

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AS PREDICTORS OF INSTRUCTIONAL DISSENT

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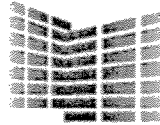
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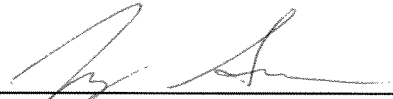
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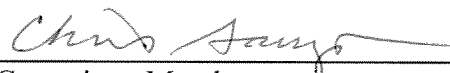
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STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS AS PREDICTORS OF INSTRUCTIONAL DISSENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore student characteristics that may predict how students express dissent in the classroom. Goodboy (2011a) defined instructional dissent as a student's expression of dissatisfaction with a class-related issue. According to Kassing's (1997) model of organizational dissent, individual factors such as temperament, traits, and personality may influence how students choose to express dissent. Student characteristics explored include aggressive communication (Infante & Rancer, 1982; Infante & Wigley, 1986), tolerance for disagreement (Knutson, McCroskey, Knutson, & Hurt, 1979; McCroskey & Wheelless, 1976; Teven, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1988), and academic locus of control (Trice, 1985). Results suggest that verbal aggressiveness is the best predictor of dissent in the instructional context. Future research should continue to examine Kassing's (1997) model of organizational dissent in the instructional context.

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Student Characteristics as Predictors of Instructional Dissent

Students frequently report dissatisfaction with their classroom experiences (Boice, 1996; Goodboy, 2011a; McMillan & Cheney, 1996), and as a result, they often respond with resistance strategies (Burroughs, Kearney, & Plax, 1989), challenge behaviors (Simonds, 1997), or nagging behaviors (Dunleavy & Myers, 2008; Dunleavy, Martin, Brann, Booth-Butterfield, Myers, & Weber, 2008). In addition to these responses, and perhaps even more frequently, students express dissent (Horan, Chory, & Goodboy, 2010). *Instructional dissent*, defined as “any communication behavior students use to indicate disagreement” (Goodboy, 2011a, p. 298), is used by students to (a) persuade a teacher to change something or correct a perceived wrong (i.e., rhetorical dissent), (b) express or vent feelings in order to garner sympathy and empathy from others (i.e., expressive dissent), or (c) seek retaliation or revenge on a teacher (i.e., vengeful dissent) (Goodboy, 2011a). Though scholars have established that students use instructional dissent, they have yet to uncover factors influencing students’ decisions and motivations to express one of the aforementioned types of instructional dissent. By determining factors that influence students’ decisions regarding expressions of dissent, instructors and administrators may be able to develop more effective channels for students to express dissatisfaction with classroom experiences (Argon, 2009; Boice, 1996) and determine appropriate and effective ways to respond to dissent messages. Ultimately, this may improve students’ and instructors’ communication and experiences in the classroom, creating a more fruitful environment for all. Therefore, one way to begin creating more satisfying classroom experiences for all is to identify the factors that influence instructional dissent.

Organizational scholars have relied on Kassing's (1997) four-phase model of organizational dissent for examining dissent in organizations and have found support for each phase of the model – triggering agents, strategy selection influences, strategy selection, and expressed dissent. Particular to this study, the *strategy selection influences* phase addresses *why* individuals dissent (i.e. Why does someone choose to dissent? Why does someone dissent using a particular message or strategy?). Specifically, it suggests that *individual, relational, and organizational* factors impact an individual's decision to dissent and the type of dissent he or she uses. Kassing (2008) identified *individual* factors as one of the most influential factors affecting employee dissent. Therefore, the primary goal of this project is to explore the influence of individual factors (i.e., students' characteristics and traits) on expressions of dissent in the instructional context. Specifically, this project will examine three student characteristics (i.e., aggressive communication, tolerance for disagreement, and academic locus of control) and their association with types of instructional dissent (i.e., rhetorical, expressive, and vengeful).

Theoretical Perspective

Model of Organizational Dissent

Kassing's (1997) model of organizational dissent has provided the primary framework for studying dissent within organizations. Drawing on the Theory of Unobtrusive Control (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985), Theory of Independent-Mindedness (Gorden & Infante, 1987, 1991), and Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect Model of Dissatisfaction (Farrell, 1983; Hirschman, 1970), Kassing's model of organizational dissent explains *how* and *why* employees express dissent. In light of Tomkins and Cheney's (1985) Theory of Unobtrusive Control, Kassing (1997, 2011) reasoned that dissent may occur when employees make decisions using individual decision

premises instead of organizational decision premises. Employees may choose to follow individual decision premises in order to prioritize self or others' interests over the organization or as a response to feeling conflict with an organizational decision (Kassing, 2011). Drawing from the Theory of Independent-Mindedness (Gorden & Infante, 1981, 1991), Kassing posited that employees experiencing incongruence with the organization will need to express their opinions (Kassing, 1997, 2011). Employees of free speech cultures, particularly employees from the United States, are uniquely enculturated to value freedom of expression as a means of participating and investing in the societies, cultures, and organizations of which they belong and will be particularly motivated to express dissent (Kassing, 1997, 2011). After recognizing his or her need to dissent, the employee must choose a means to dissent (Kassing, 1997). Hirschman's (1970) exit-voice-loyalty model of employee dissatisfaction describes options available to an employee when deciding to whom to express feelings of incongruence (Kassing, 1997). Employees may choose to exit or leave the organization (i.e., escape) or remain in the organization and use his or her voice to express concerns (i.e., attempt organizational change) (Kassing, 2011). An employee's feeling of loyalty toward the organization may influence his or her decision to exit or use their voice (Kassing, 2011). Farrell (1983) revised Hirschman's (1970) model by adding *neglect* which included behaviors such as tardiness, missing work, or declining performance quality to the options available to employees experiencing conflict associated with the organization. Organizational dissent, a subset of employee voice, may include messages which mirror exit or neglect (Garner, 2009a; Kassing, 2011). Despite the possibility that other theories may serve as a lens through which to understand particular organizational dissent experiences (Kassing, 2011), Theory of Unobtrusive Control, Theory of Independent-

Mindedness, and Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect Model of Employee Dissatisfaction illuminate situational and motivational factors that may influence organizational dissent (Kassing, 1997).

Out of this theoretical framework, Kassing (1997) developed a four-phase model of organizational dissent. The model includes, 1) the *triggering agent*, which is the circumstance or event that causes the employee to feel disassociated with the organization, 2) *strategy selection influences*, which includes individual, relational, and organizational factors that may impact an employee's decision to dissent, 3) *strategy selection*, which involves the employee assessing the risk of retaliation, and 4) *expressed dissent*, which involves the sharing of dissent with others. In recent years, organizational scholars have paid particular attention to the *strategy selection influences* and *expressed dissent* phases of Kassing's model.

Strategy selection influences. *Individual, situational, and organizational* factors may affect whether or not an employee expresses dissent and, if they do, how he or she expresses dissent (Kassing, 1997). According to Kassing (1997), "individual behaviors enacted within and values imported from outside organizations affect employee dissent" (p. 324). In light of this, organizational scholars have investigated several *individual* factors such as employee aggressive communication traits (Kassing & Avtgis, 1999), employee locus of control (Kassing & Avtgis, 2001), employee age and length of work experience (Kassing & DiCioccio, 2004), employee satisfaction (Kassing, 1998), employee burnout (Avtgis, Thomas-Maddox, Taylor, & Richardson, 2007), employee empowerment or sense of powerlessness (Kassing, 1998; Sprague & Rudd, 1988), employee preference to avoid conflict (Sprague & Rudd, 1988), employee sense of right and wrong (Hegstrom, 1991), and organizational based self-esteem (Kassing, 2011;

Payne, 2007). Overall, empirical results support Kassing's (1997) model, suggesting that individual factors do affect how employees express dissent about work related issues.

While less research has explored *relational* factors that influence organizational dissent, scholars have found some support for their impact on employees' dissent decisions. Kassing (1997) posited that "the types and quality of relationships people maintain within organizations" affect employee dissent (p. 324). As support for this, Kassing (2000b) found that employees who perceive high quality relationships with superiors reported using articulated dissent whereas employees who perceive low quality relationships with superiors reported using latent dissent. High quality superior-subordinate relationships are characterized by more proactive communication that invites both confirming and contradictory opinions such as articulated dissent (Fairhurst, 1993; Kassing, 2000b; Krone, 1992; Waldron, 1991). Thus, the quality of superior-subordinate relationships appears to influence dissenting employees' choice of audience. Additionally, Kassing and Armstrong (2002) noted that co-worker related topics often triggered dissent. Therefore, relational factors impact employees' initial reasons for expressing dissent, as well as affecting employees' target of dissent.

Scholars have also found support for the *organizational* influences on the dissent process. Kassing (1997) described organizational influences as "how people relate to and perceive organizations" (p. 324). Organizational scholars have examined the influence of organizational size (Miceli & Near, 1992), structure (King, 1999), and culture and climate (Graham, 1986; Goodboy, Chory-Assad, & Dunleavy, 2008; Hegstrom, 1990; Kassing, 1998, 2000a, 2008; Pacanowsky, 1988). Organizational climate, which is a blend of organizational structure and culture, is perhaps the most influential of any factor affecting expressions of employee dissent

(Graham, 1986; Hegstrom, 1990; Kassing, 1998, 2000a, 2008). Organizations may provide an organizational climate that recognizes, tolerates, or cultivates dissent, or organizations may offer climates in which dissent is strongly discouraged (Hegstrom, 1990, 1999; Pacanowsky, 1988). Kassing (1998, 2000a) found that organizations perceived by employees to value freedom of speech, provide opportunities for dissent to be expressed and have trustworthy members of upper management will most likely receive employee dissent.

Expressions of dissent. As part of the fourth phase of the organizational dissent model, Kassing (1997, 1998) identified three types of expressed dissent: articulated, antagonistic (or latent), and displaced. *Articulated dissent* refers to dissent expressed to organizational members who can use the information to effect change within the organization (Kassing, 1997, 1998). Typically, articulated dissent flows upward, from subordinates to superiors, when the dissenting employee does not fear retaliation (Kassing, 1997, 1998). For example, if an employee disagreed with the company's paid time off policy, he or she would discuss the issue with his or her manager. Subordinates who engage in articulated dissent perceive a low risk of retaliation for expressing dissent and consider their message to have constructive value (Kassing, 1997). However, when employees are not concerned with changing the organization, they often use antagonistic dissent (Kassing, 1997).

Antagonistic dissent refers to expressions of dissent made by employees who believe the organization will perceive the dissent as adversarial. They do not, however, fear retaliation based on perceived organizational leverage. Employees who engage in antagonistic dissent are generally concerned with personal interests or personal-advantage issues (Graham, 1986; Hegstrom, 1991) and will express dissent to whomever they deem as "a captive or influential

audience” (Kassing, 1997, p. 326). The conceptualization of antagonistic dissent has changed over the years, shifting away from personal-advantage dissent towards openly expressed criticism to coworkers (Kassing, 1998). This shift led to re-naming antagonistic dissent latent dissent in order to incorporate the idea that dissent may exist regardless of whether or not it is observed, although dissent is observable under certain conditions (Kassing, 1998). Therefore, *latent dissent* describes situations in which an employee would like to express dissent, but lacks the channels and resources available to communicate his or her ideas directly to management (Kassing, 2000b, 2001). Thus, the employee shares his or her opinions and feelings with other co-workers who are unable to enact organizational change (Kassing, 2000b, 2001). For example, an employee in one department may disagree with his or her superior’s decision to require weekly progress reports from all department members. He or she may express his or her frustration to an employee in another department who does not have a vertical organizational relationship to the superior (i.e., superior-subordinate) or horizontal organizational relationship (i.e., not on the same level of the organizational hierarchy as the superior). Because the employee who hears the dissent does not have either a vertical or horizontal organizational relationship to the superior, he or she is most likely unable to use the information to enact organizational change.

Finally, *displaced dissent* refers to expressions of disagreement to those outside of the organization (Kassing, 2000a, 2001). For example, an employee may disagree with a new policy within the organization regarding online communication and express his or her dissatisfaction to a spouse or a friend who is not connected to the organization. Displaced dissent does not include whistle blowing or dissent expressed to public audiences (Kassing, 2000a, 2001). Rather, due to

the possibility of the organization perceiving the dissent as adversarial and the potential risk of retaliation, employees engaging in displaced dissent are not challenging or confronting the organization directly (Kassing, 1997, 2000a, 2001). While early definitions of displaced dissent included expressions of dissent to those *within* the organization who could not effect change, as well as dissent in conjunction with others (Kassing, 1997), through the development and validation of the Organizational Dissent Scale (Kassing, 1998), items including dissent to coworkers aligned with the new concept of latent dissent. Kassing (1998) proposed that displaced dissent failed to produce the hypothesized outcomes during the validation of the measure due to the fact that (1) all employees may express displaced dissent and (2) displaced dissent may be a trait-like rather than state-like type of dissent (i.e., displaced dissent may be a communibiological function as opposed to a response to individual, relational and organizational factors). Although displaced dissent is recognized in organizational dissent literature, Kassing's revised Organizational Dissent Scale only measures articulated and latent dissent (Kassing, 1998, 2000a, 2000b).

Currently, organizational dissent scholars use the terms *upward*, *lateral*, and *displaced dissent* to designate different types of dissent (Kassing, 2002, 2011). These terms indicate the direction of the dissent within an organizational hierarchy. Therefore, *upward dissent* refers to dissent expressed to a superior. Upward dissent most closely relates to articulated dissent. *Lateral dissent* describes dissent expressed to a co-worker and is similar to latent dissent. Scholars continue to use *displaced dissent* as a term for contradictory feelings or opinions expressed to someone outside of the organization.

In sum, Kassing's (1997) model of organizational dissent defines the process employees go through when experiencing dissatisfaction with their organization. Specific to this project, the model highlights how individual characteristics influence dissent strategy selection. Kassing's (1997) definition of dissent and his model of organizational dissent has provided a springboard for instructional communication scholars to begin researching instructional dissent.

Instructional Dissent

Following results from Horan, Chory, and Goodboy's (2010) study of classroom justice, in which dissent was identified as the most common response to classroom injustice, Goodboy (2011a, 2011b) initiated two studies that extended Kassing's (1997) model to the instructional context. In Horan et al.'s (2010) study, when instructors did something that students perceived as unfair (e.g., unfair grading procedure, unfair grade, insensitive or rude comments, etc.), students reported expressing dissent to teachers (most often), other faculty members or staff, family and friends, other students in (or out of) the class, and on teacher evaluations. Because no additional instructional communication literature included dissent at the time of the study's publication, Goodboy's first task included defining instructional dissent and differentiating dissent from other negative student behaviors.

Drawing on Kassing's (1997) definition of organizational dissent, Goodboy (2011a) defined *instructional dissent* as, "any communication behavior that students use to indicate disagreement" (p. 298). Goodboy (2011a) distinguished instructional dissent from other negative student reactions (i.e., resistance strategies, challenge behaviors, and nagging behaviors), by suggesting that "student dissent does not always involve a desire for instructor compliance or influence, but rather involves the mere communication of disagreement" (p. 328).

In his subsequent studies, Goodboy (2011a, 2011b) explored causes of instructional dissent and types of expressed dissent.

In the first study, Goodboy (2011a) identified nine causes, or *triggering agents*, of instructional dissent. Triggering agents punctuate the beginning of the dissent process (Kassing, 1997). Triggering agents in an organizational context cause an employee to feel some sort of conflict associated with the organization (Graham, 1986; Kassing, 1997, 2011; Kassing & Armstrong, 2002; Redding, 1985); whereas a triggering agent in an instructional context causes a student to feel conflict about something related to the class (Goodboy, 2011a). Students in the study reported nine triggering agents: (1) unfair testing/assignments, (2) unfair grading, (3) teaching style (i.e., instructional practices), (4) instructor offensiveness (i.e., hostile offensiveness), (5) classroom policies, (6) violating the syllabus, (7) instructor indolence (i.e., acted in a lazy manner), (8) lack of feedback, and (9) group members slacking. Goodboy concluded that the triggering agents identified describe common causes of student dissatisfaction; thus, when students are dissatisfied, they are likely to dissent. Further, Goodboy suggested conceptual overlap between triggering agents in the instructional context and triggering agents in the organizational context. Specifically, unfair testing and grading and violating the syllabus aligned with “ethical issues” in the organizational context; whereas, teaching style, classroom policies, and lack of feedback were similar to “change motivations” in the organizational context (Goodboy, 2011a).

In addition to identifying the triggering agents of instructional dissent, Goodboy (2011a) also categorized the *targets* to whom students reported expressing dissent. Students reported expressing the majority of dissent to the class instructor or chairperson, other classmates, or

friends and family. Goodboy concluded that the findings were consistent with Kassing's (1997) model, in that students reported expressing dissent to articulated or upward targets (i.e., teacher or chairperson), latent or lateral targets (i.e., classmates), and displaced targets (i.e., family and friends).

Finally, based on students' reports of dissent, Goodboy (2011a) classified three distinct types of student dissent messages expressed by students. These included expressive, rhetorical, and vengeful dissent messages. *Expressive dissent* describes those occasions when students share their feelings and frustrations about class-related issues. The primary purpose of expressive dissent was to make the student feel better, and students mainly enacted expressive dissent with latent targets (i.e., classmates) and displaced targets (i.e., friends and family). *Rhetorical dissent* occurs when students wish to change something and attempt to persuade the instructor to correct a perceived wrongdoing. Students primarily enacted rhetorical dissent to seek change, and they mainly expressed rhetorical dissent to articulated targets (i.e., teacher or chairperson). *Vengeful dissent* describes expressions of dissent in which students attempt to cause harm to their instructor through retaliation or revenge. Students predominantly used vengeful dissent to get revenge or hurt the credibility of the teacher, however receivers of students' vengeful dissent messages were unclear in Goodboy's study.

Goodboy's (2011a) categories of student dissent messages primarily reflect students' various goals when expressing dissent. For example, students choose to express rhetorical dissent in order to incite change. This aligns with Garner's (2009) research on organizational dissent, which suggests employees express dissent to accomplish goals. Garner identified eleven primary and secondary goals employees have when expressing organizational dissent – identity,

obtaining information, conversation management, get advice, change opinion, emotional support, gain assistance, change behavior, affect management, provide guidance, and personal resources. Thus, although goals vary depending upon the context (i.e., organizational vs. instructional), both students and employees express dissent in order to fulfill a goal.

In the second study, Goodboy (2011b) introduced a psychometric measure of instructional dissent that reflected the three types of dissent messages: expressive, rhetorical, and vengeful dissent. The Instructional Dissent Scale is a 22-item, 5-point Likert scale. Using a scale ranging from *never* (0) to *very often* (4), students were asked to report how often they communicated certain dissent messages in the class that met immediately before the data collection. *Expressive dissent* included items such as, “I complain to others to express my frustrations with the course,” and “I try to feel better about the course by explaining my aggravations to others.” *Rhetorical dissent* included, “I voice my opinions to my teacher when there is a disagreement because I want to do better in the course,” and “I express my disagreements with my teacher because I want something to change in the course for the better.” *Vengeful dissent* included, “I seek revenge on my teacher by trying to get him/her in trouble,” and “I make sure that everyone knows how awful my teacher is to get revenge for the bad semester I had.”

In order to establish concurrent validity, Goodboy (2011b) examined the relationship between instructional dissent and teacher misbehaviors (i.e., indolence, incompetence, and offensiveness), traditional learning outcomes (i.e., learning indicators, state motivation, student communication satisfaction, affective learning), and perceived classroom justice (i.e., distributive, procedural, and interactional). As predicted, Goodboy found a direct positive

relationship between expressions of dissent, learning outcomes, and perceived classroom justice. To establish discriminant validity, he examined the relationship between instructional dissent and challenge behaviors (i.e., procedural, evaluative, practicality). As expected, he found that students' expressions of dissent were positively associated with student challenge behavior.

In summary, Goodboy's initial studies of instructional dissent identified triggering agents and types of dissent messages (Goodboy, 2011a), as well as proposed a way to further investigate types of dissent messages (Goodboy, 2011b). However, scholars do not yet know what factors may influence students to express dissent. Kassing (1997) suggests that dissent strategy selection occurs in light of *individual*, *relational*, and *organizational* influences. Thus, in order to learn more about dissent in the instructional context, the aim of this project is to examine *individual* student characteristics and traits that may influence the types of dissent enacted in the classroom. Goodboy (2011a) recommended that future research investigate *aggressive communication* and *locus of control*, two individual traits which have been examined in relation to organizational dissent (Kassing & Avtgis, 1999, 2001). A related individual trait, *tolerance for disagreement*, may also influence a student's expression of dissent. By exploring contributing factors to students' decisions to dissent, scholars will be able to offer a more complete answer as to *why* students dissent (Goodboy, 2011a). This will not only add to our theoretical understanding of dissent in the instructional context, but practically, identifying the types of students that are more likely to dissent, could help teachers devise strategies for effectively and appropriately responding to dissenters. Further, it may help teachers identify and enact procedural changes that may decrease students' desire to dissent in the first place.

Student Characteristics & Traits

Kassing (1997) proposed that individual factors, defined as “predispositions and expectations people import from outside their respective organization, as well as how they behave within the organization” (p. 324), influenced how employees made choices regarding expressing dissent in an organization. Accordingly, predispositions may include temperament, traits, and communication behaviors (Hegstrom, 1991; Kassing, 1997). While organizational scholars have examined the effect of individual factors on employee expressions of dissent, it is currently unclear how individual factors may influence students’ expressions of dissent in the instructional context.

Aggressive communication. Aggressive communication encompasses both argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness (Infante, 1987). *Argumentativeness* constitutes a constructive form of communication in which individuals engage each other about conflicting ideas or issues (Infante & Rancer, 1982; Kassing, 1998). Conversely, *verbal aggressiveness* describes a destructive form of communication in which one person attacks another person’s self-concept rather than engaging in a discussion of ideas (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Although aggressive communication was originally posed from a personality perspective (Infante & Wigley, 1986), Beatty and McCroskey (1997) put forth the idea that aggressive communication may be tied to neurobiological factors and thus be characterized as temperament.

Within the organizational context, Kassing and Avtgis (1999) explored the impact of aggressive communication traits (i.e., argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness) on employee dissent. They argued that since individuals consider the strength of their argument when deciding whether to voice their concerns (Hegstrom, 1991), high argumentativeness would be related to expressions of dissent to someone within the organization who could influence

organizational change (i.e., articulated dissent); whereas, low argumentativeness would be related to expressions of dissent to someone outside of the organization who could not influence organizational change (i.e., displaced dissent). Further, they argued that verbal aggressiveness would be related to expressions of latent (i.e., dissent messages resulting from an employee's lack of skill, resources, or opportunities to access those in power; typically directed to others associated with the organization who do not have power to enact organizational change) and articulated dissent. To test these assertions, employees completed a self-report questionnaire consisting of argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, and types of expressions of dissents. The results revealed that employees high in argumentativeness and low in verbal aggressiveness were more likely to use articulated dissent. Conversely, employees high in verbal aggressiveness were also more likely to use latent dissent. Neither argumentativeness nor verbal aggressiveness was related to displaced dissent. Thus, Kassing and Avtgis' study indicates that aggressive communication traits relate to variations in employee dissent.

Within instructional communication literature, scholars have primarily researched *instructors'* trait aggressive communication (Edwards & Myers, 2007; Kennedy – Lightsey & Myers, 2009; Myers, 2002; Myers & Knox, 2000; Myers & Rocca, 2001; Rocca, 2004; Rocca & McCroskey, 1999; Schrod, 2003); however, some scholars have examined students' trait aggressive communication and the impact of these traits on instructional outcomes (Kennedy-Lightsey & Myers, 2009; Schrod, 2003). For example, Kennedy-Lightsey and Myers (2009) explored the association between aggressive communication traits and students' compliance-gaining messages (i.e., BATs). Participants first completed a self-report measure of verbal aggressiveness and argumentativeness, and then they completed a questionnaire regarding

perceptions of appropriateness and effectiveness of BATs as well as usage. The results revealed that students who reported high verbal aggressiveness also indicated a higher likelihood of using antisocial BATs, though this was mediated by perceptions of antisocial BATs as appropriate and effective. Students' verbal aggressiveness also correlated with likelihood of prosocial BAT use. Argumentativeness did not appear to predict student BAT usage and related to only one neutral BAT strategy as effective, though not appropriate. Kennedy-Lightsey and Myers (2009) concluded that argumentative students may seek instructor compliance less frequently due to its face threatening nature.

Given that trait argumentativeness may be perceived as constructive (Gorden, Infante, & Izzo, 1988) and influences employees to express dissent to their supervisors in order to enact change (Kassing & Avtgis, 1999), and considering students who enact rhetorical dissent primarily express dissent to their teachers in order to change a perceived wrong, it seems logical to assume a positive relationship between trait argumentativeness and rhetorical dissent. To test this line of reasoning, the following hypothesis was posited:

H1: Trait argumentativeness will positively predict rhetorical dissent.

Further, given that trait verbal aggressiveness refers to an individual's predisposition to engage in destructive communication intended to attack and threaten others (Infante & Wigley, 1986) and that vengeful dissent is a form of aggressive and hostile communication intended to hurt the instructor, it seems reasonable to assume a positive relationship between trait verbal aggressiveness and vengeful dissent. To test this line of reasoning, the following hypothesis was posed:

H2: Trait verbal aggressiveness will positively predict vengeful dissent.

Tolerance for disagreement. Tolerance for disagreement (TFD) describes a threshold for detecting and experiencing disagreement (McCroskey & Wheelless, 1976; Teven, 2000). Although previously conceived as a relational variable (McCroskey & Wheelless, 1976), Knutson, McCroskey, Knutson, and Hurt (1979) suggested that TFD described an individual's orientation, and Richmond and McCroskey (1992) revised the definition of TFD to: "the amount of disagreement an individual can tolerate before he or she perceives the existence of conflict in a relationship" (p. 125). McCroskey (1992) suggested that "people with a high tolerance for disagreement are relatively conflict resistant, whereas people with a low tolerance for disagreement are highly conflict prone" (p. 172). Whereas disagreement describes differences of opinion between people (Richmond & McCroskey, 2009), conflict refers to a personalized interaction characterized by verbal aggressiveness, hostility, competition, and distrust (McCroskey & Wheelless, 1976). Individuals with high TFD are more skilled at articulating differences of opinion, presenting arguments, and participating in debate (Richmond & McCroskey, 2010). Additionally, people who have a higher threshold for disagreement are more cognitively and communicatively flexible (Martin, Anderson, & Thweatt, 1988). Accordingly, flexible communicators tend to approach arguments and avoid verbal aggression. Conversely, individuals with low TFD are more likely to be involved in conflict because they lack the skills necessary to argue constructively. Further, when they are involved in a debate, individuals with low TFD may be more likely to use verbal aggression.

Teven (2000; 2004; 2005) extended tolerance for disagreement to the instructional context by examining teachers' TFD. He found that when students perceived the teacher was high in TFD (i.e., conflict resistant), they also perceived the teacher cared more (Teven, 2000)

and was more nonverbally immediate (Teven, 2004). Further, when the teacher was perceived to be high in TFD, students reported higher affect for the course and less cognitive learning loss (Teven, 2005). Thus, Teven's work suggests that TFD affects perceptions and outcomes in the instructional environment.

Because instructional dissent constitutes a student's feelings of disagreement with a class-related practice or policy, it appears logical that a student's TFD may affect how he or she expresses his or her feelings of disagreement. A student who is more skilled or confident discussing different opinions may be more likely to present an argument attempting to persuade a teacher to correct a perceived wrong (i.e., rhetorical dissent). Thus, a student with a higher threshold for disagreement may feel more confident presenting his or her opinion and debating its merit with the teacher. Conversely, just as a teacher with a low TFD (i.e., conflict prone) may be more likely to engage in verbal aggression (Teven, 2000), a student with a low threshold for disagreement (i.e., low TFD) may lack cognitive and communicative flexibility or argumentation skills necessary to converse about a divergent opinion. Because the student will perceive that he or she cannot present an argument well enough to warrant discussing the matter with the course instructor, the student may choose to vent his or her frustration to a classmate, friend, or family member (i.e., expressive dissent). With this in mind, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H3: Tolerance for disagreement will positively predict rhetorical dissent.

H4: Tolerance for disagreement will inversely predict expressive dissent.

Locus of control. Another personality characteristic that differentiates individuals in various situations is his or her perception of control. Locus of control refers to the amount of perceived power an individual has over his or her life (Rotter, 1966). Some individuals believe

they have power or control and that they can work towards a desired outcome and affect change within their life. They are said to have an *internal* locus of control (Levenson, 1974; Rotter, 1966). Conversely, some individuals believe they have little control and that luck, chance, or powerful others primarily influences what happens to them. They are described as having an *external* locus of control (Levenson, 1974; Rotter, 1966). Differences in perceptions of control have been linked to individual differences in perceptions, behaviors, and outcomes in both organizational and instructional settings.

In the organizational context, differences in locus of control have predicted such things as job involvement, work satisfaction, relational satisfaction, type of job, and leadership performance (Abdel-Halim, 1981; Anderson & Schneider, 1987; Avtgis & Brogan, 1999; Mitchell, Smyser, & Weed, 1975). In addition, pertinent to this study, differences in locus of control have been linked to use of different types of dissent strategies. Specifically, Kassing and Avtgis (2001) found that individuals who believed they had control over their own lives (i.e., internal locus of control) were more likely to express dissent to a superior in order to enact organizational change (i.e., articulated dissent), while individuals who believed they had little control over their own lives (i.e., external locus of control) were more likely to express dissent to co-workers (i.e., latent dissent). They concluded that employees who perceived greater control of their work environment enacted more articulated dissent because they are “more persuasive and pro-social in their behavior and because they are less conforming and less avoiding of arguments” (p. 123). In addition, they are “more likely to be satisfied employees who see their organizations as more open to employee input, which provides them with the confidence and comfort to express articulated dissent” (p. 124). Further, they concluded that employees who

perceived less control over their work environment were more likely to express dissent to co-workers instead of someone in a position of power because they perceive that channels for expressing one's opinions remain inaccessible or futile to use" (p. 124).

Within the instructional context, *academic locus of control* describes the amount of perceived control an individual has over his or her learning environment (Arlin & Whitley, 1978; Crandall, Katkovsky, & Crandall, 1965; Trice, 1985). Specifically, a student who perceives a greater amount of control over his or her learning environment, thus taking greater responsibility for academic successes and failures, has an *internal* locus of control (Arlin & Whitley, 1978; Sideliner, 2010). Conversely, a student who perceives a lesser amount of control over his or her learning environment, thus attributing academic successes or failures to luck or others, has an *external* locus of control (Arlin & Whitley, 1978; Sidelinger, 2010).

Differences in academic locus of control have been used to predict differences in student behaviors (Sidelinger, 2010) and perceptions (Wheeless, Stewart, Kearney, & Plax, 1987). For example, regarding student behaviors, Sidelinger (2010) found that students who perceived they had more control over their academic environment were more likely to be involved both in and out of the classroom than were students who perceived less control over their academic successes or failures. In terms of student perceptions, Wheeless et al. (1987) found that students with more academic locus of control (i.e., internals) perceived teachers used behavior alteration techniques (BATs) less frequently than did students with less academic locus of control (i.e., externals) and concluded that, "these differences in perceptions of the teachers' use of BATs testify to the different ways in which internals and externals view their interpersonal world" (p. 257). Thus, differences in control orientations appear to influence both students' perceptions and behaviors

in the instructional setting. However, control orientations have not yet been examined in relation to instructional dissent messages.

Given that locus of control appears to be an individual factor that predicts student perceptions and behaviors in the instructional setting (Sidelinger, 2010; Wheelless et al., 1987) and dissent usage in the organizational context (Kassing & Avtgis, 2001), it seems reasonable that locus of control may predict students' use of dissent in the instructional context. Further, given that students who perceive they have greater control over their academic successes and failures are more likely to prepare for class and participate during class (Sidelinger, 2010), it seems that they would also be more likely to express dissent. Attempting to persuade your teacher to correct a perceived wrong, venting frustrations about classroom experiences, and seeking revenge on a teacher all portray students' efforts to exert their control over their academic successes or failures. While Kassing and Avtgis (2001) found a difference between internals and externals on the type of dissent messages expressed in the organization context, based on the work of Sidelinger (2010), I feel that overall, students with greater locus of control would be more likely to express dissent. Thus, the following hypothesis was posited:

H5: Academic locus of control will positively predict expressions of dissent (i.e., rhetorical, expressive, vengeful).

Methods

Participants

Following approval from the university Internal Review Board, an online survey was administered to approximately 380 undergraduate students enrolled in a basic communication course at a mid-size, private, liberal arts university in the southwestern United States.

Participants included 162 males and 219 females ranging in age from 18 to 30 ($M=19.07$, $SD=1.24$). Approximately 80.3% participants identified as white/Caucasian, 10.2% identified as Hispanic or Latin American, 7.2% identified as Black/African American, 3.9% identified as Asian American or Pacific Islander, 2.6% identified as European American, and 2.6% identified themselves as Other. One hundred eighty-two ($n=182$) participants were classified as freshman, 131 were sophomores, 44 were juniors, and 24 were seniors based on credit hours completed by the student participant. Participation was voluntary.

Procedures

I solicited participation from undergraduate students currently enrolled in an introductory basic speech communication course during the tenth week of the fall semester. A link to the survey was posted on the basic communication course website. Course lab instructors provided students instructions to access the survey during class meetings held the ninth week of the fall semester. Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, students were not asked to take the survey in class. Rather, students completed the survey during a specified time frame (i.e., between 8am Monday and 5pm Friday of the tenth week of school) at a location determined by each student. Students completed the survey in approximately 30 minutes. Minimal course credit (less than 2%) was awarded for completion of the survey at the instructor's discretion. Students opting not to participate completed an alternative assignment for equal credit in the course.

First, students completed questions regarding self-perceptions of temperament. Second, using Goodboy's (2011a) categories of triggering agents, students identified a policy, procedure, or classroom issue in a course they were currently enrolled with which they disagreed. The remainder of the survey asked questions regarding that particular class. As in Goodboy's (2011a)

study, participants reported unfair testing as the primary triggering agent (37.3%). One hundred sixty-six (n=166) participants reported disagreeing with policies, procedures, or classroom issues in a course required for their major. The instructor in the course which participants experienced disagreement or dissatisfaction was most often female (n=244). One hundred twenty-four (n=124) participants reported that the rank of the instructor of the course in which they experienced disagreement was Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor. One hundred twenty-two (n=122) participants reported not knowing the rank of the instructor of the course in which they disagreed. Eighty-three (n=83) of the instructors were lecturers or adjuncts, and 52 of the instructors were graduate teaching assistants.

Asking students to recall a class in which they are currently enrolled is a methodology aligned with current trends in instructional research, which uses student reflections of real-life situations and reactions versus hypothetical scenarios (Burroughs, 2007; Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004; Goodboy, 2011a, 2011b). Additionally, this methodology mediates problems unique to this line of research such as dissent not occurring in every classroom situation, not all students dissenting, and discrepancies in educational environment, student perceptions of the event based on changes in emotional state and memory of the event due to lapse in time between the occurrence of dissent and student report completion (Goodboy, 2011a, 2011b).

Measures

Argumentativeness scale. Originally developed by Infante and Rancer (1982), this 20-item Likert measure is composed of two trait variables – tendency to approach arguments and tendency to avoid arguments. Items such as, “Arguing over controversial issues improves my intelligence” represent the tendency to approach arguments. In contrast, “While in an argument, I

worry that the person I am arguing with will form a negative impression of me,” is an example of a tendency to avoid arguments item. Participants responded to items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “almost always true” (5) to “almost never true” (1). To measure the argumentativeness trait, the items included in each dimension were added separately, then the sum of the tendency to avoid items was subtracted from the tendency to approach sum. For this study, Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

Verbal aggressiveness scale. In accordance with recent concerns regarding the dimensionality of Infante and Wigley’s (1986) Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (Levine et al., 2004), only the 10 negatively-worded items were used to assess verbal aggressiveness. Students reported self-perceptions of their verbally aggressive behavior by answering questions such as “If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character” on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “almost never true” to “almost always true.” For this study, Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

Revised tolerance for disagreement scale. Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond (1988) revised the original tolerance for disagreement scale (Knutson, McCroskey, Knutson, & Hurt, 1979) in order to address concerns with face validity. Thus, the researchers updated each item to say “disagreement” where the word “conflict” previously appeared. Additionally, the researchers instituted a 5-point Likert scale instead of the 7-point scale used in the original measure and reduced the number of items on the scale to 15, eliminating items that did not add to the measure’s reliability. Items such as “I don’t like to be in situations where people are in disagreement” comprise this measure. For this study, Cronbach’s alpha was .82.

Academic locus of control scale. Trice's (1985) Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) Scale specifically measures college students' perceptions of control of academic performance. The scale consists of 28 statements to which respondents indicated true or false. Internal locus of control individuals may answer "true" to items such as "College grades most often reflect the effort you put into classes" or "I never feel really hopeless – there is always something I can do to improve my situation." Individuals with an external locus of control may answer "false" to the same items, but they may answer "true" to items such as, "I came to college because it was expected of me" or "I can be easily talked out of studying." Following the calculation procedure employed by Sidelinger (2010), the items were re-coded so that internal academic locus of control was represented by a higher score and external academic locus of control was characterized by a lower score. For this study, Cronbach's alpha was .91.

Instructional dissent scale. Goodboy (2011a, 2011b) drew on Kassing's (1997) Organizational Dissent Scale to create a state measure of students' expressions of dissent in the classroom. Both measures include three different expressions of dissent that may be used in a particular context. The Instructional Dissent Scale consists of 22 items on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from (0) "Never" to (4) "Very Often" (Goodboy, 2011a, 2011b). The measure incorporates three dimensions of student expressions of dissent – expressive (e.g., "I complain to others to express my frustrations with this course."), rhetorical (e.g., "I tell my teacher when I disagree with him/her so I can do better in this course."), and vengeful (e.g., "I hope one day my teacher gets fired as a result of my criticism of him/her."). Although a relatively new scale, the measure opens the door for dissent research within instructional communication. For this study,

Cronbach's alpha was .96 for expressive dissent, .93 for rhetorical dissent, and .92 for vengeful dissent.

Data Analysis

To test the seven hypotheses, Pearson product-moment correlations were obtained. In addition, post-hoc analysis included three multiple regression models using student traits (i.e., argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, tolerance for disagreement, academic locus of control) as predictor variables and types of dissent (i.e., expressive, rhetorical, vengeful) as separate criterion variables.

Results

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations and Pearson product-moment correlations are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Product-moment Correlations for all Variables (N = 381)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Instructional Dissent</i>								
1. Expressive	2.97	.99						
2. Rhetorical	2.03	.91	.313**					
3. Vengeful	1.37	.68	.186**	.473**				
<i>Student Traits</i>								
4. Argumentativeness	1.00	1.25	-.100*	.095*	-.010			
5. Verbal aggressiveness	2.16	.69	.147**	.215**	.274**	.322**		
6. Tolerance for disagreement	42.45	7.69	-.126**	.050	-.021	.671**	.154**	
7. Academic locus of control	1.41	.13	.050	.037	.155**	-.025	.193**	-.012

Note. ** correlations are significant at $p < .05$, * correlations are significant at $p < .01$.

The first hypothesis predicted that trait argumentativeness would positively predict rhetorical dissent. Pearson product-moment correlations revealed that trait argumentativeness was positively related to rhetorical dissent ($r = .095, p < .05$). Thus, hypothesis one was supported.

The second hypothesis predicted that trait verbal aggressiveness would positively predict vengeful dissent. Pearson product-moment correlations revealed that trait verbal aggressiveness was positively associated with vengeful dissent ($r = .274, p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis two was supported.

The third and fourth hypotheses predicted that tolerance for disagreement would positively predict rhetorical dissent and inversely predict expressive dissent. Pearson product-moment correlations revealed that tolerance for disagreement was not positively associated with rhetorical dissent ($r = .050, ns$), however tolerance for disagreement was inversely associated with expressive dissent ($r = -.126, p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis three was not supported, but hypothesis four was supported.

Hypotheses five predicted that academic locus of control would positively predict expressions of dissent. While in the predicted direction, Pearson product-moment correlations revealed that there was no significant relationship between academic locus of control and expressive dissent ($r = -.061, ns$) or between academic locus of control and rhetorical dissent ($r = -.04, ns$). However, there was a significant relationship between academic locus of control and vengeful dissent ($r = .15, p < .01$). Therefore, hypothesis five was partially supported.

Finally, post-hoc analysis was conducted to examine the unique and combined contributions of student traits to expressive, rhetorical, and vengeful dissent in the classroom. In

all three models of dissent, verbal aggressiveness was the only factor that emerged as a significant predictor. That is, in the multivariate model for expressive dissent, verbal aggressiveness ($\beta = .180, p < .001$) emerged as a significant predictor ($F(4, 376) = 5.24, p < .001, R^2 = .053$). Similarly, in the multivariate model of rhetorical dissent, verbal aggressiveness ($\beta = .201, p < .001$) emerged as a significant predictor ($F(4, 376) = 4.67, p < .001, R^2 = .047$). Finally, in the multivariate model of vengeful dissent, verbal aggressiveness ($\beta = .297, p < .001$) emerged as a significant predictor ($F(4, 376) = 9.05, p < .001, R^2 = .088$).

Discussion

The primary goal of this project was to examine the relationship between individual factors (i.e., student characteristics) and instructional dissent messages. Specifically, using Kassing's (1997) model of organizational dissent as a theoretical foundation, we examined three student characteristics - aggressive communication (i.e., argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness), tolerance of disagreement, and academic locus of control. Overall, the results suggest that individual factors do somewhat predict students' use of dissent in the instructional context, with verbal aggressiveness being the most influential of the student characteristics examined. Consequently, our results enhance our understanding of instructional dissent and further extend Kassing's model of dissent to the instructional context.

The first two hypotheses tested the relationship between aggressive communication traits and instructional dissent. Aggressive communication is composed of two separate traits – argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness. *Argumentativeness* refers to constructive communication in which individuals express conflicting ideas or issues (Infante & Rancer, 1982), whereas *verbal aggressiveness* describes destructive communication in which one person

verbally attacks another person's self-concept rather than their ideas (Infante & Wrigley, 1986). Hypothesis one, which predicted that argumentativeness would be positively associated with rhetorical dissent, was supported. Thus, students who are generally more argumentative are also more likely to voice concerns, complaints, and differing opinions directly to someone in a position of power. That is, they are more likely to communicate their differences of opinion directly to their teacher or another member of the faculty or staff who has the power to right a perceived wrong. Students high in argumentativeness may feel more confident advocating or refuting a position than someone low in argumentativeness; thus, they may feel more comfortable confronting a teacher about a course policy, procedure, or issue to which they disagree or feel strongly about. This finding is consistent with organizational dissent literature. For example, Kassing & Avtgis (1999) found that employees with high argumentativeness (and low verbal aggressiveness) were more likely to express articulated dissent. Articulated dissent, or upward dissent, is characterized by communicating disagreements or contradictory opinions to a superior. In the instructional context, a teacher or department chairperson may be considered a student's superior. Therefore, someone with trait argumentativeness is more likely to express dissent to a superior in both organizational and instructional contexts.

Although not included in our original predictions, the data also showed a negative correlation between argumentativeness and expressive dissent. Thus, students with trait argumentativeness are less likely to share their frustrations with individuals who do not have the power to do anything about it. Whereas rhetorical dissent refers to students' attempts to change course policies or procedures by communicating with the teacher or another faculty or staff member, expressive dissent is akin to venting. Students enacting expressive dissent voice their

frustrations or disagreements over course policies and procedures to other classmates, family, or friends in order to feel better. Our results are consistent with Kassing and Avtgis (1999) who found that verbally aggressive (not argumentative) employees tended to express latent dissent (i.e., dissent expressed to a co-worker or someone not in a position of power). Kassing and Avtgis proposed that employees with a strong argument would be more likely to voice their complaint to someone of power who could influence organizational change. Thus, similarly, students high in trait argumentativeness are more likely to express dissent to a teacher (i.e., rhetorical dissent) who is in a position to correct the perceived wrong, instead of venting their frustrations to a classmate or friend (i.e., expressive dissent).

Hypothesis two, which predicted that verbal aggressiveness would positively predict vengeful dissent, was also supported. Thus, our results support the idea that students high in verbal aggressiveness are more likely to attempt to ruin a teacher's reputation by exposing his/her bad practices to others, criticize the teacher in hopes he/she gets fired, spread negative publicity about the teacher, and get revenge on the teacher by making sure everyone knows how bad he/she is. This finding seems to be in line with previous scholars' claims that verbally aggressive individuals lack the skill set to devise constructive arguments, which leads to their use of antisocial communication behaviors, such as vengeful dissent. For example, Infante, Trebing, Shepherd, and Seeds (1984) suggested that individuals high in verbal aggressiveness may lack the argumentative skills required to develop and support a position over a controversial issue. Similarly, Hegstrom (1991) posited that a key factor employees consider before expressing dissent is the strength of their argument. Furthermore, Kassing (1998) proposed that an employee's skill deficiency may lead the employee to use aggressive albeit indirect expressions

of dissent. Thus, students high in verbal aggressiveness may not feel capable of explaining their contradictory opinions. Consequently, these students may resort to attacking their teacher's image through vengeful dissent.

However, on the other hand, verbal aggressiveness was also related to expressive and rhetorical dissent. Thus, students high in verbal aggression are also more likely to voice their concerns, complaints, and disagreements to others (i.e., expressive dissent) and to teachers directly (i.e., rhetorical dissent). One possible explanation for the relationship between student verbal aggressiveness and all three forms of instructional dissent is the lack of specificity in the Instructional Dissent Scale items. Whereas vengeful dissent items explicitly indicate behaviors that would damage or hurt the teacher with whom the dissenting student disagreed, items on the measure representing rhetorical and expressive dissent appear to be somewhat ambiguous in regards to the actual content of the message and the reasons for the dissent. Items signifying rhetorical dissent such as "When I wanted my teacher to remedy my concerns, I complained to him/her" do not indicate whether the student complained by presenting an opposing viewpoint (i.e., argumentation) or by insulting the teacher (i.e., verbal aggression). Likewise, items such as "I complained about my teacher and course because it made me feel better" designed to identify expressive dissent do not specify whether the student presented opposing ideas or made negative remarks in order to tarnish the teacher's image or career. Therefore, students may attempt to right a perceived wrong (i.e., rhetorical dissent) or feel better (i.e., expressive dissent) by discussing a controversial issue (i.e., argumentation) or by derogating his or her instructor (i.e., verbal aggression). Another explanation is that expressions of instructional dissent are not

necessarily based on a lack of ability or skill-set, rather expressions of dissent might depend primarily on ones' innate desire to derogate others.

Hypotheses three and four predicted students' expressions of dissent based on their tolerance for disagreement. Tolerance for disagreement refers to the amount of disagreement an individual can withstand before attributing conflict to a relationship (Richmond & McCroskey, 1992). People with a high tolerance for disagreement are able to deal with more disparity in relationships than those with a low tolerance for disagreement. Hypothesis three, which predicted that students' tolerance for disagreement would positively predict rhetorical dissent, was not supported. Thus, even though individuals with a higher threshold for disagreement may have the skill-set to build an argument and communicate their frustrations to a person in a position of power (Richmond & McCroskey, 2010), our results suggest that students with a higher tolerance for disagreement are not necessarily going to discuss their divergent ideas and opinions directly with their teacher. One explanation for this could be that students with a high tolerance for disagreement do not perceive differences of opinion in the classroom as problematic, or at least not problematic enough to warrant a conversation with the teacher. In other words, these students may not perceive a wrong that necessarily needs to be corrected. Thus, they may have no need to express their disagreement directly to the teacher.

Hypothesis four, which predicted that students' tolerance for disagreement would inversely predict expressive dissent, was supported. Thus, our results suggest that students who have a high tolerance for disagreement are less likely to express their frustrations, disappointments, and complaints to their peers. This prediction was based on the idea that individuals with a higher threshold for disagreement are better able to articulate their ideas and

formulate arguments (Richmond & McCroskey, 2010) and therefore would be more likely to complain directly to their teacher and less likely to vent to their classmates. However, based on the previous results, it may not totally be about lacking the necessary skills to communicate disagreements. Students may not vent their frustrations to classmates, friends, or family because they may not have anything to vent about. In other words, as previously mentioned, they may not perceive differences of opinion in the classroom problematic. However, further research is needed to test this notion.

Hypotheses five, which predicted a relationship between academic locus of control and expressions of instructional dissent, received partial support. Although all associations between academic locus of control and expressions of dissent were in the predicted direction, the only significant relationship was between academic locus of control and vengeful dissent. Thus, our results suggest that students who perceive greater control over their learning environment may discuss disagreements with their teacher or their peers, but overall they are more likely to communicate with others in order to get revenge on the teacher. A student with a higher academic locus of control believes that his or her actions within the learning environment will affect his or her academic successes and failures (Arlin & Whitley, 1978). That is, they believe their actions matter. Students with high academic locus of control believe they have the power to effect change, and they are therefore more motivated to take things into their own hands in order to get results. Thus, when students with high academic locus of control feel like they have been wronged, they are going to expose their teachers' bad practices to others, spread negative publicity about the teacher, and even try to get their teacher fired.

Finally, we sought to determine the most significant predictor of instructional dissent. Among argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, tolerance for disagreement, and academic locus of control, only verbal aggressiveness emerged as a significant predictor of rhetorical, expressive, and vengeful dissent. However, even then, it only accounted for 5-8% of the variance in the different dissent messages (i.e., rhetorical, expressive, and vengeful dissent). Nonetheless, our results suggest that a student high in verbal aggressiveness may use any of the three forms of instructional dissent in order to express disagreement or dissatisfaction with a classroom policy or procedure. That is, they may attempt to right a perceived wrong by communicating directly with the teacher (i.e., rhetorical dissent), venting to their peers (i.e., expressive dissent), or seeking revenge on the teacher (i.e., vengeful dissent) (Goodboy, 2011a), all of which allow them to communicate their disagreement (Goodboy, 2011a). Unlike other negative student responses, such as student challenge behaviors or nagging behaviors, instructional dissent does not necessarily involve compliance or persuasion of the instructor (Goodboy, 2011a), which would require being able to develop and articulate a well-crafted argument. Instead, instructional dissent is simply expressing a different opinion to someone (i.e., teacher, classmates, others), which most people would likely agree requires much less skill. Therefore, ones' argumentative ability or skill-set is not necessarily the best predictor of dissent in the instructional context, rather ones' desire to derogate others (Infante & Rancer, 1982) was a better predictor in these data. Thus, students who are more verbally aggressive were more likely to express instructional dissent.

Future Research

In light of the results of this study as well as the support found in Goodboy's (2011a, 2011b) studies, scholars may want to continue to explore the four phases of Kassing's (1997) model in the instructional context. Goodboy's (2011a) initial examination of triggering agents and the individual student factors explored in this study only relate to the first two phases of the model, triggering agent and strategy selection influences. Future research should extend the model by investigating the other two phases, strategy selection and expressed dissent. However, the next logical step would be to explore additional factors comprising strategy selection influences and the messages students use to express dissent.

Despite the support found for student characteristics as predictors of instructional dissent, individual factors appear to have small predictive power, indicating that other factors may influence students' expressions of instructional dissent more so than individual characteristics. This finding mirrors organizational dissent literature, which identified organizational factors as the most influential in regards to employee expressions of dissent (Kassing, 2008). Thus, researchers should consider examining organizational factors, such as the size and climate of the classroom and how they relate to expressions of instructional dissent messages. Goodboy (2011b) initially included students' perceptions of justice in the validation and development of the instructional dissent scale. As predicted, students' perceptions of justice positively related to students' expressions of dissent. Thus, additional organizational factors may also apply to the classroom setting and more specifically, influence instructional dissent. Furthermore, differences between the instructional and organizational contexts may reveal that individual, relational, and organizational factors influence students differently than employees. For example, the interpersonal nature of the teacher-student relationship (Frymier & Houser, 2000; Turman &

Schrodt, 2006) may heighten the importance of relational factors that influence a student's choice of dissent messages. Scholars may consider relational factors such as teacher power, which may drive student behavior and therefore, students' expressions of dissent (Paulsel, Chory-Assad, & Dunleavy, 2005). Research also shows that employees may be motivated to dissent about issues related to a co-worker (Kassing & Armstrong, 2002). Thus, students' relationships with their classmates may also influence their expressions of dissent. For example, if one student knows that other students in the class disagree with a class policy to turn in homework on Thursdays, he or she may be more likely to express rhetorical dissent.

Second, instructional dissent scholars should explore the messages students use to express dissent. Neither the Organizational Dissent Scale nor the Instructional Dissent Scale includes specific messages employees or students use when dissenting. Garner (2009b) categorized employee dissent messages, uncovering eleven specific types: circumvention, coalitions, direct-factual appeal, exchange, humor, ingratiation, inspiration, pressure, repetition, solution presentation, and repetition. Garner argued that employees' aggressive communication traits may influence the type of message an employee chooses to use. Thus, future instructional dissent studies may seek to pinpoint specific dissent messages used by students.

Future scholarship may also consider the rate at which students dissent. Although studies have shown that students do express dissent, this particular study reveals that students may not express dissent very often. Scholars may strive to discern whether the lack of reported student dissent is due to student perceptions of their teachers (i.e., they are good and fair and I do not disagree with them), student populations (i.e., small, private, liberal arts school versus a large, state institution), student investment in learning (i.e., very invested or not invested at all), or data

collection practices (i.e., collecting during the same semester may lead to increased perceived risk on behalf of the student; student may not experience or enact dissent during one semester, etc.).

Implications for the Classroom

The results of this study suggest that student characteristics present a limited explanation for students' expressions of instructional dissent. Consequently, how teachers present themselves, interact with their students, and navigate classroom interactions may serve as better predictors of students' expressions of dissent. This is encouraging, given that this is something teachers have control over.

Nevertheless, learning to identify verbal aggressiveness, tolerance for disagreement, and academic locus of control may positively affect an instructor's ability to anticipate, respond to, or mitigate instructional dissent. In addition, contrary to the organizational literature which highlights the positive effects of employee dissent, Goodboy (2011a) argued that instructional dissent should not be part of the classroom experience. However, dissent in the classroom does exist and may lead to positive change (Goodboy, 2011a; Goodboy, 2011b; Horan, Chory, & Goodboy, 2010; Kassing, 1997, 1998). Therefore, learning to identify factors that may predict dissent and respond to dissent in an effective manner is beneficial to instructors.

Limitations

As with any study, this project included several limitations. First, one item was mistakenly excluded from the Tolerance for Disagreement measure. Despite this error, a Cronbach's alpha of .82 was achieved for the scale. Second, this study relied on self-report survey data. As Goodboy (2011b) noted, students' reports of dissent are one-sided. Additionally,

without supplementary qualitative information describing the dissent message a student delivered and the teacher's perspective of the incident, we only have limited information regarding the actual dissent event. Third, students indicated that they did not dissent that often. Most students indicated a triggering agent consistent with Goodboy's (2011a) nine identified triggering agents, but overall they did not report using instructional dissent that much. This may be due to a homogenous sample of college students from a small, private, southwestern university. Considering the prevalence of student dissent accounted for in Horan, Chory, and Goodboy (2010), a more diverse sample may include greater instances of instructional dissent. Finally, Burroughs (2007) noted that students may use nonverbal behaviors to resist instructor compliance-gaining attempts. Only verbal dissent messages were examined in this study, thus future scholars should examine nonverbal dissent messages as well.

Conclusion

Instructional dissent is an important part of the teaching and learning process. Therefore, it is important that researchers explore students' motivations (i.e., strategy selection influences) and messages in order to respond appropriately and effectively. This study identified a particular student characteristic (i.e., verbal aggressiveness) that predicts instructional dissent. By identifying students with this characteristic, teachers and administrators may be more prepared to respond to expressions of student dissent when they occur. Thus, scholars should continue to explore instructional dissent. Although Kassing's (1997) model of organizational dissent provides a useful framework for examining instructional dissent, scholars need to begin to identify how dissent in the instructional context is both similar to and different from dissent in

the organizational context. Illuminating this process can assist in creating more positive classroom experiences for everyone.

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Appendix A: Argumentativeness Scale

Instructions: This questionnaire contains statements about arguing controversial issues. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally by indicating your perceived rate of occurrence. Remember, consider each item in terms of arguing controversial issues.

Almost Never True (ANT)	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True (AAT)		
1	2	3	4	5		
			ANT	AAT		
1.	When in an argument, I worry that the person I am arguing with will form a negative impression of me.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Arguing over controversial issues improves my intelligence.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I enjoy avoiding arguments.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I am energetic and enthusiastic when I argue.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Once I finish an argument I promise myself that I will not get into another.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Arguing with a person creates more problems for me than it solves.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I have a pleasant, good feeling when I win a point in an argument.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	When I finish arguing with someone I feel nervous and upset.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I enjoy a good argument over a controversial issue.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I get an unpleasant feeling when I realize I am about to get into an argument.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I enjoy defending my point of view on an issue.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I am happy when I keep an argument from happening.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I do not like to miss the opportunity to argue a controversial issue.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I prefer being with people who rarely disagree with me.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I consider an argument an exciting intellectual challenge.	1	2	3	4	5

16. I find myself unable to think of effective points during an argument.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I feel refreshed and satisfied after an argument on a controversial issue.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I have the ability to do well in an argument.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I try to avoid getting into arguments.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I feel excitement when I expect that a conversation I am in is leading to an argument.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B: Verbal Aggressiveness Scale

Instructions: This survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally when you try to influence other persons.

	Almost Never True (ANT) 1	Rarely True 2	Occasionally True 3	Often True 4	Almost Always True (AAT) 5
				ANT	AAT
1. When individuals are very stubborn, I use insults to soften the stubbornness.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When people refuse to do a task I know is important, without good reason, I tell them they are unreasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, I insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance I lose my temper and say rather strong things to them.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When individuals insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When people do things which are mean or cruel, I attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, I yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I am not able to refute others' positions, I try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C: Revised Tolerance for Disagreement Scale

Instructions: This questionnaire involves people's feelings and orientations. Hence, there are no right or wrong answers. We just want you to indicate your reaction to each item. All responses are to reflect the degree to which you believe the item applies to you.

	Strongly Agree (SA) 1	Agree 2	Undecided 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree (SD) 5
				SA	SD
1. It is more fun to be involved in a discussion where there is a lot of disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I enjoy talking to people with points of view different than mine.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I don't like to be in situations where people are in disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I prefer being in groups where everyone's beliefs are the same as mine.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Disagreements are generally helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I prefer to change the topic of discussion when disagreement occurs.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I enjoy arguing with other people about things on which we disagree.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I would prefer to work independently rather than to work with other people and have disagreements.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I would prefer joining a group where no disagreements occur.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I don't like to disagree with other people.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Given a choice, I would leave a conversation rather than continue a disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I avoid talking with people who I think will disagree with me.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I enjoy disagreeing with others.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Disagreement stimulates a conversation and causes me to communicate more.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D: Academic Locus of Control Scale

Instructions: This questionnaire contains statements regarding your perception of control over academic outcomes. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

	True (T) 1	False (F) 2	T	F
1. College grades most often reflect the effort you put into classes.			1	2
2. I came to college because it was expected of me.			1	2
3. I have largely determined my own career goals.			1	2
4. Some people have a knack for writing, while others will never write well no matter how hard they try.			1	2
5. I have taken a course because it was an easy good grade at least once.			1	2
6. Professors sometimes make an early impression of you and then no matter what you do, you cannot change that impression.			1	2
7. There are some subjects in which I could never do well.			1	2
8. Some students, such as student leaders and athletes, get free rides in college classes.			1	2
9. I sometimes feel that there is nothing I can do to improve my situation.			1	2
10. I never feel really hopeless – there is always something I can do to improve my situation.			1	2
11. I would never allow social activities to affect my studies.			1	2
12. There are many more important things for me than getting good grades.			1	2
13. Studying every day is important.			1	2
14. For some courses it is not important to go to class.			1	2
15. I consider myself highly motivated to achieve success in life.			1	2
16. I am a good writer.			1	2
17. Doing work on time is always important to me.			1	2
18. What I learn is more determined by college and course requirements than by what I want to learn.			1	2
19. I have been known to spend a lot of time making decisions which others do not take seriously.			1	2
20. I am easily distracted.			1	2

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 21. I can be easily talked out of studying. | 1 | 2 |
| 22. I get depressed sometimes and then there is no way I can accomplish what I know I should be doing. | 1 | 2 |
| 23. Things will probably go wrong for me some time in the near future. | 1 | 2 |
| 24. I keep changing my mind about my career goals. | 1 | 2 |
| 25. I feel I will someday make a real contribution to the world if I work hard at it. | 1 | 2 |
| 26. There has been at least one instance in school where social activity impaired my academic performance. | 1 | 2 |
| 27. I would like to graduate from college, but there are more important things in my life. | 1 | 2 |
| 28. I plan well and I stick to my plans. | 1 | 2 |

Appendix E: Instructional Dissent Scale

Instructions: Answer the following statements as to how you responded to your dissatisfaction with the course.

	Never (N) 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Quite Often 4	Very Often (VO) 5
				NO	VO
1. I complained to others to express my frustrations with the course.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I expressed my disappointment about the course to other people because it helped me feel better.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I talked to other students to see if they also had complaints about the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I complained about my teacher and course because it made me feel better.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I attempted to feel better about my frustrations in the class by communicating with other people.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I talked to other students when I was annoyed with my teacher in hopes that I was not the only one.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I tried to feel better about the course by explaining my aggravations to others.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I complained about my teacher to get my frustrations off my chest.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I criticized my teacher's practices to other students because I hoped they would share my criticism.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I talked to other students so we could discuss the problems we had in class.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I told my teacher when I disagreed with him/her so I could do better in the course.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I voiced my concerns to my teacher to make sure I got the best grade possible.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I wanted my teacher to remedy my concerns, I complained to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I voiced my opinions to my teacher when there was a disagreement because I wanted to do better in the course.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I expressed my disagreements with my teacher because I	1	2	3	4	5

- wanted something to change in the course for the better.
- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. I had no problem telling my teacher what I needed him/her to do for me to succeed in the course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I hoped to ruin my teacher's reputation by exposing his/her bad practices to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I talked to other teachers and let them know my current teacher was inferior. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I hope one day my teacher gets fired as a result of my criticism of him/her. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I spread negative publicity about my teacher so that everyone knows how bad he/she is. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I make sure that everyone knows how awful my teacher was to get revenge for the bad semester I had. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I sought revenge on my teacher my trying to get him/her in trouble. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |