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Examining the Associations Among Home–School Dissonance, Amotivation, and Classroom Disruptive Behavior for Urban High School Students

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Abstract

The current study examined the association among home–school dissonance, amotivation, and classroom disruptive behavior among 309 high school juniors and seniors at two urban high schools in the Southern region of the country. Students completed two subscales of the Patterns of Learning Activities Scales (PALs) and one subscale of the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS). ANCOVA analyses revealed significant differences in classroom disruptive behaviors for the gender independent variable. Controlling for gender in the multiple hierarchical regression analyses, it was revealed that home–school dissonance significantly predicted both amotivation and classroom disruptive behavior. In addition, a Sobel mediation analysis showed that amotivation was a significant mediator of the association between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behavior. Findings and limitations are discussed.

Keywords

home–school dissonance; classroom disruptive behavior; amotivation; high school students; urban education

Classroom disruptive behaviors are considered the most prevalent behavior problems reported during early childhood and adolescence (Buyse, Verschueren, Doumen, Van Damme, & Maes, 2008; Little, 2005; Murphy, Theodore, Aloiso, Alric-Edwards, & Hughes, 2007; Myers & Pianta, 2008). Classroom disruptive behaviors have been classified as externalizing behaviors, where students tend to exhibit hostile and aggressive behaviors and

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internalizing behaviors and where students tend to withdraw and avoid classroom confrontations by not participating in classroom activities or fully interacting with teachers (Burgess, Wojslawowicz, Rubin, Rose-Krasnor, & Booth-LaForce, 2006). Many urban classrooms have been distinguished by a significant number of students who exhibit classroom behavior problems (Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996).

The research literature has consistently shown that male students—irrespective of educational level or school type—have higher incidence of classroom disruptive behavior and experience the outcomes of such behaviors (i.e., main office referrals, school suspension, and expulsions) significantly more than female students (Gregory, 1997; Lumley, McNeil, Herschell, & Bahl, 2002; Taylor & Foster, 1986). Most recently, Thomas, Bierman, Thompson, and Powers, (2008) showed that male students were reported by their classroom teacher to display significantly higher disruptive behaviors than female students (Thomas et al., 2008). Skiba Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002) also reported that male students were significantly more likely than female students to have office referrals resulting from several classroom disruptive behaviors such as fighting and vandalism (Skiba et al., 2002).

Though classroom disruptive behaviors have long been linked to academic performance and promotion, adolescent delinquency, and other academically related variables such as motivation (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004; Broidy et al., 2003; Weishew & Peng, 1993), some researchers have argued that greater quantitative investigation of the sources of classroom disruptive behavior is needed (Thomas et al., 2008). Some predictors of classroom disruptive behaviors have ranged from school and class size, extracurricular activities such as child-rearing and after-school employment, neighborhood and community factors such as socioeconomic status, urban versus nonurban status, and percentage of single-parent households to seating arrangements inside students' actual classrooms (Baumeister, Zimmerman, Barnett, & Caldwell, 2007; Lippman et al., 1996; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008; Thomas et al., 2008; Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). Indeed, there are several factors within and outside the actual classroom that are associated with classroom disruptive behaviors.

Some major sources of classroom disruptive behavior found within the classroom are the perceptions of the student–teacher relationship (Buyse et al., 2008; Myers & Pianta, 2008; Weishew & Peng, 1993). Often, students who attend urban schools enter the classroom with many distinct and diverse academic and discipline needs that many schools and teachers are not prepared to address (Weiss & Fantuzzo, 2001). Researchers have shown that the students who form close relationships with teachers enjoy schooling more, have better social relationships with their peers and teachers, perform better in schools, and report less classroom disruptive behaviors than those students that do not report such relationships (Resnick et al., 1997). In addition, among a nationally representative sample of high school students, Resnick and colleagues (1997) showed that greater connectedness to teachers was predictive of lower rates of emotional and psychological distress, suicidal ideation and behavior, violent behavior, and early sexual activities. These behavioral reports were found to be more endemic to students with weaker student–teacher bonds (Myers & Pianta, 2008; Resnick et al., 1997).

Classroom disruptive behaviors can be predicted by the quality of student–teacher relationships (Myers & Pianta, 2008). According to ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), however, there are several contextual factors and interaction patterns that occur in classrooms in particular and public schools in general that not only influence the student–teacher relationship but also may be associated with classroom disruptive behaviors (Myers & Pianta, 2008; Stewart, 2008). One of these factors is home–school dissonance.

It is likely, for example, that strong student–teacher bonds are reflective of and the product of the degree of alignment between the values and practices espoused in students’ out-of-school contexts (e.g., home) and those sanctioned in school by their teachers. That is, when students’ feel that the values and behaviors they bring to the public school classroom are honored and even used by their teachers, this may improve how students view their teachers, thus, student–teacher bonds, and, ultimately, the prevalence of classroom disruptive behaviors (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2001). However, if these same students believe that their preferred out-of-school values and behaviors are not acknowledged or respected by classroom teachers, it is likely that they may not hold favorable attitudes toward their teachers or their relationships with them and, consequently, may engage in classroom disruptive behaviors (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2001). It is often the case that many teachers are not prepared to effectively manage urban classrooms (Graziano, 2005; Okpala, Rotich-Tanui, & Ardley, 2009). Thus, it may be difficult for teachers to effectively relate to students from diverse backgrounds, who hold values that are not consistent with their own.

DiLalla and Mullineaux (2008) and Stewart (2008) suggest that, along with the home and other out-of-school contexts, the classroom environment is considered one of the multiple contexts where children develop. These authors also suggest that both the classroom and home contexts and the behaviors and attitudes learned within each are predictive of students’ classroom activities. However, what is uncertain in the educational literature is the impact of the interaction between values and attitudes espoused both at home and school on students’ classroom behaviors. From the psychological literature, it can be gleaned that students bring specific values and attitudes from the home context to school (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2001; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Also in most mainstream public schools, there is often an alternative set of values and attitudes that students must adopt and exhibit to ensure a chance at academic success (American Psychological Association, 2003; Tyler et al., 2008). Many students—low-income, urban and rural students of color in particular— may experience home–school dissonance because their preferred, home-based values and attitudes are not fully aligned with those promoted at their school (Arunkumar, Midgley, & Urdan, 1999; Kumar, 2006). This degree of dissonance between those value-based behaviors exhibited at home and those advanced at school may serve as a source for students’ behaviors at school, particularly classroom disruptive behaviors. Given this, the purpose of the current study is to extend this line of research on classroom disruptive behaviors by examining urban students’ perceptions of home–school dissonance and their association with classroom disruptive behavior reports. The major research question driving this study asks “Does the reported degree of dissonance between home and school have any association with high school students’ classroom behaviors, particularly classroom disruptive behaviors?” The literature contains several anecdotal and empirical reports of the role that perceived home–school

dissonance has on student performance and its psychological antecedents (Arunkumar et al., 1999; Gay, 2000; Kumar, 2006). No studies to date, however, have examined the relationship between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behavior, particularly with an urban high school sample, where the prevalence of disruptive behavior at school is said to peak (Little, 2005).

In addition, this study will also explore the psychological process involved in the exhibition of classroom disruptive behaviors. Particularly, the researchers seek to determine whether students' reports of amotivation mediate the relationship between home–school dissonance and disruptive behavior. Inclusion of the amotivation factor results from the literature that suggests that high school students' classroom disruptive behaviors emerged from little to no motivation to excel academically (Green-Demers & Pelletier, 2003; Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006; Snyder & Hoffman, 2002). In addition, amotivation is linked conceptually and empirically to various classroom factors such as perceptions of home–school dissonance and unfavorable student–teacher relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Thus, to gain a better understanding of the association between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors, amotivation will be included in analyses as a possible mediator between the two aforementioned factors. In addition, whether amotivation reports actually predict classroom disruptive behaviors will be discerned in the current study. The major research question driving this set of analyses asks “Is the relationship between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors significantly mediated by amotivation reports?” A review of the literature on home–school dissonance and amotivation will precede the methodology for the current study.

Home–School Dissonance

Though several educational researchers have offered anecdotal evidence to support the existence and effects of home–school dissonance (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2001), much of the data offering empirical evidence of such effects have been found in the work of Kumar (2006). Borrowing from the work of Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1991), Kumar defines home–school dissonance as the perceived differences between the values and operations extant in students' home or out-of-school environment and those salient throughout their formal schooling experiences (Arunkumar et al., 1999; Kumar, 2006). According to Kumar (2006), students from all grade levels and geographical areas experience dissonance when the cultural values, beliefs, and norms of their home are incongruent with those found in the school. In particular, Arunkumar and colleagues (1999) note that “students from cultures outside the mainstream (i.e., many urban and students of color) may experience a sense of dissonance when they encounter a devaluing of their beliefs and behaviors at schools that reflect the dominant White, middle-class ideology” (p. 442). Other education researchers agree that differences in home and school values and operations are linked to issues of culture (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2001). Some work has corroborated this claim (Tyler et al., 2008).

Throughout Kumar's research, along with several other ethnographic accounts (Gay, 2000; Phelan et al., 1991), the effects of exposure to a dissimilar or dissonant learning environment have proven to be debilitating for many students, including White, middle-class students. For example, Arunkumar et al. (1999) found no significant differences in reports of home–

school dissonance between African American and European American middle-grade students. However, they showed that students reporting high levels of home–school dissonance also reported lower levels of future hopefulness, academic efficacy, self-esteem, and grade point average (GPA). These students also reported higher levels of anger and self-deprecation (Arunkumar et al., 1999).

In a later study, Kumar (2006) employed home–school dissonance as a criterion variable. Specifically, Kumar (2006) used multilevel growth curve analysis in a study examining the associations between middle school students' perceptions of classroom goal structures and teachers' reported classroom practices and home–school dissonance. Analyses revealed that students' perceptions of classroom performance goals were predictive of home–school dissonance. In addition, teachers' reported mastery goal instructional practices were significantly related to decrease in home–school dissonance as students made the transition from elementary to middle school.

Taken together, these studies suggest that home–school dissonance can be viewed as both a predictor of various achievement-related outcomes and their psychological and behavioral antecedents (e.g., academic efficacy and appropriate, teacher-sanctioned classroom behaviors) and a criterion variable predicted by several contextual factors (e.g., perceptions of classroom goal structure and teacher-based goal orientation instruction). Given the predictive nature of home–school dissonance in the aforementioned research (Arunkumar et al., 1999), it is expected that home–school dissonance reports will be predictive of reported classroom disruptive behaviors. That is, if students' reports of home–school dissonance are related to lowered academic efficacy, lowered self-esteem, hopelessness, and low GPA, it is likely that—in a performance-oriented context such as the public school classroom—students would resort to classroom disruptive behaviors rather than academic success-promoting behaviors when exposed to home–school dissonance. Also likely is the notion that participation in classroom disruptive behaviors may covary with a diminished sense of academic motivation or amotivation.

Amotivation

Amotivation is a construct found in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Self-determination theory was conceptualized to better understand the factors that motivate students in the classroom to behave in ways conducive or misaligned with academic success (Legault et al., 2006). According to the theory, behaviors are, at least, partially influenced by intrinsic motivation (pleasure and interest-related motives), extrinsic motivation (instrumental motives), and amotivation (an absence of motivation; Legault et al., 2006). According to Deci and Ryan (2002), amotivation is defined as a psychological state where individuals cannot identify an association between their behavior and the outcome of that behavior. Amotivated individuals often feel detached from their future actions and, as a result, tend to invest little effort or interest in actually executing such actions. For high school students, in the place of executing such behaviors are classroom boredom, inadequate concentration in class, higher levels of psychological stress, and eventual high school dropout (Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992).

Given the literature, another proposed outcome of the presence of home–school dissonance and amotivation is classroom disruptive behaviors. A recent study uncovered that academic motivation was statistically associated with reported problem behaviors and academic performance among a Canadian high school student sample (Legault et al., 2006). However, potential sources of amotivation, namely, home–school dissonance, were not explored. Again, the literature on both home–school dissonance and amotivation suggest that each could likely be a strong predictor of classroom disruptive behavior among low-income urban and rural high school students. Thus, the current study seeks to examine this. In addition, the current study will examine whether the association between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors is mediated by amotivation. That is, the current study will explore whether high school students' exposure to a classroom context where they feel that their values and attitudes are or are not taken into full consideration may prompt participation in classroom disruptive behaviors vis-à-vis feelings of amotivation.

Method

Sample

A convenience sample of three hundred nine high school students from two urban high schools in the Southeastern region of the country participated in the current study. The high schools were randomly selected from a list of high schools near the institution hosting the research. The majority of the students at the two high schools were African American (80%). Seventy-four percent of the sample was on free or reduced lunch. Sixty-three percent of the sample was female, and 64% of the sample was juniors. Forty-four percent of the sample was 17 years of age. The average GPA of all students was 2.98 with a standard deviation of .56.

Instruments

The Academic Motivation Scale–College Version (AMS–College Version; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992) is a 28-item self-report measure used to assess students' intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation. The AMS has seven different subscales, each of which corresponds to a different form of motivation. The intrinsic domain contains three subscales: Motivation to Know (performing an activity for the satisfaction that one experiences while learning, exploring, or trying something new), Motivation to Accomplish (engaging in an activity for the personal satisfaction of accomplishing a task or creating something) and Motivation to Experience Stimulation (engaging in an activity to experience sensory pleasure or excitement). The extrinsic domain contains three subscales: external regulation (behavior is regulated through external means such as rewards and constraints), introjected regulation (behavior is regulated by the expectations of others), and identified motivation (behavior that is internalized because of external factors). Scale responses for the AMS–College Version are recorded using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*does not correspond at all*) to 7 (*corresponds exactly*). Vallerand and Bissonnette (1992) reported Cronbach's alphas ranging from .83 to .86 for the subscales and test-retest reliability estimates over a 1-month period ranging from .71 to .83.

Amotivation has its own subscale and is described as behaviors that do not facilitate the achievement of a specific goal (Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992). The amotivation subscale of the AMS was used in the current study. Sample items for the amotivation subscale include “Honestly, I don’t know; I really feel that I am wasting my time in school.” Alpha reliability for the amotivation subscale in the current study was .90.

Patterns of adaptive learning scales—The Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scale (PALS; Midgley et al., 2000) was developed to examine the relationship between student motivation, affect and behavior, and the learning environment. The scale is composed of items that assess (a) personal achievement goal orientation; (b) perceptions of teacher’s goals; (c) perceptions of classroom goal structures; (d) academic-related perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and strategies; and (e) perceptions of parents and home life. Items on the PALS are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*very true*). The PALS have been administered to ethnically diverse sample groups at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in low-to-middle-class households.

The classroom disruptive behavior subscale (three items) was used in the current study to assess high school students’ reports of cheating at school. The alpha reliability coefficient for the classroom disruptive behavior subscale in the current study was .86. A sample item from the classroom disruptive behaviors subscale was “I sometimes annoy my teacher during class.” Also, the dissonance between home and school subscale (five items) was used in the current study. The alpha reliability coefficient for this subscale was .88. A sample item from the dissonance between home and school subscale was “I feel troubled because my home life and my school life are like two different worlds.”

Procedures

Two predominantly African American urban public high schools were identified in central Kentucky for data collection. Institutional review board approval was obtained from the University of Kentucky and both Fayette and Jefferson County Public Schools. Subsequently, an initial meeting was arranged with high school administrative personnel to introduce the study and to coordinate data collection. Written informed consent was obtained from participants aged 18 and older. For students below age 18, informed consent from the student’s parent or legal guardian and student assent were obtained prior to survey completion. The survey packet was administered to participants during a single classroom session and students were given 45 min to complete the survey protocol.

Results

Data Analysis Plan

Several preliminary analyses were performed before the analyses germane to the initial research questions were executed. All statistical analyses were computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS 16.0). To begin, multicollinearity examinations using both tolerance and variance inflation factors both indicated that numerical responses for each variable included in the analysis plan were not highly correlated and thus did not measure similar constructs. Following this preliminary analysis, a

multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) will be computed to determine if scores on classroom disruptive behaviors, amotivation, and home–school dissonance vary as a function of ethnicity, gender, and/or class rank. GPA served as the covariate, thereby controlling for student achievement effects on each of these factors. In addition, a bivariate correlation matrix will be computed to determine whether significant associations emerged among home–school dissonance, amotivation, and classroom disruptive behaviors. Along with these correlation analyses, a series of hierarchical regression models will be computed to determine whether (a) home–school dissonance was predictive of amotivation, (b) amotivation was predictive of classroom disruptive behaviors, and (c) home–school dissonance was predictive of classroom disruptive behaviors. According to several researchers (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007), these analyses are aligned with the criteria necessary to examine mediation effects. If the standardized beta coefficients for each of these associations emerge statistically significant, a Sobel test of mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) will be performed to determine if amotivation mediates the relationship between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors.

MANCOVA

A MANCOVA was computed to determine whether scores in home–school dissonance ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 0.90$), amotivation ($M = 1.47$, $SD = 0.62$), and classroom disruptive behaviors ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.10$) vary as a function of ethnicity, gender, and class rank (grade), with GPA as a covariate. No significant F statistics emerged for the ethnicity or class rank variables, $F(3, 272) = .66$, $p = .58$, $\eta^2 = .01$ and $F(3, 272) = .54$, $p = .78$, $\eta^2 = .01$. The gender variable did emerge statistically significant, however, $F(3, 269) = 5.87$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .06$. Subsequent univariate F statistic computations revealed that male high school students ($M = 2.94$) reported significantly higher classroom disruptive behavior scores than did female high school students ($M = 2.54$). Interaction terms for the variables included in the MANCOVA were not statistically significant.

Bivariate Correlations

A correlation matrix was computed to determine the bivariate associations among the variables included in the MANCOVA. Consistent with the MANCOVA results, the associations between the ethnicity and class rank demographic variables and the outcome variables of interest did not reach statistical significance. The gender variable was statistically associated with classroom disruptive behavior ($r = -.27$, $p = .01$). In addition, home–school dissonance was significantly correlated with amotivation ($r = .30$, $p = .01$) and classroom disruptive behaviors ($r = .29$, $p = .01$). In addition, amotivation was strongly associated with classroom disruptive behaviors reports ($r = .31$, $p = .01$). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, including dependent variable means and bivariate correlations.

Regression Analyses

Regression analyses were computed to determine the predictive ability of home–school dissonance and amotivation on classroom disruptive behaviors. Given that student ethnicity and class rank were not significantly associated with home–school dissonance, amotivation or classroom disruptive behaviors, the regression models only examined home–school dissonance and amotivation as predictors of classroom disruptive behaviors. As the

researchers were interested in whether high school students' reports of home–school dissonance and amotivation were predictive of classroom disruptive behaviors, possible gender effects on classroom disruptive behaviors were controlled by including gender in the first step of the regression equation for classroom disruptive behaviors.

The first step of the first regression model contained the gender variable as a control variable. The regression equation containing both home–school dissonance and amotivation as predictors of classroom disruptive behaviors did emerge statistically significant, $F(3, 307) = 22.66, p = .01$. The standardized beta coefficient for home–school dissonance emerged statistically significant ($\beta = .25, t = 4.71, p = .01$) and accounted for 6% of the variance in classroom disruptive behaviors, as shown in Figure 1. Here, a one-unit increase in home–school dissonance was related to a .25 increase in classroom disruptive behaviors. The standardized beta coefficient for amotivation emerged statistically significant ($\beta = .23, t = 4.14, p = .01$) and accounted for 5% of the variance in classroom disruptive behaviors. Here, a one-unit increase in amotivation was linked to a .23 increase in classroom disruptive behaviors.

Path Analysis

The stipulations reported by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test a mediation model were examined to perform a path analysis with the three variables. Though some research has presented alternative methods to examine the presence of mediation effects (MacKinnon et al., 2007; Mallinckrodt et al., 2006), the Sobel analysis has been regarded as a sufficient procedure to examine mediation effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). In particular, to determine whether amotivation mediates the association between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors, there must be significant prediction of (a) home–school dissonance on amotivation, (b) amotivation on classroom disruptive behaviors, and (c) home–school dissonance on classroom disruptive behavior. Given that the previous regression analyses had already revealed significant associations between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors and amotivation and classroom disruptive behaviors, an association between home–school dissonance and amotivation must emerge statistically significant to test for mediation effects. A simple regression model was computed with home–school dissonance as the predictor variable and amotivation as the criterion variable. Results revealed that home–school dissonance was a significant predictor of amotivation, $F(1, 312) = 28.56, p = .001; \beta = .28, t = 4.71, p = .001$, thus, allowing for a test of the mediating effects of amotivation on home–school dissonance and academic cheating to be conducted.

Having met the requirements to test mediation, a path analysis was conducted. It was expected that the association between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors would be lowered when reports of amotivation were included in analysis. That is, the researchers expected amotivation to partially mediate the association between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors. Partial mediation occurs when the beta coefficient between the initial predictor of interest and the criterion variable is significantly reduced but not to zero (MacKinnon et al., 2007). Given the associations among all the variables, along with the literature suggesting that there are multiple predictors

to explain variance in classroom disruptive behaviors, partial mediation was expected. That is, it was not anticipated that the association between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors would be reduced to zero.

A Sobel analysis was used to detect partial mediation. Sobel analysis (Sobel, 1982) reveals whether there is an indirect effect resulting from the mediation. That is, a Sobel analysis tests the null hypothesis suggesting that the indirect effect—when the relationship between the initial predictor variable of interest and the criterion variable is mediated by the identified mediator variable—is zero. In a Sobel analysis (1982), a z statistic is used to determine whether “the difference between the path coefficient excluding the mediator and the path coefficient including the mediator is significantly different from zero” (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Early Child Care Research Network, 2003, p. 588). Recent research has advanced criteria to determine the sample size needed to detect significant mediation effects at a power of .8 (Cohen, 1988; Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007). Specifically, when the path coefficient from the initial predictor to the proposed mediator and the path coefficient from the mediator to the criterion variable are larger than .26, at least 196 participants are necessary to detect mediation with large power. With .28 and .23 as the standardized beta coefficients for the associations between home–school dissonance and amotivation and amotivation and classroom disruptive behaviors, respectively, the current sample of 309 was sufficient to detect significantly powerful mediation effects (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007). The Sobel analysis revealed that the relationship between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors was significantly reduced by amotivation scores from a standardized beta of .25 to a standardized beta of .18 (mediation z statistic = 3.25, p = .001) as shown in Figure 2.

Discussion

The current study had several foci. One focus was to determine whether reports in home–school dissonance, amotivation, and classroom disruptive behaviors were linked to demographic variables reported by high school juniors and seniors. To examine these, an MANCOVA was conducted with home–school dissonance, amotivation, and classroom disruptive behaviors as dependent variables and race, gender, and class rank as independent variables. GPA served as the covariate in the MANCOVA. Findings from this study revealed that classroom disruptive behaviors were significantly associated with student gender. Classroom disruptive behaviors, however, were not varied as a function of either race or class rank. The current research on classroom disruptive behaviors suggests that many high school aged students may engage in disruptive classroom activities and more male than female students tend to engage in such behaviors (Somers et al., 2008; Stewart, 2008; Waschbusch, 2002). In addition, no significant differences in either home–school dissonance or amotivation emerged as a function of student race, gender, or class rank. The literature has shown no significant differences in home–school dissonance or amotivation as a function of race, class rank, or gender (Arunkumar et al., 1999; Midgley et al., 1998).

Another focus of the current study was to determine if home–school dissonance was predictive of classroom disruptive behaviors. The rationale for examining the predictive nature of home–school dissonance on classroom disruptive behaviors was based on research

that has shown that students' perceptions of home–school dissonance is oftentimes predictive of maladaptive academic outcomes (e.g., GPA) and their psychological and behavioral antecedents (e.g., low self-esteem, time on task; Arunkumar et al., 1999; Kumar, 2006). In the current study, researchers were interested in whether one aspect of the classroom environment—home–school dissonance—was statistically associated with reports of classroom disruptive behaviors among low-income, rural and urban high school students. In addition, to further explore another possible source of classroom disruptive behaviors, researcher examined reports of amotivation and whether these were statistically predictive of classroom disruptive behavior. Finally, in an attempt to examine the psychological process that precedes classroom disruptive behaviors for high school students, it was believed that amotivation scores would mediate the relationship between home–school dissonance and academic cheating.

Hierarchical regression analyses determined significant associations between each of the variables of interest. Particularly, home–school dissonance predicted amotivation and classroom disruptive behaviors and amotivation was also predictive of classroom disruptive behaviors. With these significant associations, a test of mediation was run to determine if amotivation was a significant mediator of the relationship between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors. A Sobel analysis determined that amotivation reduced the size of the association between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors. This indicated amotivation as a significant mediator. That is, the difference between the path coefficient (between home–school dissonance and classroom disruptive behaviors) excluding amotivation and the path coefficient including amotivation was significantly different from zero.

Taken together, these findings continue in the line of research purporting the adverse academic experiences of students exposed to home–school dissonance (Arunkumar et al., 1999; Kumar, 2006). In particular, inclusion of a high school sample—a sample reported to have significantly high incidence of classroom disruptive behavioral problems—along with an examination of the association among home–school dissonance, amotivation, and classroom disruptive behaviors provide the literature with a better understanding of the sources of classroom disruptive behaviors for this student population. Specifically, these findings suggest that there is no significant difference between home–school dissonance, amotivation, or classroom disruptive behavior reports among African American and European American junior and senior high school students. Gender differences in classroom disruptive behaviors did emerge and were consistent with the literature suggesting that male high school students engage in such behaviors significantly more than female students (Somers et al., 2008; Stewart, 2008; Thomas et al., 2008; Waschbusch, 2002). Furthermore, once gender was controlled in the multicomputations, the findings in the current study suggest that student perceptions of dissonance between their home and school experiences are linked to reports of amotivation in school and their reports of classroom disruptive behavior, irrespective of gender, race, or class rank. Moreover, amotivation was shown to mediate the relationship between home–school dissonance and academic cheating reports, thus suggesting that feelings of amotivation (a) may be associated with home–school dissonance and (b) may be associated with how students behave in classrooms they think may be dissonant from their home contexts or experiences.

The current study adds to this literature by suggesting that students' perceptions of the formal learning context and its perceived distinction from their home environment are statistically associated with how they behave in their classrooms. This association, however, is mediated by the students' level of motivation, particularly achievement motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Although these results may inform educators and researchers of additional contextual (e.g., home–school dissonance) and psychological (e.g., motivation) factors that significantly predict classroom disruptive behaviors, several limitations persist in the current study.

To begin, the nature of this study was correlational, and thus causality cannot be implied throughout the findings. In addition, classroom disruptive behaviors were self-reported, and it is likely that students may have attempted to underestimate the degree to which they engage in these behaviors. Future studies should look to include administrative teacher or anecdotal reports of student classroom behavioral disruptions as a way to more accurately assess the salience of this phenomenon. Moreover, given the relatively low percentage of variance accounted for by the predictors in the current study, additional data should be collected to discern whether classroom disruptive behaviors can be predicted by other student-based factors such as participation in advanced placement courses, intent to pursue postsecondary education, church attendance, community involvement, parents' educational levels, and others. Finally, although the home–school dissonance measure has been used in previous research to detect students' experiences with the phenomenon, there is no indication of what exactly these perceived differences are between home and school. Though much of the literature has suggested that the student perceived differences between home and school are situated in the existence of distinct cultural values (Gay, 2000), the PALS Home–School Dissonance subscale does not allow researchers to determine exactly what these perceived differences actually are (e.g., whether these differences are cultural in nature). Future studies should develop scales measuring the cultural nature of perceived home–school dissonance reports.

Overall, the current study identifies a new source of classroom disruptive behaviors for these urban high school students: their perceptions of home–school dissonance. For many of these students, elevated perceptions of distinction between home and school are associated with their reports of being amotivated. To reduce the rates of disruptive behaviors among urban secondary education students, it would be a good first step to determine how to better align school learning activities with those present in the home of students from varying ethnic and racial backgrounds. A first step toward this end, it would seem, would involve more effective teacher-education programs that provide teachers with skills that equip them with working with students and families from diverse backgrounds and communities that may be different from their own.

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Figure 1.
Simple path from home-school dissonance to classroom disruptive behavior

Figure 2.
Simple path from home-school dissonance to classroom disruptive behavior mediated by amotivation

Table 1

Descriptive and Correlation Matrix

	Race	Gender	Grade	HSD	AM	AC	Alpha	<i>M (SD)</i>
Race	1	-.12*	-.013*	.06	.06	.06	—	—
Gender		1	-.00	-.11	-.13	-.06	—	—
Grade			1	-.06	-.10	-.09	—	—
HSD				1	.29**	.20**	.86	2.28 (0.90)
AM					1	.27	.90	1.47 (0.62)
CDB						1	.88	2.57 (1.10)

Note: HSD = home-school dissonance; AM = amotivation; CDB = classroom disruptive behaviors.

*
p .05.

**
p .01.