being encouraging, agreeable, and reinforcing to the student. The teacher also avoids criticizing the student or saying anything that might hurt the student's feelings, and sides with the student in disagreements he or she may have with others.

25. **Trustworthiness**: The teacher attempting to get a student to like him or her presents self as trustworthy and reliable. For example, he or she emphasizes his or her responsibility, reliability, fairness, dedication, honesty, and sincerity. The teacher also maintains consistency among his or her stated beliefs and behaviors, fulfills any commitments made to the student, and avoids "false fronts" by acting natural at all times.

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strategies. Research in the classroom environment has generally chosen to use the typology offered by Bell and Daly (1984). It is possible that future research in the classroom environment may find other strategies.

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*Bell et al. (1987) found the following additional strategies: faithfulness, honesty, physical affection, verbal affection, self-improvement, reliability, shared spirituality, and third-party relations.*
CURRENT RESEARCH ON AFFINITY-SEEKING
IN THE CLASSROOM

An important disclaimer from the start: We do not intend to be encyclopedic in this review. For the most part, we limit this review to recent research that has taken the affinity typology and applied it to the classroom environment. The vast majority of this research has focused on affinity strategies used by teachers to generate liking on the part of students. Very little research has examined affinity strategies used by, for instance, students to get teachers to like them, or techniques used by teachers to generate liking by parents or administrators.

The first systematic exploration of affinity-seeking in the classroom context was conducted by McCroskey and McCroskey (1986). They had more than 300 experienced elementary and secondary schoolteachers read descriptions of the 26 strategies outlined by Bell and Daly (1984). Teachers were asked to indicate how frequently they saw other teachers use each of the strategies. When the responses were tabulated, eight strategies were identified as very frequently used by teachers. These were physical attractiveness, sensitivity, eliciting other's disclosure, trustworthiness, nonverbal immediacy, conversational rule keeping, dynamism, and listening. Nine strategies fell at the bottom of the frequency estimates. These were inclusion of other, self-inclusion, reward association, concede control, influence perceptions of closeness, similarity, openness, present interesting self, and supportiveness. But even these were seen as used by many teachers. Indeed, only three of the low-ranked strategies (inclusion of other, self-inclusion, and reward association) were seen as used by less than half of the teachers in their schools. When McCroskey and McCroskey rank ordered the teachers' responses and correlated those ranks with the ranks obtained by Bell and Daly, they discovered a strong similarity (rho = .80) between the two rankings (see Table 8.2).

McCroskey and McCroskey's (1986) study was followed by a more comprehensive study conducted by Gorham, Kelley, and McCroskey (1989). Inservice elementary and secondary school teachers were first asked to indicate how much difficulty they have in getting students to like them as teachers. Across grade levels, most teachers reported very little difficulty in generating liking on the part of students for them. Interestingly, the higher the grade level, the more teachers reported difficulty in generating affinity: For example, 20% of the high school teachers reported moderate difficulty, whereas only 6% of the early elementary teachers reported the same degree of difficulty. Teachers were then asked to describe five instances when they had done something "to get a student to like you" in the past year. The 1,172 descriptions drawn from responses by teachers to this question were coded
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TABLE 8.2
Rank Order of Teacher Affinity-Seeking Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>McCroskey &amp; McCroskey</th>
<th>Gorham et al.</th>
<th>Roach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altruism</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume control</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume equality</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable self</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concede control</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversational rule keeping</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamism</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicit other's disclosure</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate enjoyment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of other</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence perceptions of closeness</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal immediacy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal autonomy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical attractiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present interesting self</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward association</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-concept confirmation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-inclusion</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportiveness</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The above rank-ordered comparisons illustrate perceptions of different strategy use. McCroskey and McCroskey (1986) asked teachers how often affinity strategies had been observed in the classroom. Gorham et al. (1989) asked teachers what strategies they used to generate affinity. Roach (1991) asked students how often their teachers used each strategy.

using the Bell and Daly scheme. More than 98% of the examples fell easily into one of the 25 categories with good rater reliability. The most frequently used strategies, across grade levels, included facilitating enjoyment, self-concept confirmation, trustworthiness, conceding control, eliciting other’s disclosure, sensitivity, and self-inclusion. The least frequently used strategies included assuming control, assuming equality, conversational rule keeping, inclusion of others, personal autonomy, physical attractiveness, and presenting an interesting self. As grade level increased, three strategies (facilitate enjoyment, nonverbal immediacy, and self-concept confirmation) were reported less frequently, whereas altruism was reported more frequently, especially at the high school level. Interestingly, when Gorham et al. compared the rank ordering of teacher strategies with the ranks provided by McCroskey and McCroskey (1986) and Bell and Daly (1984),
they found small and insignificant rank-order correlations. They argued that the McCroskey and McCroskey data failed to tap into intentional, strategic behaviors used by teachers to enhance affinity. McCroskey and McCroskey asked teachers how frequently the different strategies were used by other teachers in their schools. Many of the strategies may have been used automatically, without much strategic emphasis, by teachers in those schools. On the other hand, Gorham et al. (1989) had teachers describe things they did intentionally to generate affinity. In line with the conception of affinity seeking as an intentional, strategic move, Gorham et al.'s argument seems persuasive.

Gorham et al. (1989) also added a new idea to the affinity research. Past research had focused exclusively on ways people go about generating personal affinity (i.e., getting others to like them). Gorham et al. suggested teachers also attempt to generate an affinity for their subject matter. They asked their sample of teachers how difficult it was to get students to like the subject matter they taught and also to describe five times when they had done something to get students to like their subject matter. More than 50% of the teachers reported moderate or great difficulty in getting students to like subject matter. The group reporting the greatest difficulty were junior high school teachers. Of these, 73% reported moderate difficulty; 6% reported great difficulty. When responses to the open-ended question asking teachers to describe what they did to generate liking for their subject matter were coded into the Bell and Daly typology, 50% of the responses fell in the facilitate enjoyment category. When examined at different grade levels, Gorham et al. found that the use of this strategy decreased as grade level increased. The only other category with a substantial representation was conceding control: Of the teachers' responses, 14% fell in this category. It may well be that the category system proffered by Bell and Daly is not the most appropriate one to assess liking for subject matter. At some grade levels, 15 of the strategies were never mentioned. This, in addition to the high number of responses falling into one category (facilitates enjoyment), hints that there may be a different, and more useful, category system appropriate for organizing our knowledge of teacher strategies for enhancing subject-matter learning. What that category system would look like awaits future research.

Richmond (1990) had undergraduate students rate instructors on their affinity seeking in terms of whether they engaged in each of the strategies and, if they did, how frequently they did so. These responses were then correlated with a number of other judgments about the instructor and the class. Richmond found that perceived affinity seeking on the part of teachers was positively and significantly related to a variety of student responses including motivation to study material presented in the class, self-perceptions of how much one learned in the class, intentions to engage
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... in recommended behaviors drawn from the class, intentions to take other courses on the topic of the class, intention to take another class from that instructor, as well as positive affect toward the course's content and the instructor. Overall, teachers who are seen as using more affinity-seeking behaviors with greater frequency are viewed more positively. In addition, these positive perceptions appear to generalize to the course content and perceptions of how much learning occurred in the class. In follow-up analyses, Richmond suggested that most of the outcome variables, aside from affect, arise from a link between affinity and motivation. Teacher affinity moves enhance student motivation that leads, in turn, to increased perceived learning.

Two recent studies continued Richmond's (1990) line of research. The first was Roach's (1991) investigation of college students' perceptions of the affinity-seeking strategies of college instructors. In this project he asked students to assess the likelihood of an instructor using each of the 25 strategies. As with Richmond, Roach had students focus on the instructor they had most recently been in class with. Some of the students reported on professors; others described graduate teaching assistants. Roach found that, overall, professors were seen as using affinity strategies more frequently than teaching assistants. When examined individually, teaching assistants were seen as more likely to use the strategies of assuming equality, conceding control, eliciting others' disclosure, and self-inclusion. Professors were seen as more frequently using strategies of assuming control, comfortable self, personal autonomy, and trustworthiness. Each of the 25 strategies was positively and significantly related to students' liking for the instructors, students' perceptions that they had learned from the instructor, and students' liking for the subject matter.

Frymier and Thompson (1991) completed a study contemporaneously with Roach's (1991) investigation. They also had students report on the teacher whose classroom they had just left. Students indicated the degree to which their teachers used each of the 25 affinity strategies along with measures of the perceived credibility of teachers (two dimensions—perceived competence and perceived character), the liking students had for their teacher, the students' motivation to learn, as well students' feelings of how much they had learned and how much they liked what they had learned. Frymier and Thompson found positive correlations between perceived teacher affinity seeking and both dimensions of credibility. Perceived affinity seeking was more strongly related to character judgments than competency ratings (although both were significantly correlated with affinity). As one would expect, perceived affinity seeking was significantly and positively related to liking for teachers, students' motivation to learn, students' belief that they had learned in the teachers' classes, and students' affect toward the course material. One interesting finding was that the
personal autonomy strategy had an inverse relationship with every outcome measure, save perceptions of competence. This strategy involves communicating independence, standing on one's own feet, and thinking freely. Perhaps, as Frymier and Thompson argued, teachers who are perceived as too independent from their students are not liked as much as teachers who demonstrate somewhat less independence from their students.

Before ending this review, one strand of related research needs to be mentioned in examining the construct of affinity in terms of classroom power—research examining referent power. Of all the bases of classroom power, referent power is the closest to affinity as an influence strategy. French and Raven (1959) characterized referent power in terms of people's spontaneous desire to imitate or follow the directions and guidance of a person who has charisma to them. They argued that among their bases of power, referent power has the broadest range of influence because followers may identify with a wide variety of behaviors and traits in the other person. In the classroom setting, McCroskey and Richmond (1983) defined referent power in terms of identification:

The foundation of referent power is the student's identification with the teacher. This type of power is based on the relationship between two people. Specifically, it is based on the desire of the less powerful person (the student) to identify with and please the more powerful person (teacher). The stronger the student's attraction to and identification with the teacher, the stronger the teacher's referent power. (p. 177)

French and Raven made the case that expert, legitimate, and referent power affect behavior through attitudes, whereas reward and coercive power can often directly affect behavior regardless of attitude. Consequently, the latter two sorts of power have limited effectiveness when compared with the former three.

Referent power has been shown to affect a number of attitudes such as ones related to smoking (McAlister, Krosnick, & Milburn, 1984) and drug use (Humphrey, O'Malley, Johnston, & Bachman, 1988). It has also been related to better compliance in the health arena in cases of medication regimens (Reynolds, Joyce, Swift, Tooley, & Weatherall, 1965) and weight reduction programs (Rodin & Janis, 1979). Some research has suggested that male supervisors are more likely to use referent power than female supervisors and that as experience increases in supervisory roles, there is less use of referent power (Robyak, Goodyear, & Prange, 1987).

In the classroom context, Richmond and McCroskey (1984) found significant and positive correlations between teachers' self-reported use of referent power and their students' reports of grades they thought they would
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be receiving in those teachers’ classes. In addition, greater referent power use by teachers was positively and significantly correlated with more positive affect on the part of students for course material, the instructor, and future enrollment in courses having related content. Richmond (1990) found that undergraduate students’ perceptions of teachers’ use of referent power was positively correlated with their motivation to study for that instructor’s class, their perception that they had learned something, their affect toward the content of the class, the instructor, and behaviors relevant to the class, as well as their intent to engage in behaviors recommended in the class, enrolling in another course with related course content, and taking another class with the same instructor. Jordan, McGreal, and Wheelless (1990) found similar effects: teachers who were perceived to use referent power had students who had more positive attitudes and stronger intentions to study further in the teacher’s area of interest. Teachers generally think they use referent power in their classrooms more than their students think they do (McCroskey & Richmond, 1983).

The issue scholars studying referent power have not faced is the test of tying referent power to specific behavior enactments. What does a teacher do to increase referent power? In the past, there have been some unsystematic descriptions of potential ways this might be accomplished. Martin (1978), for example, suggested that school counselors can enhance their referent power by chatting with teachers in social and noninstructional settings. Rodin and Janis (1979) proposed that by emphasizing similarities, counselors can be perceived as having more referent power in the eyes of counselees. But until the affinity-seeking construct was advanced, there was no organized collection of descriptions. The advance offered by the affinity-seeking construct is that it does define a universe of specific behavioral moves that enhance referent power.

CONCLUSIONS

What do we know from the research that has utilized the affinity-seeking construct in classroom contexts? Although there are clearly a number of diverse findings in these various studies, two broad generalizations seem to hold across virtually every investigation. First, teachers appear to engage in affinity seeking in classroom environments. In every study, teachers and students had no difficulty recognizing the concept or identifying behavioral enactments of the different strategies. Affinity seeking is done in the classroom. How affinity is enacted is less clear. Although research has found that the Bell and Daly typology works reasonably well in classroom
setting, there has been little study of the individual strategies. There may be some strategies that exist in the classroom that are not incorporated in the Bell and Daly typology. Additionally, the specific behaviors associated with the various strategies have not been carefully delineated.

Second, perceptions of teacher affinity seeking are related to a number of other instructionally related perceptions. Greater perceived affinity seeking on the part of teacher is positively and strongly related to variables such as liking for the teacher, a sense that they had learned substantial material in that teacher's classes, and reported intentions by students to take other classes in the subject matter and with that teacher.

There are a number of limitations in current studies of affinity in the classroom. A few are especially important to mention not as an indictment of existing research but rather as directions future research may want to take. These limitations neatly fall into two clusters. The first cluster has to do with breadth, the second with biases in the current research.

One issue of breadth that has already been mentioned is the use of the Bell and Daly typology. Although Gorham et al. (1989) have demonstrated that most enactments of affinity seeking can easily fit that typology, this does not mean that the typology is truly reflective of what goes on in classroom contexts. Gorham et al. found high levels of coding completeness when raters were asked to place reported enactments into the category scheme. But this is not the critical test of the typology's functionality. Instead, the critical test is whether naive coders would sort enactments into the same clusters if they were not given the categories ahead of time. It would be useful to see if this would happen. In the area of relationship communication, Bell, Tremblay, and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1987) found eight additional strategies present in married couples (see also Dindia & Baxter, 1987). There may be additional strategies in the instructional context. Moreover, there may be more appropriate category schemes for different grade levels and even for different subject matters: The typology for early elementary education settings may differ substantially from the typology appropriate for college classrooms. In addition, different sorts of classroom tasks may engender different sorts of affinity moves and it may well be that without greater task specificity we end up with very mixed results. Bell and Daly (1984) found that the task-social dimension of social interactions affected choices to use certain affinity-seeking strategies. Might that be so in classrooms where a range of activities, some more social, some more task oriented, are accomplished?

4Researchers have conducted investigations related to specific strategies, although not under the rubric of affinity-seeking strategies. For example, Cooper, Stewart, and Gudykunst (1982) found that teachers' confirming and disconfirming responses influence student evaluations of instructors.
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A second issue in the breadth category has to do with the narrowness of current affinity research. Virtually every study available today examines affinity from the perspective of the teacher doing something to generate student liking for the teacher. But there are a number of other potential relationships in the classroom. Gorham et al. (1989), for instance, creatively proposed that teachers also engage in behaviors that aim to generate student affinity for the subject matter being taught. Other realms of inquiry are also possible. For example, what do students do to engender liking from teachers? What do teachers do to generate affinity from parents, administrators, and peers? Take the case of principals in schools. They, too, must generate affinity in teachers. Abbey and Esposito (1985) related perceptions of principals' referent power and teachers' sense of social support from principals. Not surprisingly, they found that the two covaried positively.

Bias represents a second cluster of limitations in current scholarship. One very large bias is reflected in the fact that every time affinity research is discussed, virtually every study must be prefaced with the word “perceived.” We are caught saying “the more teachers are perceived to engage in affinity . . .” or “as perceived affinity seeking increases . . .” It may be time to begin to study the actual enactment of affinity in the classroom. The descriptions provided initially by Bell and Daly and then expanded by McCroskey, Richmond, Gorham, and others are specific enough that coding of actual behaviors in classroom settings is possible. This is important. Until the biases associated with self-reports and perceptual data are separated from the actual behavioral enactments of affinity, there will not be clear and compelling evidence about the relative role of affinity seeking in the classroom. The same can be said about some of the dependent measures used by researchers in this area. Perhaps the most compelling example of a self-report bias that can create problems is research that asks how much students feel they learned in a class and labels that “cognitive learning.” To naive readers of an abstract or conclusion section of an article, that term probably implies that some measure of actual knowledge acquisition was administered and assessed. Not true! It is student-reported learning, something very different than actual learning (although in some settings, they may be substantially correlated). The issue is one of possible artifact—if I like someone, I am more likely to report that this person engages in positive behaviors (like those in the affinity typology). Moreover, if I like someone, I’m also likely to say I got something out of my interactions with that person. If that person is a teacher, then I got something out of his or her teaching—read, cognitive learning. When every measure is a perceptual one, bias can exist that inflates the degree of relationship between variables. Don’t misunderstand: Self-report measures represent first stabs at data collection. They highlight directions scholars should take. But if affinity is indeed important in classroom contexts, then
it behooves investigators interested in the topic to conscientiously try to demonstrate, behaviorally, the important relationships.

Closely tied to this concern is the issue of causality. The assumption in every piece of research in the affinity-seeking literature is that affinity-seeking "leads" to various outcomes. But do we know this? For example, is there a causal relationship between liking and positive evaluations of instructors, regardless of the grade received by the instructor? Might it be that the more motivating the teacher, the more interesting the subject matter, or the more learning one feels in a class, the more one judges the teacher as engaging in various affinity behaviors?

A final concern has to do with the purpose of this book. The book focuses, broadly speaking, on the role of power in instructional contexts. Interestingly, within communication, while there has been a recent flurry of work on the topic, there has been little concern for how affinity relates to influence. This is reflected in the current chapter. We review all of the research done on classroom affinity seeking, but find almost none of it focusing on influence. We know, at this point, that referent power can affect student behavior. And we know that it is possible to conceive of the various affinity strategies as ways of operationalizing referent power. But we know little about how the different techniques actually lead to greater influence in the classroom. Which strategies are best recommended as power tactics? Which ones work, and which do not? And, perhaps more importantly, why do they work?

REFERENCES


8. AFFINITY IN THE CLASSROOM