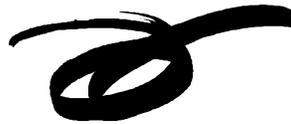


**STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RULES FOR  
CLASSROOM INTERACTION**

by  
**H. Paul LeBlanc III**

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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF RULES FOR  
CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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## ABSTRACT

Burgoon's expectancy violation model posits that nonverbal rule violations will be evaluated according to the perceptions toward the violator and the behavior itself. However, the violator may have perceptions regarding the appropriateness of the rule. This study measured the perceptions of high school students regarding the rules for classroom interaction. It is believed that the rules for classroom interaction are rules which have been learned through the process of socialization and enculturation into the classroom setting throughout students' careers. These rules should be well known by all students by the time they reach tenth grade, the grade being investigated.

A survey questionnaire was developed through a pilot study, and was distributed to 244 students through the English classes of three East Baton Rouge parish high schools. The high schools were chosen by relative drop out rate. Students were grouped by sex, race and age to measure differences in attitude by characteristics of potential dropouts. The study found that males have more negative attitudes toward compliance with laziness rules and the importance of those laziness rules than females. The study also found that Black students have a more positive attitudes regarding the importance of distraction, laziness, and respectfulness rules than non-Black students. Implications regarding the attitudes toward classroom rules are discussed.

## CHAPTER 1

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

#### Introduction

Education is a life long process that begins in the home and continues through both formal and informal training. How a person learns and his or her success in learning the lessons of life are contingent upon earlier lessons. The patterns that are developed early can significantly affect the learning process later in life. Attitudes affect perceptions, as well as development through the learning process. Attitudes ultimately manifest themselves in behavior (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). The learning process is therefore crucial to the understanding of the behavior of attitudes (Doob, 1947; cited in Staats & Staats, 1958).

In this study, the perceptions of high school students will be measured along two dimensions: compliance with the rule, and importance of the rule relative to other rules. Attitudes regarding compliance with the rule are measured to determine if students believe the rule should be followed. Attitudes regarding the importance of the rule are measured to determine if students perceive the rule as important regardless of whether it should be followed. It is hoped that by making a distinction between students from a high academic risk group and students from a low academic risk group, differences in perceptions or attitudes toward the

rules can be measured. If differences in attitude between "at risk" and "non risk" students can be measured, then methods for decreasing drop out tendencies can be developed.

For purposes of this study, the term "at risk" is defined as students who have a high potential for academic non-completion, i. e. dropping out. A dropout is a pupil who leaves school, for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and without transferring to another school (Cage, 1984).

The problem of high school dropouts has generated increased interest among researchers, policymakers, and educators in recent years (Rumberger, 1986). Ultimately, it is hoped that measurable differences, if they occur, can be used as a tool to assist educators in dealing with the tendencies that students have in dropping out of school. While attitude has long been recognized as a precursor to behavior, overt behavior does not consistently indicate attitude (Ruby & Law, 1983). Therefore, the study of actual behaviors relative to the perceptions of the subjects is outside the scope of this study.

This study will follow two major lines of thought: communicative rule generation and rule structures for the classroom. This chapter will review communication and sociological research on the generation of rules and rule structure, including nonverbal expectancy violation as proposed by Burgoon and colleagues. Chapter 2 will review

education research on classroom rule structures and characteristics of dropouts. Chapter 3 will attempt a synthesis of communication theory regarding nonverbal expectancy violation considering actual rules for high school classroom interaction. A statement of the research questions and the hypotheses will be relevant here. Chapter 4 will include a discussion on the development on the test instrument including the analysis of the pilot study. Also included in chapter 4 will be an explanation of the methodology to be used in the analysis. Chapter 5 presents the results of the data analysis. Chapter 6 discusses the findings and offers directions for further study.

#### Rules and Rule Generation

Persons interact with each other in ways that are predicted by earlier behavior. That is, persons interact in learned patterns. These patterns are a function of socialization. And, socialization is the process by which persons learn what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior in a given cultural or social context. Several theories have been posited which seek to illustrate this socialization process. Social learning theory (John B. Watson, Albert Bandura, Richard Walters; theorists cited in Grusec & Lytton, 1988) suggests that individuals imitate actions as a result of conditioning and reinforcement. Social learning theory posits that conditioning and problem solving are the processes by which individuals learn. Conditioning occurs as

a response to stimuli repeated until the stimuli is no longer needed to induce the desired behavior. Problem solving on the other hand, occurs as a result of dissonance and the desire to reduce it. This desire serves as a motivating factor in the cognitive search for a means to reduce dissonance (Mowrer, 1960). On the other hand, cognitive developmental theory (Jean Piaget, James Mark Baldwin, theorists cited in Grusec & Lytton, 1988) suggests that the socialization process involves assimilation of events given existing mental structures and accommodation of new ideas for problem solving. Individuals are typically motivated to maintain equilibrium between assimilation processes and accommodation processes but may opt for one process over the other as a result of cognitive dissonance (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). For example, an individual may opt for the assimilation process to overcome cognitive dissonance when the attitudes surrounding the event are well established and are central to the individual's self-concept. Either theoretical perspective assumes that the socialization process involves interaction between an agent and a target.

In the family environment, children (target) are socialized by their parents, older siblings, or other relatives with which they come in contact (agent). Outside the family, persons are socialized by peers, significant others, or the media. A child's environment includes the ideology of society (e.g. formal and informal rules about how

life should be conducted) (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). Children learn socially appropriate behavior by imitating others when others' behavior is not prohibited and results in positive reinforcement (Kagan, 1985). Children are not born social, but must acquire social characteristics from their environment, including others, and incorporate them into their own personality (Bell, 1963). Children do not learn passively. Rather, children interact with their environment, observing the behavior of others as well as their own behavior (Roedell, Slaby, & Robinson, 1977). Children learn what is acceptable behavior through the observation of others and their interaction with those others.

The theoretical perspective, known as symbolic interactionism, proposes that meaning is communicated through behavior between interactants (Mead, 1934; cited in Littlejohn, 1989). The social learning theoretical perspective would suggest that children learn what is acceptable behavior as a result of reinforcement. Reinforcement occurs through interaction. Behaviors that result in positive reinforcers, such as a smile, are strengthened. Whereas, behaviors that result in negative reinforcers, such as a spanking, are suppressed, and those that are not reinforced are extinguished (McCoy and Zigler, 1965). However, meaning is attached to the behavior, whether reinforced, suppressed or extinguished.

These observations of behavior, by the target, are organized into cognitive schemata, which serve as knowledge bases for achieving goals (Berger & Kellerman, in press). These knowledge bases are mental structures or rules for mentally organizing information, and therefore developing meaning, as hypothesized by Immanuel Kant (1781) in the Critique of Pure Reason (cited in Jones, 1975) and later considered as cognitive schemata by Frederick C. Bartlett (1932; cited in Smith, 1982). Meaning is therefore attached to observations as a function of already existing mental structures. The individual develops methods to achieve goals based on those meanings. Goals such as being accepted into a group, or not being alienated from a group, serve as motivators for acting acceptably. The group is defined by those actions or behaviors that are expected of its members. The expected behaviors are specified by rules. These rules are compared to existing mental structures.

Susan Shimanoff (1980) defines a rule as a prescription which can be followed and suggests behaviors that are obligated, preferred, or prohibited in particular contexts. Rules are determined by the society, the family, or a member of the family given authority to make such rules, i.e. the head of household, and can be implicit or explicit. Implicit rules are guides which are not formally stated but rather define behavior as appropriate or inappropriate based on actions that are either performed or not performed by the

group, i.e. the society or the family. An example of an implicit rule within a family might concern being loyal toward family members: do not talk about family problems to non-family members. In the classroom, an implicit rule might be to respect the right of others: do not borrow another's materials without asking permission. Implicit rules may have been stated explicitly at an earlier time in another social context but are assumed to apply by members of a new social context. For example, a child learns rules of interaction in his or her family of origin. These rules are then applied to other contexts such as friendships, boss/subordinate relationships, or student/teacher relationships. The notions of accommodation and assimilation from cognitive developmental theory play a role in the assumption of rules implicitly from one social context to another. Explicit rules are formally stated regulations or customs that define appropriate or inappropriate behaviors for the group. An example of an explicit rule in the family might be that children are expected to be at home by eleven o'clock in the evening. In the classroom, an explicit rule might take the form of regulations regarding the issuance of hall passes or the carrying of weapons.

The role of rules as communicative interaction cannot be understated. Shimanoff states:

"In order for communication to exist, or continue, two or more interacting individuals must share rules for using symbols. Not only must they have rules for individual symbols, but they must also

agree on such matters as to how to take turns at speaking, how to be polite or how to insult, to greet, and so forth. If every symbol user manipulated symbols at random, the result would be chaos rather than communication."

The formation of the rule (for interaction) may be a result of a behavior that is contrary to the expectations of the group. When behavior occurs, which is contrary to the goals of the group, it is labelled deviant. This deviance may or may not have been intentional, or intentionally deviant. However, when deviant behavior occurs, it creates a crisis situation in which the group may decide to state the rule, therefore making the rule explicit. Implicit rules exist when members of the group know what is expected of them as a consequence of observed behavior of other members of the group (Ford, 1983). Therefore, implicit nonverbal rules are defined as communicative rules for nonverbal interaction that are learned through a socialization process. Attitudes, including knowledge of rules, are learned through conditioning which may be performed through verbal (and nonverbal) communicative behaviors (Staats & Staats, 1958).

Groups are defined by rules which indicate who belongs or does not belong to the group. Rule violation occurs when a member of a group defined by the rule acts contrary to the suggested behavior. This may require specific knowledge of the rule. If the individual group member is unaware of the rule, then the rule violation is an unintentional deviation from expected behavior. However, if a group member is aware

of the rule, then a true violation occurs whether or not the individual agrees with the rule. A violation of a rule may precipitate negative sanctions by the authority setting the rule, or by the group that is defined by the rule. The force of the rule defining the group is not determined by its implicit or explicit nature, but rather by the meaning of the rule for the group and the sanctions incurred by its violation. These negative sanctions can include punishment, ostracism, or alienation from the group. Consistent violation of the rule may result in reformulation of the rule, or a withdrawal of the rule.

Rules, therefore, are learned and used in everyday interactions. For example, Burgoon and Saine (1978) have found that our society has evolved rules about how and when one gazes at another. Also, proximity rules dictate that closeness communicates friendliness, but too much closeness creates discomfort in others. Ford (1983) found: "rules can be inferred from any repetitive family behavior." Rules also affect how persons interact with one another. For instance, the style of expression and the skill of communication are influenced by the emotional expressiveness of the family environment (Halberstadt, 1986). "In a society where being liked is important, the child is often taught ... to fit smoothly with all his age peers" (Bell, 1963).

Other research on rules was conducted by Brown and Levinson (1987). They suggest that interaction is based on

universal rules of politeness in language, and that violation can incur sanctions. These rules of politeness are based on individuals' desires to save or maintain "face." The researchers distinguish rule types by function: rules of positive politeness such as cooperation thus saving face, and rules of negative politeness such as being direct and honest thus threatening face (Brown and Levinson,1987).

As a consequence of the development and use of rules, persons have expectancies regarding the compliance of persons to rules in any given context. Individuals in a system are expected to follow rules, and noncompliance may be viewed as a violation. Which environment determines the set of rules to be followed may be situational. Rules for appropriate behavior within a specific group, as suggested earlier, may be assimilated from previous knowledge of rules and then applied to the new social context. On the other hand, the context may be sufficiently different to warrant the development of idiosyncratic rules. However, these idiosyncratic rules must be based on a social understanding which is affected by other contexts. For example, parents may consider it inappropriate for teenage children to vandalize school property. Indeed, vandalizing may be an explicitly stated social norm. However, within the teenager's peer group, vandalizing may be considered appropriate behavior. The appropriateness or inappropriateness may be situationally determined, but the

behavior and the rules regarding the behavior has meaning within a larger social context. Within a specific social context, such as a classroom, rules may govern nonverbal behavior in order to maintain a learning environment.

#### Nonverbal Behavior and Rules

Nonverbal behavior has a communicative function. Such functions include power and dominance, persuasion, feedback and reinforcement, deception, and impression management (Patterson, 1983). These functions of social control serve a purpose of influencing the behaviors of others, and thus defining rules within social contexts. Nonverbal communication, as a form of language, has rules regarding its use in certain social contexts. Ekman and Friesen (1969) specified the origins of nonverbal behavior as including: (a) innate reflexes of the nervous system, (b) the anatomy of the human species (such as the existence of hands), and (c) experience of the use of nonverbal behavior from other members of one's culture, class, or family. Therefore, the social origin supposes a function for nonverbal behavior such as communication in social interaction.

An example of a type of nonverbal communication that entails situational rules for its use is eye contact. Eye contact can communicate intimacy. When strangers make eye contact, that contact typically lasts for a few moments and then is followed with a downward glance. When a stranger maintains eye contact for longer periods of time, it can

become uncomfortable for the individual. Our society has rules against staring because it is viewed as a violation of personal space. When such a violation occurs, sanctions toward the violator are used to control the behavior. Sanctions against staring could include a returned stare or a nonverbal expression of disdain.

According to Burgoon and Hale (1988), expectancies are derived from cognitions regarding social norms that are learned through the socialization process. Behaviors relevant to the norms may fall within a range of acceptability. Burgoon and Hale (1988) researched violations of expected nonverbal behavior and have created a model that incorporates the following concepts: arousal, communicator reward valence, violation valence, and the interpretation and evaluation of behaviors. Arousal occurs in the interactants when a noticeable deviation from the norm is performed. This arousal may have been sought by the deviant individual, as a means to get attention. That is, deviation may have been intentional or unintentional.

Communicator Reward Valence influences the perception of positive or negative affect of the deviant. This may affect further violations for the purpose of getting attention. This may also affect further evaluations of the deviant due to continued violation, i.e. negative evaluation contributes to further violation which contributes to further negative evaluation. In terms of behavior interpretation and

evaluation, regard for the communicator may affect selection of meaning for the implicit relational message. Negative regard for the violator may result in negative interpretation of the deviant behavior. And finally, in terms of violation valence, behaviors are evaluated as positive or negative as a result of the source of the message, the societal norms regarding the meaning of the message, and the degree to which the violation exceeds the range of acceptability, which constitutes the defining boundary of appropriateness within the social context.

This chapter represents some of the current thought in communication research regarding rules for communicative interaction. Rules serve the function of structuring language, such as what can be said and how it can be said. However, rules also define relationships. Rules set boundaries so that members of systems can tell who is in the system and who does not belong to the system. Pearson (1989) holds that rules are important for three reasons. First, the development of rules reinforces relational development. Second, rule development encourages relational satisfaction. Third, rules allow individuals to define any given relationship. This research on rules is based on earlier theorizing regarding the socialization process in general and assumes that socialization is the process by which individuals come to learn about rules for interaction. Littlejohn (1989) states that the rules approach (to

research) incorporates (at least) two assumptions. First, although some human activity is mechanical and determined by uncontrollable factors, the most important behaviors are considered to be actively initiated by the individual. However, these important behaviors may become habituated through time, and therefore become mindless and mechanical. Second, social behavior is structured and organized. It is against this backdrop, structured social behavior, that the investigation is based.

The next chapter will discuss rules within the specific social context of the high school classroom. Chapter 2 will include a discussion on how rules are developed in the classroom through socialization. It will also discuss nonverbal interaction rules as they pertain to the classroom context, and rule types within the framework of the social context.

## CHAPTER 2

### RULES AND THE CLASSROOM

#### Classroom Socialization

In school classrooms, rules are essential for the smooth operation of classroom interaction. Expectations of our society regarding the purpose of schools include the development in children the ability to interact with others in prosocial ways, to resolve conflict by peaceful means, and ultimately the ability to contribute productively to society (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). Learning the subtleties of interaction is one of the basic processes of socialization (Martin, 1976). These ideas are woven into the ideological beliefs of the social contract, such that individuals should contribute to society and not be a burden to society.

This ideology is promoted through the socialization process and serves as a basis for the implementation and enforcement of rules. (The ideology may, however, be at odds with the belief systems of individuals in the society.) Nowhere is this purpose more aptly served than in the classroom situation where one individual is given the responsibility of teaching a group of young persons about the rules of society. To be sure, what we call society is identical to agents following rules. It is rational for an agent to follow a rule because by doing so he or she can influence other agents' expectations of his own future

actions, and thus influence their actions to his or her advantage (Rowe, 1989). This is the basis for the need of trust in relationships. The ability to follow a rule provides a basis for establishing reputations. These reputations influence the behavior of others. The existence of social institutions provides an equilibrium for social behavior. Social institutions are constituted by agents following rules of action and believing others to follow rules of action (Rowe, 1989). Given this framework, the school classroom is the context for socialization. Indeed, socialization is a school function which involves more than a simple matter of teaching children to behave themselves, but involves helping children understand themselves and the world around them (Epstein, 1979).

In this context, the teacher may act as an authority figure. The communication behavior which defines the relationship between the teacher and the student is largely the result of the social system and the culture the individuals grew up in (Hurt, Scott & McCroskey, 1978). Rules are set in the classroom by the teacher, or by the school. In the example of the teacher or the school setting the rules, the rules are formally stated and are explicit.

However, some classroom rules may be implicit, that is students are expected to have learned proper behavior from home through socialization. Examples of implicit rules in the classroom may be: (a) respect the teacher (elder), (b)

pay attention to the teacher (elder), or (c) do not distract others from paying attention to the teacher (elder). According to Charles (1981), at the primary grade level, students have to be continually reminded of the rules in force. By grade four, students recognize the logic of rules, their necessity, and their enforcement. In the Junior High years, students become more independent and will defy authority as a means to gain that independence. By high school, most students have overcome adolescent metamorphoses, and will become less rule breaking. Those who become alienated from the mainstream of personalities, customs, and institutions tend to leave school and reach out in other directions (Charles, 1981). This reaching out in other directions often takes the form of dropping out, which may be considered a violation of the social contract.

#### Rule Types

Actions that disrupt, destroy, defy, hurt, or infringe on others rights are considered rule breaking behaviors in the classroom situation (Charles, 1981). Examples of non-observance of rules, or violations of expected behavior, are evident from the school records of students in high schools. In an Associated Press article (Baton Rouge Morning Advocate, Friday April 12, 1991), seven high school students from Syracuse, New York were arrested for dismantling school property. Stories of students being killed by other students on school grounds are also frequently seen in newspapers. To

be sure, occurrences of shootings on school grounds in East Baton Rouge Parish, where this study was conducted, have been documented by the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's office. Prohibition against carrying weapons on school grounds is a formally stated, explicit rule. Other examples of rule violations may include fighting, bringing or distributing drugs at school, or setting off fire alarms.

While some students may present discipline problems for school administrators, other students may never get into trouble. This study is interested in student perceptions regarding implicit nonverbal rules in student/teacher or student/student interaction in the classroom because it is believed implicit nonverbal rule violation may demonstrate the potential for academic noncompletion. The type of nonverbal rules of interest in this study include proxemics, oculosics, regulation of conversation, and rules regarding the use of environment, territory and time.

According to Hurt et al., (1978) nonverbal communication in the classroom takes several forms. Space and territory is communicated through the use of seating arrangements: Students will either choose their own seats or be assigned seats, but some confrontations may result from issues of territoriality. Students who choose to sit close to the teacher in a traditional classroom arrangement typically interact more with the teacher, and are typically less apprehensive about talking to other people.

For younger grade students, touch plays an important developmental role. Touch communicates belonging, security, and understanding. Lack of touch communicates rejection and isolation. As students get older, they become enculturated to sexual norms. Body gestures and movement are the most difficult types of communication for the communicator to control. Facial expressions can serve as reinforcers or nonreinforcers. Use of time is regulated in the classroom: Tardiness is a punishable offense. This is due in part to the view of time as a commodity in North American culture. Vocal behavior communicates our attitudes about the content of our verbal message, such as sarcasm or depression. And finally, direct eye contact with another in our culture normally communicates interest and attention. Conversely, lack of eye contact communicates lack of interest and attention (Hurt, et al., 1978). Rules for social interaction become the basis for interaction rules in the classroom.

As argued above, students are expected to learn implicitly and follow these types of rules. As students progress through grades, their grasp of proper behavior should become more acute. Andersen, Andersen, & Mayton (1985) first studied rule development in the classroom. In another study, Andersen, Andersen, Murphy, & Wendt-Wasco (1985) looked at teachers' perceptions of students', grades K through 12, development of nonverbal communication. They studied five types of nonverbal communication including

proxemics, haptics, oculosics, vocalics, and physical appearance. The authors found that teachers perceived that students increased interactional distances between themselves and their peers as well as themselves and adults as grade level increased. Teachers reported that students decreased the amount of touch given as grade level increased. No difference was found in eye gaze between kindergarten through twelfth grade students. Teachers reported a small but significant increase in the appropriate use of loudness and rate as students increased in grade. Students were found to be more inclined to be concerned with their physical appearance as they increased in age. And finally, the researchers obtained mixed results regarding the development of kinesic behavior (facial expression). However, Andersen, Andersen, Murphy, & Wendt-Wasco interpreted the results as being "consistent with literature suggesting that inhibition, masking, and display rules act to suppress the expression of affective behavior in older children" (Shennum & Bugenthal, 1982; cited in Andersen, Andersen, Murphy, & Wendt-Wasco, 1985). This research suggests that appropriate nonverbal interaction is learned through a developmental socialization process in the classroom.

It was suggested that development of nonverbal communication may be related to overall language development rather than the classroom experience per se. However, the Andersen, Andersen, Murphy, & Wendt-Wasco (1985) study is

relevant in that it shows: (a) teachers can code nonverbal behaviors of their students, (b) that students do follow expected nonverbal behaviors, and (c) that development of nonverbal communication with age through grade 12 suggests a socialization pattern.

Conversational interaction rules include following the proper cues for switching speakers. This is known as turn-taking. In a study, researchers have identified behaviors such as a raised index finger, and an inhalation of breath coupled with a straightening of the back as cues by the listener to select the next turn at talk (Wiemann & Knapp, 1975). Harrigan (1985) also found that body movement (eye gaze and hand movement) prefaced turn-taking. Duncan (1972) found that strong regularities exist in behaviors regarding the rules of turn-taking. In the classroom, students are taught to raise their hand in order to speak. This behavior, presumably taught at an early age, has been observed in other social contexts, such as in interpersonal or small group communication, for the purpose of regulating turn-taking (Schegloff, 1978). Students are also expected to wait until they are called upon to speak. There are also constraints on the types of topics which can be discussed in the classroom.

Eye gaze behavior carries with it a set of rules. In order to show that a person is attentive, that person, occasionally at least, should direct eye gaze toward the speaker. According to Burgoon, Buller, Hale, & deTurck (1984) low eye contact, distal position, backward body lean,

and the absence of smiling and touch communicated greater detachment. This is often interpreted by teachers as a sign of non-interest.

In a classroom setting, teacher and student must develop a rapport. Immediacy to the task or interaction is required and expected. Hale and Burgoon (1984) found that a dominant pattern of reciprocity occurred when immediacy was increased, especially on evaluative measures. For example, a teacher may communicate immediacy through nonverbal means such as eye contact. When this immediacy is communicated, it tends to precipitate a perception by both interactants that immediacy is reciprocated. Burgoon, Newton, Walther, & Baesler (1989) found that greatly increased involvement communicated being very immediate, receptive and equal, whereas decreased involvement communicated nonimmediacy.

Maintaining eye contact with the teacher is an indicator of immediacy and attentiveness. To sustain immediacy, the teacher should reciprocate attentiveness. Ginott (1972) adds that two ways to deal effectively with misbehavior include demonstrated attentiveness of the teacher to occurrences in the classroom, and the ability to deal with more than one issue simultaneously. The teacher has to demonstrate control, that is the ability to effectively implement sanctions for behaviors, regardless of the actions of the violator (Ginott, 1972). This attentiveness by the teacher is demonstrated through eye contact. If, perhaps, the teacher does not pay attention to students who violate rules

of classroom interaction, then the student may continue to violate norms which eventually may lead to disciplinary problems and/or expulsion. A second possibility may be the potential for these students to drop out of school.

As part of the socialization process, students learn rules for proper behavior in the classroom. These rules can be restrictive, that is they prohibit certain behaviors, or prescriptive, that is they promote certain behaviors. These rules also can be differentiated by type of behavior sanctioned. Earlier research provides a basis for a list of rules regarding classroom interaction. Seven rule types were employed in the study of students perceptions of classroom rules (from Tikunoff, & Ward, 1978; cited in Mergendoller, Osaki, Swarthout, Ward, & Tikunoff, 1981).

The first types are mobility rules, or norms about what restrictions are placed on the students' physical movement in the classroom. Talking/noise rules are norms which refer to the boundaries the teacher sets on talk in the classroom as well as other sanctionable noises. Ethical rules are norms referring to the students' rights or responsibilities towards others or the group. Procedural rules are norms which define, describe, or delimit the students' behavior in other than strictly instructional situations. These rules are concerned primarily with classroom management rituals as well as scheduling and use of materials. Academic rules are norms which define, describe, or delimit the students' behavior in

instructional situations, and are concerned with the learning process. School-imposed rules are formal rules enforced as part of school or district policy. And finally miscellaneous rules are all other rules which are sanctioned in the classroom which do not belong in the above categories. Each of these rule types could include both restrictive and prescriptive rules.

Examples of each rule type include: (a) Mobility: don't run in class; (b) Talking: don't talk out of turn; (c) Ethical: don't hurt others, or don't talk back to teacher; (d) Procedural: don't come in late after recess; (e) Academic: do your work; (f) School-imposed: don't go in Ball Room, and (g) Miscellaneous: don't pass secret notes (Mergendoller, et al., 1981). Rules relevant to this study include all types except school-imposed. School-imposed rules are made explicit by their nature. These seven rule types are consistent with the categorization of nonverbal behavior described above. For example, mobility rules regard the use of space and territory. Ethical rules may regard the regulation of touch in regard to hurting other individuals. Talking rules regulate use of vocal behaviors. These rules may indeed represent context specific interaction rules which, ultimately, are based on universal rules of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However these rules are categorized, violation of rules can imply attitudes which are not consistent with the goals of socialization in the

classroom. If, indeed, the attitudes are inconsistent with the apparent goals, these attitudes may precipitate a potential for academic noncompletion.

This potential for dropping out of school must, at least, be determined by attitudes held by the student. Attitudes toward the teacher, school, or social context in general can affect the interaction in the classroom. The interactional approach by a teacher toward students can affect the students' attitudes. Aronson & Linder (1965) found that subjects liked the evaluator (in this case, the teacher) best when the evaluations moved from negative to positive when compared to evaluations that moved from positive to positive, from negative to negative, or from positive to negative (in rank order). This suggests that a student's esteem may be increased if teachers pay more positive attention to those students who have received prior negative evaluations. This gives the initiative for action to intervention measures.

Biases toward or against students by teachers also can affect students' attitudes. For example, to find that accent or dialect is rejected by the teacher and/or the school is usually interpreted by the child as a personal rejection. Frequently this leads to a rejection of self and a lowered self-image and/or a rejection to teacher and school (Hurt, et al., 1978). If the student perceives that the teacher dislikes him or her, and the student develops an attitude of

rejection, this attitude may precipitate a potential for dropping out.

This chapter discussed the specific rules and rule types which are relevant to the classroom context. Also discussed were specific nonverbal behaviors which might be regulated by rules in the classroom. The following chapter will define more explicitly the characteristics of the at risk student in terms of the potential dropout.

## CHAPTER 3

### RULES AND THE AT-RISK STUDENT

#### Dropout Characteristics

Current estimates of the dropout problem during grades 9 - 12 range from a high of twenty-five to thirty percent (Smith, 1990) to a low of thirteen to eighteen percent (Sherman, 1987). Sherman (1987) claims that data provided by state education agencies to the U.S. Department of Education estimate the dropout rate at 25 percent or higher. Ruby & Law (1987) claim that the national dropout rate has remained at about 20% for the last decade. However, disparities in the definition of dropouts, in data collection and the methodologies used to calculate the rates have caused national dropout figures to vary (Ruby & Law, 1987; Sherman, 1987). For example, in June 1987, the San Juan (California) Unified School District's Research and Evaluation Department prepared a summary of dropout data available which indicated that San Juan's dropout rate was between 22 and 25 percent over a 3-year period (Widmann & Housden, 1988). As a specific school district, these figures may not be inconsistent with the national averages. To put these percentages into perspective, by 1987 it is estimated that between 290,000 and 325,000 girls and between 325,000 and 375,000 boys drop out of school each year. Consequently, the