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## **What is Teacher Presence?**

Collaborative research with primary school teachers  
using a reciprocal approach

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## Why Teacher Presence?

Target: Develop presence to ensure you are the leader in the classroom.

Target: Be authoritative. Have a presence.

Target: Develop your voice and presence



Is presence something some people innately possess (the 'x factor') or can it be learnt?



## Teacher Presence as a phenomenon: 'Presence' evident in different fields

Behaviour  
Management  
(Kounin, 1970;  
Jones, 2007)

Leadership and  
Management  
(Senge et al,  
2004; Hewlett,  
2012)

Self-presentation  
(communicating  
to an audience)  
(Babad et al,  
2004;  
Carney et al,  
2010;)

Behaviourist  
Psychology



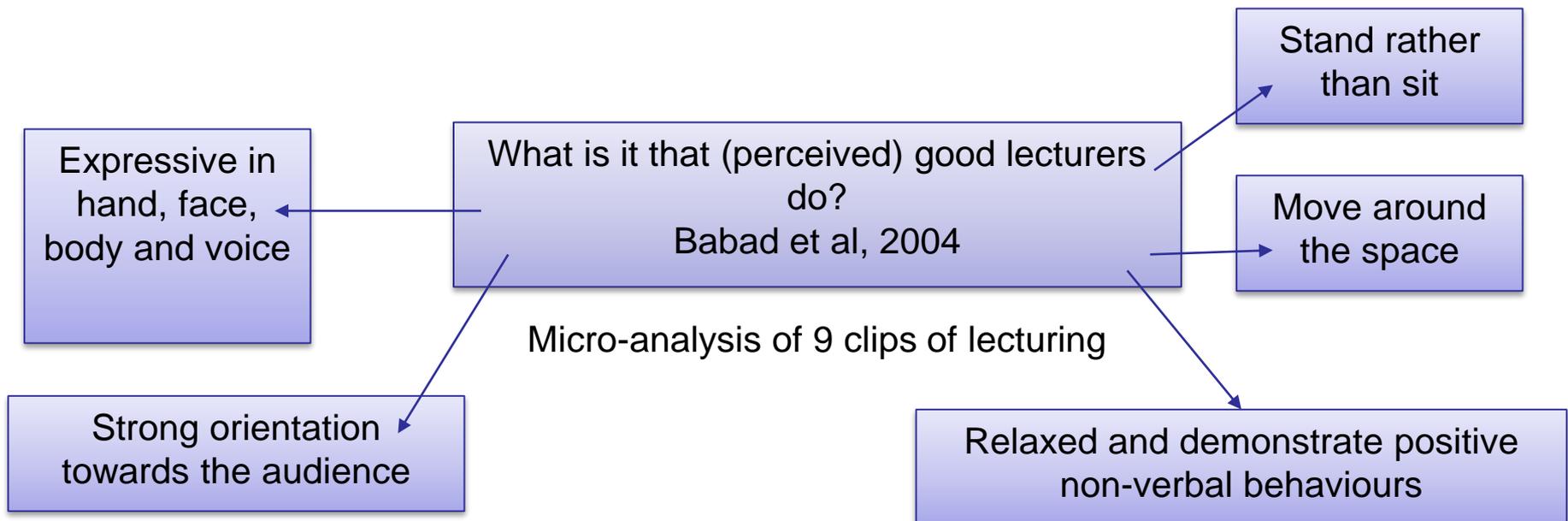


## Presence through a Behaviourist Lens (a way of doing: technique)

“thin slices” – instantaneous non-verbal cues  
Ambady and Rosenthal, 1993

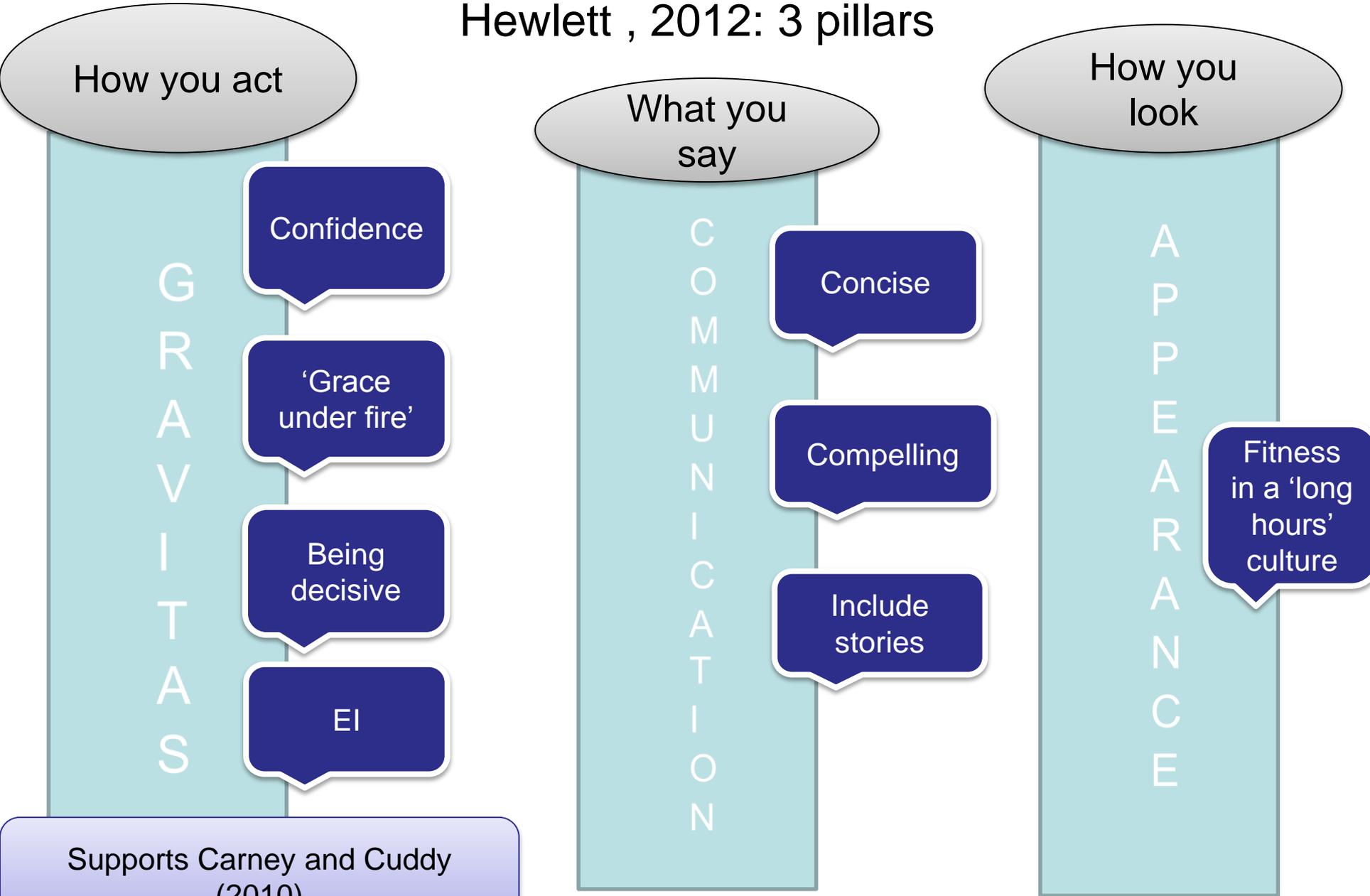
Mainhard, Wubels  
and Brekelmans  
(2014)  
-secondary pupils  
- impressions of a  
teacher over time;

Rated for likeability, honesty and competence.



# Executive Presence – research across a range of fields

Hewlett , 2012: 3 pillars





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## Teacher Presence as a phenomenon: 'Presence' evident in different fields

Reflection theory  
(Rogers and  
Raider-Roth,  
2006,  
Meijer et al, 2009)

Humanist  
Psychology





## Presence through a Humanist Psychology Lens (a way of being)

### “Aliveness”

Dewey, 1933

“(the teacher) must be alive to all forms of bodily expression of mental condition ... as well as sensitive to the meaning of expression in words”

“an alert mind ... in concert with a compassionate heart”  
Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006

### “Wide-awakeness”

Greene, 1973

In the  
moment

### “Mindfulness”

Tremmel, 1993;  
Brown and Ryan, 2003

Linked to Schon’s concept of ‘reflection in action’ – ability to respond  
“in the moment”

“Bringing ones whole self to full attention”  
Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006

A connection between the personal  
and professional self  
Meijer et al, 2009



# A theory of presence in teaching

(Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006)

“State of alert  
awareness”

“receptivity”

“connectedness ...”  
to self and others

**BEING  
'IN THE MOMENT'**

This engagement and response is **PRESENCE**

Teacher responds with “intelligence and compassion”

Teaching involves engaging in an **authentic relationship**  
with students



## The research study: What is teacher presence?

- How do primary teachers describe this phenomenon?
- Can a 'way of doing' (behaviourist) and a 'way of being' (humanist) co-exist?

Kornelsen (2006)

**“A shift from a way of doing  
to a way of being.”**

A journey from reliance upon  
technique to *authenticity* in  
relationships and interactions

**Technique**

• necessary early  
in career

**Authenticity:**

ideal state



## Methodology and Methods

Case Study Approach (Yin, 2009) (*single embedded*)

- 4 participants (2 male; 2 female)
- Researcher spent time in the classroom observing informally the morning activities and routines
- Recorded a lesson (with researcher observing in room)
- Researcher and Participant reviewed lesson
- Reciprocal discussion around the recording and own views on this subject.



## Reciprocal Approach (Curry, 2012)

Researcher responsibility:

- Avoid using participants as a *means* (Koninck, 2007)
- Contribute to professional context (Scott et al, 2004; Wellington and Sikes, 2006)
- Reduces vulnerability of the participant as they are involved in offering annotation and discourse to the data (Curry, 2012)

Reciprocity offers an alternative approach ... where both researcher and participant gain significantly from the experience (Curry, 2012)



## Analytical framework: synthesis between behaviourist and humanist



- Teacher had deliberately stepped back after asking a question.
- This pose would be described by Satir as ‘the computer’: a pose that encourages those you are in rapport with to think and contemplate.
- The teacher participant was able to talk about this as a deliberate action/technique which encouraged the children to talk to each other and not to him.



- Teacher is encouraging group exploration of mathematical ideas.
- The use of the 'palms up' gesture is known in non-verbal communication as an open gesture. Here the teacher has slightly shrugged shoulders and facial gestures suggesting passivity.
- The teacher explained that he has deliberately used this gesture to encourage children to explore possibilities – rather than seek the 'right' answer



## Gaining a deeper understanding through dialogue



Participant explained use of technique to enable participation from this child:

Proximity

Lower level

Limited eye contact





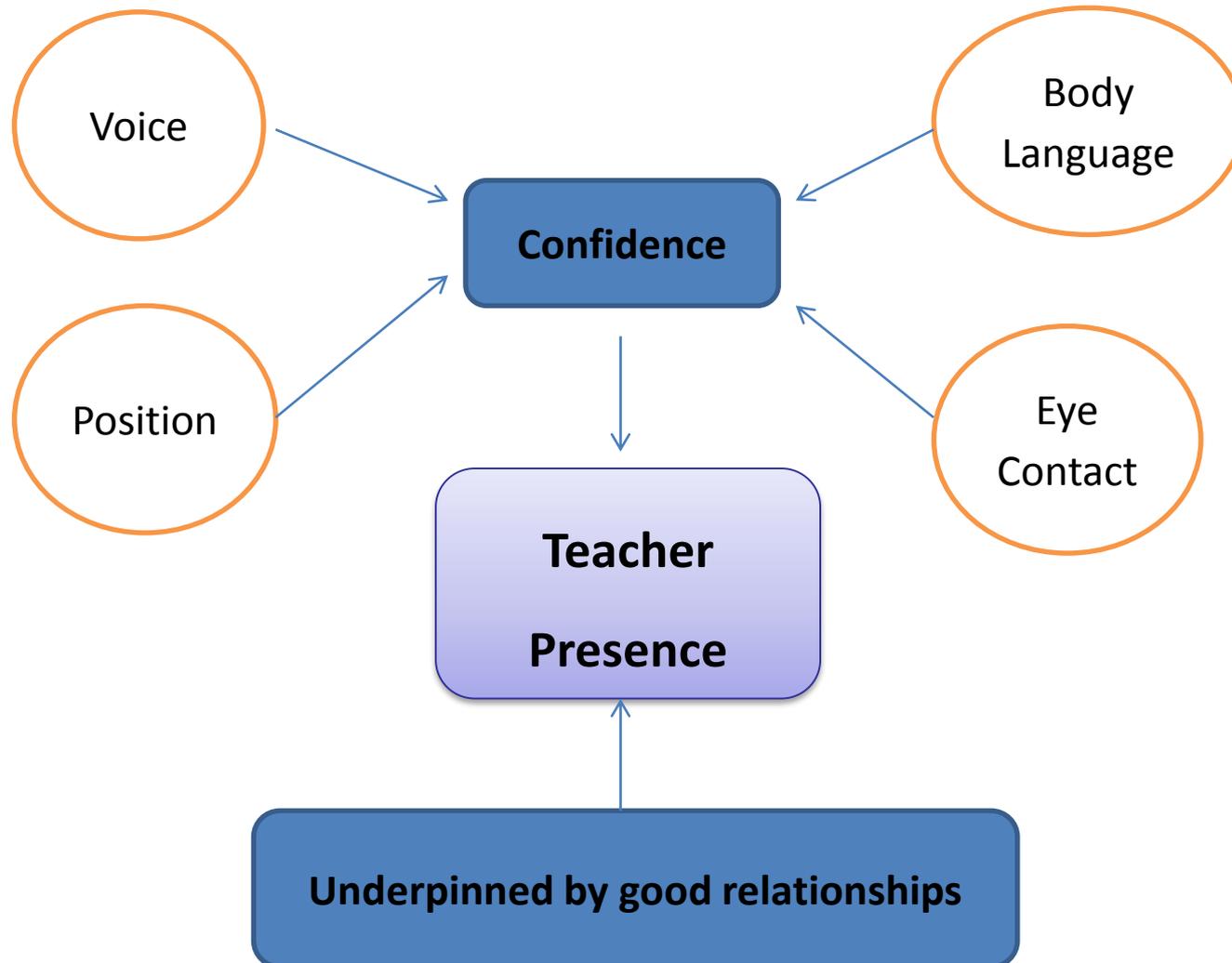
Researcher asked about the other children e.g. two boys. These particular boys wanted the teacher's attention at different times.

Researcher suggested that perhaps these boys in particular viewed the teacher as a role model (could be linked to gender?).

This was something the teacher had not noticed in his role.



# For interest ... previously undertaken research with trainees at end of training



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