Method
Participants were 184 undergraduate students at Oregon State University. Five-minute interactions between dyads were video-taped. There were 47 female-male, 37 female-female, and 8 male-male dyads. Using these videos, eye contact and interpersonal distance were then assessed. Interpersonal distance assessment was done on both head-to-head and closest body part (predominantly feet).

Compensation Theory
Patterson (1973) assumes there are approach and avoidance forces in nonverbal behaviors that balance mutual comfort of dyads. This is called the compensation theory. Argyle & Dean (1965) found that the less eye contact a dyad made, the closer they were to each other. Couatts & Ledden (1977) also found that the closer a dyad got to one another, the less eye contact they made.

According to the compensation theory in nonverbal immediacy behavior, we hypothesize that when an unacquainted dyad interacts, less eye contact will be made as they get closer to each other.

Results
We found no evidence to support Patterson’s compensation theory in nonverbal immediacy behavior. Across all interactions, we found that participants who increased their eye-contact throughout the course of the interaction also moved closer to each other, which was contrary to our hypothesis ($r = -.30, p < .01$).

Upon closer inspection, this contrary relationship was driven primarily by female-female dyads.

Additionally, the correlation for this relationship was weaker for male-male than it was for female-male dyads.

Discussion
We believe the increased eye contact as interpersonal distance decreases throughout the interaction in female-female dyads was due to developing more comfort, more rapport, and more self-disclosure between both females. This may be due to the fact that the task was designed for intimacy-building and to compel participants to increase the depth of their self-disclosure by talking about more personal topics as the course of the interaction passes. On the flipside, males withdrew from getting more intimate and self-disclosing; therefore, distance was not closer by the end of the interaction.

Since we had significantly more female-female interactions than male-male interactions, there is reason to expect the overall relationship between change in distance and the amount of eye-contact to be affected more by female-female interactions than any other combination of gender.

Conclusion
Nonverbally compensating for comfort in interactions is of high importance. Aiello & Thompson (1980) found that there were negative social, emotional, and physiological responses when space was invaded beyond comfort without reduction in eye-contact. Examples of negative responses are: being more aggressive (social response), higher anxiety levels (emotional response), and a higher skin-conductance level or SCL (physiological response). The higher SCL is a result of unpleasant physiological arousal in the human body whenever threatened or uncomfortable. If all these negative responses are triggered by failing to properly compensate, one could make an interviewer uncomfortable and therefore lose a potential job.