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Instructional Dissent as an Expression of Students' Academic Orientations and Beliefs about Education

Alan K. Goodboy & Brandi N. Frisby

This purpose of this study was to examine how students' academic orientations toward learning and general beliefs about education (i.e., academic entitlement, learning orientation, grade orientation, academic locus of control, academic self-efficacy) predict the use of instructional dissent (i.e., expressive dissent, rhetorical dissent, vengeful dissent) in a college class. Participants were 222 students who reported on their perceived academic orientations and educational beliefs in tandem with their dissent behavior in a current college class. Results of a canonical correlation revealed that (a) when students were academically entitled, grade orientated, and lacked academic self-efficacy, they communicated more expressive and vengeful dissent, but (b) when students were learning oriented, they communicated more rhetorical dissent.

Keywords: Academic Entitlement; Academic Locus of Control; Academic Self-Efficacy; Educational Orientation; Instructional Dissent

Despite an instructor's best effort to maintain a complaint-free semester with students, when students are dissatisfied, many of them react with dissent (Cooper-Hind & Taylor, 2012; Goodboy, 2011a). Instructional dissent "occurs when students express their disagreements or complaints about class-related issues" (Goodboy, 2011b, p. 423). When students decide to dissent, they typically select one (or more) of three potential dissent responses. Students respond with *expressive dissent* by complaining to others

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(e.g., classmates, family) to vent their frustrations in order to feel better about their class (Goodboy, 2011a). Students who communicate *rhetorical dissent* attempt to persuade their instructor to rectify a perceived problem or wrongdoing (Goodboy, 2011a). And students who respond with *vengeful dissent* communicate negative messages about their instructor (e.g., to colleagues, other students) to damage his/her credibility or reputation as an act of retribution (Goodboy, 2011a). All three dissent types are inter-correlated positively (Goodboy, 2011b; Goodboy & Myers, 2012) yet are conceptually (Goodboy, 2011a) and operationally distinct student complaints (Goodboy, 2011b).

These three types of instructional dissent are typically student reactions to triggering agents attributed to the instructor, including perceptions of unfair testing and grading, instructor misbehaviors, and violations of classroom policies and syllabi (Goodboy, 2011a, 2011b; Horan, Chory, & Goodboy, 2010). Students are most likely to react with expressive dissent when they perceive classroom procedures to be unfair, but are most likely to react with vengeful dissent when they perceive their interpersonal treatment to be unfair (Goodboy, 2011b).

When students engage in expressive and vengeful dissent, they report less state motivation, affective learning, and communication satisfaction with their instructor (Goodboy, 2011b). However, students who engage in rhetorical dissent report slightly more cognitive learning. These three types of dissent operate differently; expressive and vengeful dissent seem to be indicators of classroom problems, whereas rhetorical dissent may be more indicative of student learning attempts.

In the organizational setting, Kassing (1997) proposed a model of dissent that explains how individual, relational, and organizational factors are influential in employee dissent. Of interest to this study is how individual student factors may influence student dissent in the instructional context. Highlighting the importance of examining individual factors, Goodboy and Myers proposed that, “future research should examine students’ educational orientations and beliefs about school” (2012, p. 456), noting that, “students’ experiences throughout their entire span of schooling may generate beliefs and behaviors related to their college classroom experiences” (2012, p. 456). Indeed, students’ own individual beliefs and preconceived notions about school play a role in how they communicate (Buehl & Alexander, 2009; Weber, Martin, & Myers, 2011). Therefore, this study sought to examine students’ beliefs about school and their dissent practices by examining students’ academic orientations. Four individual academic orientations were selected for this study: academic entitlement, learning/grade orientations, academic locus of control, and academic self-efficacy.

Academic Entitlement

Academic entitlement refers to “the expectation that one should receive certain positive academic outcomes (e.g., high grades) in academic settings, often independent of performance” (Kopp, Zinn, Finney, & Jurich, 2011, p. 106). Morrow (1994) noted that the student culture of entitlement undermines the goal of educational achievement. Other scholars maintain Morrow’s viewpoint because “presumably the entitled student not only feels he or she deserved something they did not achieve, but that

they fail to comprehend their role in, or accept responsibility for falling short of, the academic achievement” (Jackson, Singleton-Jackson, & Frey, 2011, p. 54).

Academically entitled students typically possess several unrealistic beliefs about their education, including the belief that they deserve good grades because they are paying tuition, that excuses should be granted for missed work due to life circumstances, and that an instructor’s career is largely to work for students by being accommodating (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2010, 2011). Indeed, entitled students have a consumer mentality about their coursework, learning, and grades (Lippmann, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009).

Male students tend to be more entitled than female students despite their year in college in both cross-sectional and longitudinal assessments (Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008). Students who are entitled tend to have higher self-esteem (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011; Kopp et al., 2011), prefer work avoidance, and put less effort into their coursework (Kopp et al., 2011). Entitled students are more likely to be extrinsically motivated, are academically dishonest and pursue self-interests (Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farruggia, 2008). Moreover, they tend to be less agreeable, conscientious, and extraverted than nonentitled students (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). A majority of the entitlement research has revealed that these students tend to be narcissistic and possess exploitative attitudes (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger et al., 2008; Kopp et al., 2011; Menon & Sharland, 2011).

Academic entitlement also appears to be a function of parenting, as entitled students report that their parents have high academic expectations, reward them for academic achievement and perceive college to be a competition because they make academic social comparisons with other known students (Greenberger et al., 2008). Given that academically entitled students expect to be owed high grades and achieve success in their coursework despite their actual efforts (Kopp et al., 2011; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010, 2011), it is likely that when their entitled expectations remain unfulfilled by their instructor, they will respond with instructional dissent. Therefore, the first hypothesis is posited:

- H1: Students’ academic entitlement is related positively to their reports of instructional dissent.

Learning/Grade Orientations

College students view their learning experiences differently as they have distinct orientations about the value and purpose of their education. Students who possess a learning orientation (LO) view the college classroom “as a context in which they expect to experience new information and ideas that will be significant to them both personally and professionally” (Eison, Pollio, & Milton, 1986, p. 54). In contrast, students who possess a grade orientation (GO) view college “as a crucible in which they are tested and graded and which is endured as a necessary evil on the way to getting

a degree or becoming certified in a profession” (Eison et al., 1986, p. 54). A students’ educational orientation has important implications for their achievement and communication in the classroom (Gorham, 1999).

LO students are more self-sufficient, have better study habits, experience less test anxiety and have more of a participative learning style than GO students (Eison, 1982). Given these findings, it is no surprise that LO students tend to outperform GO students in coursework. Although students tend to be more grade-oriented during the final weeks of the semester (Bender, 2007), in general, LO students earn higher grades (Page & Alexitch, 2003), whereas GO students have lower SAT scores (Johnson & Beck, 1988) and grade point averages (Beck, Rorrer-Woody, & Pierce, 1991). LO students report more learner empowerment, whereas GO students report lower levels of affective and cognitive learning (Houser & Frymier, 2009).

Although instructors prefer their students to be LO, most students prefer that instructors place less emphasis on grades, even though many instructors are GO (Pollio & Beck, 2000). While students’ educational outcomes are clearly affected by their LO/GO, their communication is also dependent upon these orientations. For instance, students with LO communicate more with their instructors outside of the classroom to build personal relationships, whereas students with a GO communicate more by making up excuses for their inadequate work and engaging in more sycophantic communication (Williams & Frymier, 2007). Other research suggests that student expectations of their instructor’s teaching behavior are influenced by their LO/GO (Frymier & Weser, 2001) and so are students’ persuasive attempts with instructors (Wright, 2012).

Because of these differences in classroom outcomes and communication, Goodboy (2011b) recommended that future research examine students’ LO/GO as predictors of instructional dissent. Because LO students report more involvement and learning in their classes (Houser & Frymier, 2009), LO students should be motivated to engage in rhetorical dissent with their instructors, as they tend to be better students who should desire to rectify any perceived wrongdoings in person, rather than resorting to expressive and vengeful dissent, which do not rectify problems. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

H2: Students’ LO is related positively to their reports of rhetorical dissent.

However, since GO students tend to perform poorer on measures of academic achievement (Beck et al., 1991; Johnson & Beck, 1988) and are unmotivated to build relationships with their instructors (Williams & Frymier, 2007), it is likely that their complaints are directed toward external audiences when issues arise in the classroom by using expressive and vengeful dissent, instead of rhetorical dissent. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

H3: Students’ GO is related positively to their reports of expressive and vengeful dissent.

Academic Locus of Control

Rotter explained that individuals who possess an internal locus of control believe that events are controlled by their own behavior or relatively permanent characteristics, whereas individuals with an external locus of control believe that events are “the result of luck, chance, fate, as under the control of powerful others, or as unpredictable because of the great complexity of forces” (1966, p. 1). Although locus of control is a general personality trait, research suggests that American college students have developed more of an external locus of control since the 1960s (Twenge, Zhang, & Im, 2004). Much research has examined locus of control in a variety of settings (e.g., workplace locus of control, health locus of control), because research indicates that the trait is specific to contexts, including the college classroom. Research suggests that students’ academic locus of control is important in determining classroom outcomes and behavior. For instance, students with an external academic locus perform worse in school (Ogden & Trice, 1986), have poorer attendance (Trice, 1987; Trice & Hackburt, 1989), miss review sessions (Trice, 1987), receive less extra credit (Trice, 1985) and participate and study less (Trice, Ogden, Stevens, & Booth, 1987). Clearly, having an internal academic locus of control, instead of an external locus, benefits students during their college career.

Importantly, in a study of dissension in the organization, employees with an internal workplace locus of control communicated more articulated dissent to their supervisors, but employees with an external workplace locus of control communicated more latent dissent to coworkers (Kassing & Avtgis, 2001). Therefore, it is possible that locus of control may function similarly in the classroom as it does in the organization, in relation to student-dissent practices. Specifically, since students who possess an external academic locus of control do not take credit for their own college failures, and because this results in poorer academic performance (Ogden & Trice, 1986; Trice, 1985, 1987; Trice & Hackburt, 1989), it is likely that these students are more prone to dissent. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

- H4: Students’ external locus of control is related positively to their reports of instructional dissent.

Academic Self-Efficacy

General efficacy beliefs are individuals’ perceptions of behavioral and cognitive abilities, and the confidence that these abilities can be employed to reach goals or to complete tasks (Bandura, 1977, 1982). A situation specific and individual type of self-efficacy is academic self-efficacy, which refers to students’ beliefs about their ability to succeed in an educational setting (Kim, Newton, Downey, & Benton, 2010; Sutton, Phillips, Lehnert, Bartle, & Yokomizo, 2011). Students’ academic self-efficacy enhances overall achievement (Alfasi, 2003; Yip, 2012), goal-setting and goal attainment (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992), attendance

(Collins & Bissell, 2002), motivation (Schunk, 1991), and adaptation to college (Zhang, 2004). Furthermore, students who possess academic self-efficacy have better self-concepts (Ferla, Valcke, & Cai, 2009), tend to study more effectively (Prat-Sala & Redford, 2010) and perform better on a variety of academic performance variables including exam, quiz, and essay scores (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990).

Clearly, academic self-efficacy is related to students' success in the academic setting. Further, Bandura (1982) argued that self-efficacy influences affect toward environments and others and determines challenges that individuals seek, accept and overcome. Specifically, those who are high in self-efficacy are different than those who are low in self-efficacy in that they think, feel and act or communicate differently (Bandura, 1989). In the classroom context, academic self-efficacy should influence how students respond to their environmental demands, peers, and instructors. For example, Zimmerman (2000) argued that students who feel efficacious demonstrate fewer negative reactions when faced with adverse situations. Similarly, in the organizational setting, Payne (2007) found that organization-based self-esteem, which is arguably similar to self-efficacy, was related to the communication of dissent such that an employee with high organization-based self-esteem was more likely to communicate dissent but communicated it in a more constructive way when compared to employees with low organization-based self-esteem.

Taken together, these results suggest that students with high academic self-efficacy will respond more positively to educational challenges and dissent-triggering events in the classroom (e.g., difficult assignment, low grade), or perhaps by not expressing dissent at all. Conversely, those with low academic self-efficacy may respond negatively by expressing dissent to or about the instructor. Therefore, the final hypothesis is offered:

H5: Students' academic self-efficacy is related negatively to their reports of instructional dissent.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 222 undergraduate students (79 men, 143 women) enrolled in one of six 100-level introductory communication studies courses, attending a midsized northeastern university. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 28 years ($M=19.97$, $SD=1.60$). A majority of participants ($n=157$) reported on a class size of 30 students or less, and over half of the students indicated that this class was a major requirement ($n=125$).

Procedures and Measurement

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, participants completed a survey during the final week of the semester in reference to the class they attended prior to the data collection to ensure an ample cross-section of classes and instructors (Plax,

Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986). Participants completed measures about their academic beliefs in general and reported on how frequently they engaged in instructional dissent in reference to their last class over the course of the semester. The survey included the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (Kopp et al., 2011), LOGO-II Scale (Eison et al., 1986), Academic Locus of Control Scale (Trice, 1985), the Academic Self-Efficacy subscale derived from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990), and the Instructional Dissent Scale (Goodboy, 2012).

The *Academic Entitlement Questionnaire* contains eight items and asks participants to report on the degree to which they expect one should receive positive academic outcomes regardless of performance. Responses were solicited using a 7-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include: “If I don’t do well on a test, the professor should make tests easier or curve grades,” and “Because I pay tuition, I deserve passing grades.” Previous reliability coefficients ranging from .81 to .88 have been reported for the summed scale (Kopp et al., 2011). In this study, the obtained Cronbach alpha was .71 ($M = 23.82$, $SD = 7.01$).

The *LOGO-II* contains 32 items and asks participants to report on both attitudes and behaviors that reflect LO and GO. Because there were two subscales (16 items for each orientation) in this measure, items for LO and GO attitudes and behaviors were randomized. Responses were solicited using a 5-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample LO items include: “Easy classes that are not pertinent to my educational goals generally bore me,” and “I get annoyed when lectures or class presentations are only rehashes of easy reading assignments.” Sample GO items include: “I dislike courses in which a lot of material is presented in class, or in readings, that does not appear on the exam,” and “I do not find studying at home to be interesting or pleasant.” Previous reliability coefficients of .75 and .68 have been reported for the LO and GO subscales (Wright, 2012). In this study, the obtained Cronbach alpha was .68 ($M = 46.55$, $SD = 6.70$) for the LO subscale and .65 ($M = 50.64$, $SD = 7.06$) for the GO subscale.

The *Academic Locus of Control Scale* is a 28-item scale and measures the degree to which students believe they are in control of their own achievement in academic situations. Higher scores on the scale reflect more of an external locus where the student feels less internal responsibility for their success in college. This scale uses a forced-choice (true/false) response format where external locus responses are scored as “1” and internal locus responses are scored as “0.” Sample (external) items include: “There are some subjects I could never do well in,” and “Professors sometimes make an early impression of you and then no matter what you do, you cannot change that impression.” Previous alpha reliabilities of .70 (Trice, 1985) and .93 (Sidelinger, 2010) have been reported for the summed scale. In this study, the obtained Cronbach alpha was .72 ($M = 12.86$, $SD = 4.36$).

The *Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire* contains 44 items and asks participants to report on their self-regulated learning strategies. Only the nine items that comprise the academic self-efficacy subscale were used in this study. Responses were solicited using a 7-point Likert-type response format ranging from 1 (*not at all*

like me) to 7 (*very true of me*). Sample items include: “I am sure I can do an excellent job on the problems and tasks assigned for this class,” and “I know I will be able to learn the material for this class.” Previous reliability coefficients of .87 (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990) and .92 (Thomas & Gadbois, 2007) have been reported for this subscale. In this study, the obtained Cronbach alpha was .90 ($M = 46.48$, $SD = 8.91$).

The *Instructional Dissent Scale* is a 22-item instrument that asks participants to report on how often they express their disagreements or complaints about class-related issues. This measure is comprised of three subscales that operationalize expressive dissent (10 items), rhetorical dissent (6 items), and vengeful dissent (6 items). Responses are solicited using a 5-point response format ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). Sample items include: (expressive) “I complain to others to express my frustration with this course,” (rhetorical) “I voice my opinions to my teacher when there is a disagreement because I want to do better in the course,” and (vengeful) “I hope to ruin my teacher’s reputation by exposing his/her bad practices to others.” Previous reliability coefficients for the subscales have ranged from .83 to .96 (Goodboy, 2011b). In this study, Cronbach’s alphas for the three dissent types ranged from .89 to .95 (expressive: $M = 16.83$, $SD = 10.28$, $\alpha = .95$; rhetorical: $M = 6.52$, $SD = 5.32$, $\alpha = .89$; vengeful: $M = 1.90$, $SD = 3.66$, $\alpha = .89$).

Results

Pearson correlations between the variables in this study are presented in the Table 1 matrix.

Collectively, the hypotheses predicted that students’ academic orientations would be related to their expressions of instructional dissent. A canonical correlation was computed using the academic orientation variables (i.e., academic entitlement, academic locus of control, learning orientation, grade orientation, academic self-efficacy) as predictors of the three instructional dissent types (i.e., expressive dissent,

Table 1 Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Academic Orientations</i>								
1. Academic LOC (External)	–							
2. Academic Entitlement	.28 [†]	–						
3. Learning Orientation	–.28 [†]	–.17*	–					
4. Grade Orientation	.34 [†]	.37 [†]	–.33 [†]	–				
5. Academic Self-Efficacy	–.39 [†]	–.15*	.12	–.12	–			
<i>Instructional Dissent</i>								
6. Expressive	.14*	.25 [†]	–.06	.20**	–.24 [†]	–		
7. Rhetorical	.03	.08	.29 [†]	.02	–.04	.30 [†]	–	
8. Vengeful	.11	.24 [†]	.11	.13	–.10	.49 [†]	.45 [†]	–

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, [†] $p < .001$. LOC = locus of control.

Table 2 Canonical Solution for Academic Orientations Predicting Instructional Dissent for Functions 1 and 2

Variables	Function 1		Function 2		h^2
	r_s	r_s^2 (%)	r_s	r_s^2 (%)	
Set 1: Academic Orientations and Beliefs					
Academic LOC (External)	.379	14.36	-.077	0.59	14.95
Academic Entitlement	.786	61.78	-.032	0.10	61.88
Learning Orientation	-.045	0.20	.956	91.39	91.59
Grade Orientation	.586	34.34	-.237	5.62	39.96
Academic Self-Efficacy	-.597	35.64	.212	4.49	40.13
Redundancy Coefficient	[.293]		[.204]		
Set 2: Instructional Dissent					
Expressive	.930	86.49	-.154	2.37	88.86
Rhetorical	.373	13.91	.881	77.61	91.52
Vengeful	.769	59.13	.381	14.52	73.65
Redundancy Coefficient	[.084]		[.040]		

Note. Wilks' $\Lambda = .73$; $F(15, 566.32) = 4.55$, $p < .001$. r_s = structure coefficient; r_s^2 = squared structure coefficient; h^2 = communality coefficient. Structure coefficients (r_s) greater than .45 are in bold. Communality coefficients (h^2) greater than 45% are in bold. LOC = locus of control.

rhetorical dissent, vengeful dissent) in order to evaluate the multivariate shared relationships between both variable sets and to minimize the probability of committing a Type I error (Nimon, Henson, & Gates, 2012). Results of the canonical correlation, which accounted for 27% of the variance, revealed two significant functions (see Table 2). Only structure coefficients at the .45 level or above were interpreted (Sherry & Henson, 2005). The first function ($R_c = .40$) revealed that when students possessed academic entitlement and a grade orientation but lacked academic self-efficacy they communicated more expressive and vengeful dissent. The second function ($R_c = .36$) revealed that when students possessed a learning orientation they communicated more rhetorical dissent. Results of the structure coefficients, squared structure coefficients, communality coefficients, and redundancy coefficients for both functions are displayed in Table 2. Overall, the strongest predictors of instructional dissent were academic entitlement (in function one) as a positive predictor of expressive and vengeful dissent and LO (in function two) as a positive predictor of rhetorical dissent.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine if students' individual academic orientations and beliefs about school were related to their expression of dissent in college. Two significant findings were discovered. The first significant finding was that students who communicate expressive and vengeful dissent tend to have academic orientations comprised of academic entitlement, grade orientation, and

a lack of academic self-efficacy, providing support for H1, H3, and H5. That is, these students believe they deserve high grades, care more about the grades they receive rather than what they learn, yet they do not possess the confidence to succeed. Collectively, this function reflects a portrait of a student who is preoccupied with grades but does not believe in his/her own academic abilities to achieve these grades. Rather, these students believe the instructor should give out these grades as it is in their control to delegate high marks, but not in the students' own ability to earn these marks. And when students' possess these beliefs, they resort to student-complaint behavior that resounds in unproductive ways, by trying to gain sympathy from other parties through expressing their disappointment in the class or by attempting to enact revenge on the instructor through public insults. Although Goodboy (2011a) noted that expressive dissent serves to perform a sort of "cathartic therapy" (p. 305) that helps them feel better, whereas vengeful dissent may help to "restore equity" (p. 308) when they feel wronged, Goodboy and Myers (2012) pointed out that rhetorical dissent is a more beneficial type of dissent for students to pursue.

The second significant finding was that students who communicate rhetorical dissent tend to be LO students, who value the learning process over the received grade, providing support for H2. Not surprisingly, then, these students who value their learning experiences feel free to dissent directly to the instructor instead of other audiences in order to rectify any perceived problems in the classroom. It is likely that LO students value their relationship with their professor as a learner, which directs the communication strategies they employ during academic conversations. Some research supports this contention. For instance, Williams and Frymier revealed that LO students communicate with their instructors for relational reasons "as a means to personal growth and intellectual development" (2007, p. 254). Furthermore, Wright (2012) discovered that LO students prefer open communication when having persuasive conversations with their instructors about disappointing grades. The LO student's tendency to approach the instructor directly may be indicative of respect and a desire to maintain a healthy relationship with the instructor characterized by valued learning experiences, rather than a desire to complain to outside audiences or to spread negative publicity. This finding provides more evidence that suggests rhetorical dissent may be a positive form of communication for students who learn more (Goodboy, 2011b) by valuing learning over grades.

Interestingly, no support was revealed for H4, as students' external academic locus of control did not produce a significant structure coefficient that reached the .45 criteria cutoff. The structure coefficient, however, was in the expected direction ($r_s = .38$) in function one but did contribute enough to the canonical solution to be interpreted as meaningful. It is possible that since students who possess an external locus of control perform worse in college and blame their failures on outside sources such as "fate" or "chance" (Ogden & Trice, 1986; Trice, 1985, 1987; Trice & Hackburt, 1989; Trice et al., 1987), dissent may not be a strategic response for these students when there is the belief that nothing can be done about academic failure.

These findings have important implications for instructors. The dissent expressions in this study were examined as they relate to the individual characteristics of

students (i.e., entitlement, locus of control, grade or learning orientation, and self-efficacy). These individual characteristics cannot be removed from the larger classroom context as particular events trigger the dissent (Goodboy, 2011a) and the expression of dissent can change the entire classroom climate. For example, students identified turning points in their relationships with instructors as those which often caused a loss of confidence (Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009). From an instructor's perspective, Docan-Morgan (2011) identified conniption, or the expression of student anger, surprise, or displeasure as a turning point causing changes in the instructor-student relationship. Thus, the ways in which instructors may threaten student confidence and subsequently respond to the expression of dissent can influence the instructor-student relationship and the overall classroom environment.

Further, the results of this research provide insight into the motivations behind student dissent behavior. Understanding why students express dissent can help instructors to address underlying issues such as academic entitlement, grade orientation, or self-efficacy deficiencies. For example, instructors can focus on increasing students' academic self-efficacy to proactively address potential instructional dissent. Zimmerman et al. (1992) argued that instructors should strive to structure the academic environment in a way that increases student efficacy. Specifically, instructors may direct students to remedial courses to prepare them for academic challenges they may face when there is a skill deficit (Alfasi, 2003), provide skill performance experience (Dunlap, 2005), and provide academic models to allow students to learn vicariously how to achieve in the classroom (Adams, 2004). By structuring the classroom in a way that enhances efficacy-using strategies like performance experience and vicarious modeling suggested by Bandura (1977, 1986, 1989), instructors can play a role in enhancing student efficacy and subsequently influencing student dissent expression.

The results of this study also have implications at the administrative level. Although teaching evaluations are used as a measure of quality assurance or for promotion and tenure (Ghedini & Aquario, 2008), scholars argue that student evaluations of teaching are biased by factors unrelated to instructors' teaching abilities such as grading leniency, textbook costs, attendance policies, and appearance (Germain & Scandura, 2005; Riniolo, Johnson, Sherman, & Misso, 2006). Consistent with Germain and Scandura's model that includes individual characteristics of students as important factors when interpreting faculty evaluations, the research presented here identifies specific student characteristics to consider when interpreting teaching evaluations. Specifically, teaching evaluations provide an opportunity for students to express dissent about a course or an instructor that should be interpreted in light of our results suggesting that student dissent on teaching evaluations can be attributed to students' self-perceptions and their own sense of entitlement, orientations toward learning, locus of control, and academic self-efficacy.

As in any study, the current study had several limitations. First, the LOGO-II scale produced lower internal reliability estimates than desired, even though these estimates are consistent with recent communication research (e.g., Williams & Frymier, 2007; Wright, 2012) and with research on the psychometric properties of the measure

(e.g., Jacobs, 1992). Researchers may consider improving upon the measurement of students' LO/GO as published reliability estimates have been consistently in the .60 to .70 range that may deflate effect sizes or produce nonsignificant findings. Second, the measure selected for academic locus of control used a forced-choice response format (true vs. false), which constrained variability in student responses. A better measure of academic locus of control that does not require a dichotomous forced-choice response format, and, instead, uses parametric scaling to assess the discrete gradations in student attributions of causality, may be warranted for continued research of this construct.

Future research should continue to examine the extent to which parenting and familial-instilled beliefs influence students' likelihood of dissenting. For instance, does helicopter parenting stifle instructional dissent from students when parents become too involved in their adult child's college career? Research should also continue to examine distal student factors such as personality traits and student motives for communicating with their instructors. Research should continue to examine the substantial role that instructors play in spurring and/or reducing instructional dissent through their displays of classroom power, encouragement of classroom climate, and through their daily use of communicator style during instruction. Finally, scholars should determine why some students withhold rhetorical dissent from their instructor, even when it is in their benefit to approach the instructor and to address their classroom concern.

In conclusion, this study revealed that the beliefs students hold about college in general, before even attending a class, are important predictors of how they complain about their classes. These beliefs are independent of specific instructors or courses and are taken with each student to each class regardless of the subject matter. The results of this study suggest that some students derogate their instructors because they believe in the importance of grades above all but not in their own abilities to achieve those grades. Yet, other students, who take the time to show up during office hours to persuade an instructor to correct a wrongdoing, appear more interested in the learning process. Either way, the current study suggests that some dissent has less to do with the instructor and more to do with students' academic orientations and expectations about college in general.

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