

University Citizenship Behavior in Class: The Effect of Professor's Lecture Justice on Students' Diligence¹

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Abstract

Discretionary behaviors of students that contribute to their university are termed university citizenship behavior (UCB). Past research has shown that students regarded their diligence in class to be a part of UCB, similar to conscientiousness of employees being a part of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). This study examines the effect of professors' lecture justice behavior (fair-minded teaching behaviors) on students' diligence in class. Data were collected from 385 students at a private university in Tokyo, Japan. The results indicated that lecture justice had a positive effect on UCB in class, and this effect was fully mediated by satisfaction. Some implications for practice and future research are also discussed.

Keywords: university citizenship behavior, satisfaction, organizational justice

I. Introduction

As advanced educational institutions, one of the requirements for most Japanese universities is to determine an effective means of motivating students to study hard. Japanese students usually have to study very hard to pass entrance examinations for studying at the university. However, many of them start to lose their motivation soon after they enter the university. For example, a recent nationwide survey by the Benesse Corporation of over 4,000 Japanese students found that 48.7% of them spent less than one hour per week preparing for or reviewing their classes. Moreover, 31.7% said they spent no time studying voluntarily beyond their obligatory assignments (Tsuchigo 2009). Deterioration of students' academic performance has become a serious social issue in Japan. According to Okabe, Tose, and Nishimura (1999), 20% of Japanese students could not perform a fraction calculation for elementary school pupils.

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¹ The short version of this article, entitled "University Citizenship Behavior in Class: Professor's Justice Behaviors and Students' Diligence," was published in *the Proceedings of the Decision Sciences Institute (DSI) the 41th Annual Meetings (2010)*. This longer revised version explains the reasons for paying attention to discretionary contributive behaviors of students to their universities and the measurements that were used in the empirical analysis, on the basis of useful comments of anonymous reviewers of DSI, our colleagues at Seikei University, and anonymous referees of *the Review of Asian and Pacific Studies*. The authors appreciate their beneficial advice regarding the initial version of the manuscript.

Many Japanese universities are currently working on various projects to improve students' motivation to study. However, these projects have explicitly or implicitly assumed that students study for their own benefit, and, therefore, they study hard only when they find the subject to be of interest to them or useful in their current or future life. Consequently, these projects usually require universities to create or change class content or an entire curriculum according to student interest. Although this approach might be quite important, we believe that there are alternatives.

We propose that it is important to focus on students' contributive motive to their universities when they study in class. Referring to the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) or customer voluntary performance (CVP) research, Ueda and Yoshimura (2010a) defined the concept of university citizenship behavior (UCB) as the discretionary contributive behavior by students to their university. If students study hard only when they are interested in lectures or when they believe these lectures are beneficial for their life, the only way to improve their motivation to study might be to adapt lectures to their interest. However, if the motivation to contribute to their university affects students' study habits, the antecedents that were found in past OCB or CVP research are also considered to affect their motivation to study. In this report, we demonstrate the relationship between students' diligence and some antecedents by analyzing data collected from Japanese students.

II. Student Diligence as UCB in Class and its Antecedents

1. University Citizenship Behavior

OCB is defined as employees' discretionary behaviors that contribute to their organization (Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie, 2006). OCB has gained the attention of many researchers since two pioneering papers were published in the early 1980s (Bateman and Organ 1983; Smith, Organ, and Near 1983). Although OCB is an important concept, employees are not the only people who voluntarily contribute to an organization. Bettencourt (1997) focused on customers' contributive behaviors to an organization and proposed the concept of CVP. In fact, customers who are committed to a specific organization (for example, the specific shop where they regularly buy goods or the specific manufacturer whose products they like) actively try to do something that is beneficial for the organization without expecting any reward.

Formally, students are customers of their university. However, they are not passive customers. They often exhibit behaviors that contribute to the welfare of their university. For example, they may share the positive aspects of university life with younger students in order to interest them in enrolling in their university. Further, they may voluntarily erase a blackboard for the next class when a professor forgets to do it, or use the equipment in their university carefully in order to help preserve its use for future students.

Ueda and Yoshimura (2010a) labeled such contributive behavior of the students to the university as UCB. They considered three motives for this behavior. First, students

will be branded as alumni of their university whether or not they like it. Particularly in Japan, changing universities is usually difficult and occasionally disadvantageous for students because many business organizations do not want to recruit older students who may have enrolled in another university during the course of their study. Therefore, students have no choice but to have a high level of commitment to their university. Second, when students are on campus, they have many opportunities to interact with professors, friends, and even unfamiliar students in the university. This condition causes them to consider how their behavior affects others. Finally, students tend to have a hierarchical relationship with their professors. Occasionally, they feel a responsibility to obey their professors or seniors. In particular, this is because of the generally accepted wisdom in East Asian countries, where Confucian values are widespread, that the young should respect and obey the old.

Following the emic method of Farh, Earley, and Lin (1997), who established Chinese OCB dimensions, Ueda and Yoshimura (2010a) proposed the definition of UCB to students and asked them to describe the actual or ideal behaviors that they believed met the definition. They classified 745 behaviors into 10 categories. Some of these categories were similar to those of OCB, but others were unique. They found that 13.3% of the total behaviors could be categorized as "diligence in class," which had been regarded as a formal obligation of students. This was the third-largest category and also included "stop talking in class," "do not come late to a class," "turning off a cell-phone," and "do not sleep in class," as well as some behaviors with a positive orientation toward study such as "being outspoken" and "asking something positively." In this paper, we name these types of behaviors "UCB in class." These examples of diligence in class may be associated with good manners rather than studying hard; however, we believed these items were more important as discretionary behaviors in class, particularly in the case of Japanese private universities.

In fact, a student's UCB in class has at least three effects on classmates, professors, and the entire university. Diligent students become excellent models for other students. These enlightened classmates also will have a high motivation to study. Diligent students also enhance professors' motivation to teach. These professors will then make more of an effort to develop many students' abilities. Finally, these highly motivated professors and students will improve the prestige of a university because students who are more talented are going out into the world from the university.

Moreover, it is often said that Japanese businesses tend to judge graduates on the basis of the name of their university rather than their grades. The graduates of a well-known, excellent university can get a good job even if they did poorly in school. Many students at a less prestigious university tend to believe they cannot get a good job no matter how hard they study. In other words, after entering the university, a student's diligence is a discretionary matter because his or her future will be determined to some extent by the reputation of the university.

UCB in class corresponds to the concept of "conscientiousness" in OCB. Organ et al. (2006) defined conscientiousness as "a particularly high order of compliance with the

constraints upon individuals necessary to make a cooperative system” (p.19). Conscientiousness has been confirmed as a characteristic of OCB by using not only many Western samples but also some Asian samples (Farh et al. 1997; Ueda, Yoshimura, and Asanuma 2009). Conscientiousness differs from other types of OCB in that it is only quantitatively distinguished from formal job duties, whereas other kinds of OCB are qualitatively different from formal job duties. Only behavior that is beyond what average persons are expected to do as part of formal job duties is regarded as OCB. Some researchers might consider conscientiousness, such as a lower rate of absenteeism, to be formal obligatory behavior rather than discretionary behavior. However, as stated in Organ et al. (2006), “attendance is required, but some degree of absenteeism is both expected and wholly justified” (p.21). The degree to which employees actually obey this type of formal obligation varies. Diligence in class is also expected and obligatory for university students; however, according to similar logic, actual diligence varies from student to student.

It was generally believed that students’ motivation to study in class would improve if they were interested in the lecture or they considered that the lecture would affect their current or future life. However, it is also true that students regard diligence as a contributive behavior to the university; therefore, we can refer to past OCB or CVP research in order to begin to understand how to solve the difficult problem of improving students’ motivation to study.

2. The Effect of Professors’ Behavior in Class

Although the first OCB research focused on the effect of job satisfaction (Organ 1977; Smith et al. 1983), currently many OCB researchers are paying attention to the effect of organizational justice. Organizational justice is generally considered to comprise distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Western OCB researchers assume that employees’ OCB is based on their judgment of the social exchange relationship within their organization. Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, and Taylor (2000) and Rupp and Cropanzano (2002) argued that there are different ways for organizational justice to influence OCB. Distributive justice influences OCBO (OCB for organization) mediated by perceived organizational support (POS) because it is related to the social exchange relationship between the employees and their organization. In contrast, procedural and interactional justice influence OCBI (OCB for individual) mediated by leader-member exchange (LMX) because it is related to the social exchange relationship between employees and their supervisors.

Since the 1990s, East Asian researchers have been investigating the relationship between OCB and other factors. One of the most important findings is that East Asian employees tend to emphasize the individual human relationship with their peers and supervisors, whereas Western employees tend to weigh heavily the social exchange relationship between the organization and themselves. For example, Hui, Lee, and Rousseau (2004) argued, “(t)he Chinese are expected to relate to an organization through the particular relationships that exist between individuals and their superiors. Hence, traditional

Chinese people tend to approach organizations ‘thinking interpersonally,’ in contrast to the Western view of the employment relationship that is based upon ‘thinking organizationally’” (p. 233). In fact, many East Asian OCB researchers found a stronger effect on OCB from interpersonal factors such as “loyalty to supervisor,” “supervisor commitment,” and leader-member exchange than from organizational factors (Chen, Tsui, and Farh, 2002; Wong, Wong, and Ngo 2002; Cheng, Jiang, and Riley 2003; Hui et al. 2004; Wat and Shaffer 2005).

The relationship between a professor and students is different from the relationship between a superior and employees. However, it can be assumed that the professor’s justice behaviors affect students’ discretionary behaviors, including UCB, in class. Some professors clearly explain their grading method and the objective, overview, and knowledge necessary to understand their lectures. Such explicit procedural explanations indicate that students are treated fairly; this behavior corresponds to procedural justice of a professor. If students perceive high procedural justice of a professor in class, they will increase their diligence in class. Another example of justice behavior would be the way some professors respect students and wholeheartedly conduct classes. Such of professors begin and end class punctually, teach eagerly, and try to speak clearly because they are thinking about the listeners; these behaviors are associated with interactional justice of professors. If students perceive high interactional justice of a professor, they will increase their diligence in class.

Although procedural justice and interactional justice generally have been recognized as separate categories, some researchers consider procedural justice to include interactional justice (Ambrose 2002). However, explicit explanation is similar to respectful behavior toward students. A professor who respects students is likely to do the right things for them in terms of procedure. Therefore, the law of parsimony should be applied to judging the necessity for considering these two aspects of professors’ behaviors separately. In this study, we constructed a composite factor (lecture justice) that comprised both procedural justice and interactional justice.

III. Hypotheses

From this discussion, we provide the following hypotheses regarding the effect of professors’ behaviors and attitudes on students’ diligence in class. The first hypothesis is associated with the effects of professors’ justice on students’ diligence in class. We term this lecture justice.

Hypothesis 1: *Lecture justice will positively influence students’ UCB in class.*

Lecture justice has two aspects, the first of which is procedural justice. If a professor explains the course in the syllabus or at the beginning of class, students will have a higher motivation to study in class, even though they are not obliged to do so, because this explanation communicates to students that they will be treated fairly. The second aspect

is interactional justice. If students observe sincere behavior from a professor in class and recognize that they are respected, they will have a higher motivation to study in class.² Therefore, both aspects of lecture justice were hypothesized to have a positive effect on students' UCB in class.

Further, people generally believe that students' morale will influence their actual industriousness in class. Although this is naturally expected, we are interested in this relationship because it is important to compare the effect of students' attitudinal factors and professor's justice behaviors on students' diligence in class. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis regarding the impact of students' general morale on their diligence in class.

Hypothesis 2: *A student's general morale with regard to studying will positively influence his or her UCB in class (diligence).*

Next, we consider the mediating effect of satisfaction between the previously stated antecedents and students' diligence in class. It is difficult to judge whether satisfaction mediates the relationship between justice perception and discretionary behaviors. Farh, Podsakoff, and Organ (1990) found that the relationship between job satisfaction and OCB was not significant when they simultaneously examined the effects of both organizational justice and job satisfaction on OCB. Moreover, they found no mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between organizational justice and OCB. According to Farh, Podsakoff, and Organ (1990), even dissatisfied employees continue to exhibit OCB if they perceive organizational justice because, from a long-term viewpoint, they expect that a better, fairer situation will be restored. However, each class at a university usually lasts only three or four months; thus, students do not have such a long-term viewpoint to influence their reaction to class situations. Furthermore, Ueda and Nojima (2012) reported a consistent positive effect of satisfaction on UCB. Therefore, it is possible to assume that satisfaction mediates the effect of organizational justice or general morale on UCB in class.

Hypothesis 3: *Student satisfaction will mediate the relationship between the above antecedents and their UCB in class (diligence).*

Finally, we hypothesize that there is a cyclical effect of UCB in class on satisfaction. Students have to study hard to enjoy gaining knowledge. It is expected that not only will more satisfied students become more diligent, but also that more diligent students will become more satisfied.

Hypothesis 4: *Students' UCB in class will positively influence their satisfaction with class.*

² We proposed only one hypothesis regarding the effect of justice on students' diligence in class because we addressed only one composite factor instead of dealing with procedural justice and interactional justice separately. However, it is actually difficult to judge whether one composite measure is enough to address the effect of professors' justice behaviors on students. We will discuss this problem in the Discussion and Conclusion section.

IV. Method

1. Sample

Data were obtained from a sample of 385 undergraduate students at a private university in Tokyo, Japan. Most of the students graduated from high schools in metropolitan areas in and around Tokyo and continued to live there with their families. Most students were aged between 18 and 22, although the average age was unknown. The authors and other professors distributed a self-administered questionnaire to the students and asked them to fill it out during class. These classes were not compulsory courses in the department of economics and management, and the size of the classes varied.

Each student volunteered to participate in the study and anonymity was guaranteed. All measures used in this study were originally written in Japanese and scored on 4-point scales from (4) “agree” to (1) “disagree.” We omitted the data that included even one missing response to a question because we needed complete data that would be analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM).

2. Measures

Lecture justice was measured using a six-item scale that was created for this study. This scale was divided into two parts: procedural explanation and sincere attitude of professor. Procedural explanation was measured with a two-item scale that was created for this study. One item was regarding whether a detailed description of the class was provided along with an explanation of the grading method on the course syllabus. The actual items are “Were the overview and the grading method of this class described clearly in the syllabus?” and “Did the professor explain the overview of the class and your mental attitude necessary for understanding the subject at the beginning of the class?” Sincere attitude of professor was measured using a four-item scale that was created for this study. We focused on professors’ humane behavior and attitude beyond the content of the lecture. For example, whether the lecture was useful was not our chief concern because it was associated with distributive justice. However, whether the professor appeared to be passionate was important because such an attitude was considered to reflect sincere behavior toward students. The specific items in this regard are “Did the professor observe the starting and ending time of this class?” “Did the professor speak clearly?” “Was the professor passionate enough to make you understand the subject in the class?” “Did the professor give you the opportunity to ask questions about the class?”

General morale of students was measured using a five-item scale. Yoshimura (2007) created nine items to measure job involvement for Japanese employees. On the basis of her research, we created five new items to measure students’ general morale because their formal job was considered to be studying or learning. We omitted Yoshimura’s (2007) four items measuring behavioral job involvement because the distinction between items for UCB and those for behavioral job involvement might be ambiguous. The three items of effective job involvement are “I am interested in studying at this university,” “I want to take advantage of expertise I will acquire at this university when I start to work,”

and “I like to study at this university.” The two items of cognitive job involvement are “I think the place of study is significant in my campus life,” and “I will receive valuable benefits later in my life from studying at this university.”

Student’s UCB in class was measured using a three-item scale. On the basis of the finding in Ueda and Yoshimura (2010a), we created the following three items to measure class-specific UCB: “Have you attended this class every time,” “have you made much effort to study in this class,” and “have you tried to pay attention in this class?” Attendance is also included in the items because it corresponds to conscientiousness as one of the OCB dimensions. Even if a professor says that attendance is important in order to get better grades, students’ attitudes are not always the same; some will try not to miss a single lecture, and others will believe they will be forgiven for one or two absences.

Satisfaction with the class was measured using a two-item scale comprising the following two items: “Did this class increase your interest in the subject and eagerness to learn more about it,” and “were you satisfied with this class?”

3. Analytic Process

First, average values of each variable were calculated in order to acquire the basic statistics and correlations between two variables. Then, we adopted SEM to compare and find the goodness of fit of our hypothetical model and other models.

V. Result

1. Basic Statistics

Table 1 presents the basic statistics (means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alpha values) and correlations between variables. The values of Cronbach’s alphas were between 0.755 and 0.833, which meant the reliabilities for the indicators of all factors were reasonably high. All the correlations between factors were significantly positive ($p < 0.01$).

Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha), and Correlations (source: Ueda and Yoshimura, 2010b)

	Mean	S.D	LJ	GM	Sa	UCB
Lecture Justice (LJ)	1.5861	0.5409	(0.833)			
General Morale (GM)	2.1460	0.6616	0.224	(0.796)		
Satisfaction (Sa)	1.8052	0.7559	0.644	0.285	(0.804)	
UCB in Class (UCB)	1.7126	0.6782	0.296	0.264	0.514	(0.755)

n=385, All correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$ level. Coefficient alphas are reported along the diagonal.

Lecture justice was found to have significantly positive correlations with UCB in class ($r = 0.296$), which supported Hypotheses 1 and 2. The correlation between general

morale and UCB in class was also significantly positive ($r = 0.264$), which supported Hypothesis 2.

We were interested in the finding that satisfaction tended to have stronger positive correlations with other factors, except for general morale, than the correlations of lecture justice directly with UCB in class. This result implies the mediating effect of satisfaction on the relationship between justice and UCB in class.

2. Structural Equation Model with Hypothetical Relationship

We adopted SEM using Amos 17.0 in order to examine whether or not our hypotheses were supported. We compared the indicators of fit of alternative models with or without mediating effect of satisfaction by adopting the technique of specification search.³ Some models had improper solutions, and we acquired the most reasonable model, which is depicted in Figure 1. All the standardized estimates that were significant ($p < 0.05$) are presented in Figure 1. The indicators of fit of this model were reasonably good (CMIN/DF = 2.307, GFI = 0.933, AGFI = 0.906, TLI = 0.934, CFI = 0.946, RMSEA = 0.058, AIC = 302.108).

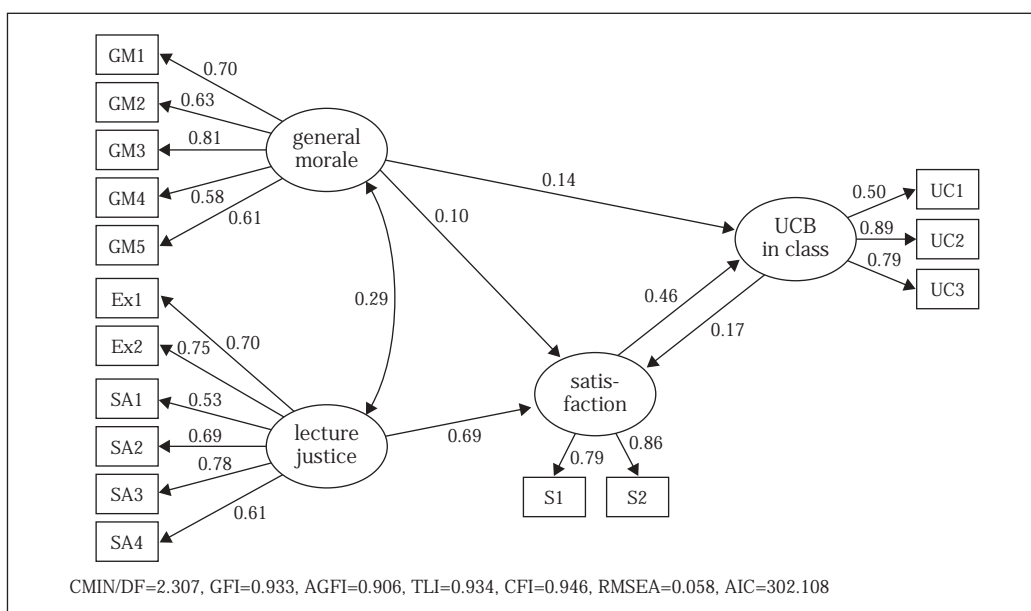


Figure 1 The Effect of Lecture Justice and General Morale (source: Ueda and Yoshimura 2010b)

Although correlation between lecture justice and UCB in class was significantly positive, as indicated in Table 1, it was found that the effect of lecture justice on UCB in class

³ One of the anonymous reviewers considered the possibility of reverse causality between attitudinal factors and behavioral factors (UCB). However, as shown in Smith, Organ, and Near's (1983) empirical result regarding the causal relationship between OCB and satisfaction, we judged that reverse causality would be relatively difficult to stand even in the case of UCB.

was fully mediated by satisfaction, as indicated in Figure 1. In contrast, the two paths from general morale were both significantly positive ($\beta = 0.10$ for the path to satisfaction, $\beta = 0.14$ for the path to UCB in class); thus, the effect of general morale on UCB in class was partially mediated by satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was also supported for lecture justice but partially supported for general morale.

The model also revealed that the path from satisfaction to UCB in class and the path from UCB in class to satisfaction were both positive ($\beta = 0.47$, $\beta = 0.17$, respectively), which indicated an interactional relationship between them. This result supported Hypothesis 4.

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

A general understanding exists that Japanese students, particularly Japanese students who major in liberal arts, are supposed to be able to graduate from their university even if they scarcely study there. Unfortunately, Japanese companies seem to give students little incentive to earn good grades; this outcome is probably because companies have their unique corporate culture and business style, and they tend to believe that new graduates are better at absorbing their culture and style than their knowledgeable counterparts. Even if university education is not necessary to obtain a good job, improving students' motivation to study is still one of the most difficult challenges for most Japanese universities. In response to our previous study (Ueda and Yoshimura 2010b), which showed that diligence in class was recognized as one of the discretionary contributions to the university, this study examined whether or not a professor's justice behavior influenced UCB in class.

The results revealed that lecture justice influenced UCB in class as expected, and this effect was fully mediated by satisfaction. General morale also affected satisfaction; however, this effect was weaker than that of a professor's lecture justice, and the direct path estimate from general morale to UCB in class was significant. Similar to the findings of past OCB research regarding the positive effect of organizational justice, including procedural and interactional justice on employees' OCB, this study reveals that diligence of students in class has an aspect of discretionary behaviors like OCB and it is also influenced by the factors analogous to organizational justice. This finding is particularly important for university educators because it indicates that they must consider ways to improve a professor's lecture justice in class as well as develop a university curriculum that meets students' needs in order to increase students' motivation to study.

The mediating effect of satisfaction on UCB in class was an interesting result. As we discussed, Farh et al. (1990) found that lecture justice affected OCB independently from satisfaction. According to their findings, employees are able to believe that a more comfortable situation will come in the future if they perceive that they are treated fairly; moreover, they could be satisfied by decreasing their OCB even if they perceive that they are treated unfairly.

However, a professor's lecture in class lasts a much shorter time than the term of employment in an organization. Dissatisfied students may not have the long-term perspective necessary to wait for the effect of justice to improve their situation. Furthermore, it would be difficult to imagine a situation in which they would reduce their OCB in class in order to gain satisfaction as a response to unfair treatment in class.

There are some exceptions exist; for example, a few Japanese students try to earn credit without even attending a large class. They might be satisfied with the credit regardless of the professor's attitude in class; however, they were not included in the sample because the questionnaires were allocated to students during class.

This study revealed that satisfaction is the key to producing UCB in class. Once professors' justice behaviors influence satisfaction to the point at which satisfaction can affect UCB in class, the cyclical relationship between satisfaction and UCB can lead to a positive feedback effect. If professors' justice cannot meet this minimum level, then UCB in class fades out in the same cyclical relationship with satisfaction.

This research had several limitations that we expect will be resolved in a future study. First, although this study revealed that professors' behaviors are decisive in improving students' motivation to study, it is not clear how the dimensions of their behaviors in class must be considered. We proposed only one hypothesis regarding the effect of justice on students' diligence in class because we addressed only one composite factor instead of dealing with procedural justice and interactional justice separately. However, it is actually difficult to judge whether one composite measure is enough to address the effect of professors' justice behaviors on students. Further study is needed for investigating professors' actual attitudes and behaviors in class in order to define exhaustive definitions of their behaviors in class.

Second, it is not certain that students' voluntary responses to the questionnaire were sufficiently reliable because we did not provide them with any incentive or reward. The questionnaire asked them about the class that they were attending. Therefore, they might have hesitated to honestly rate the degree of their diligence in that class. A new way to collect data must be devised to elicit students' actual thoughts and opinions.

Third, this study utilized data from students in several classes and correlations between two variables might have been influenced by other factors such as the size of classes. Although we cannot specify how those factors would have an effect on the relationships between two variables, their effect must be controlled for in future research.

Fourth, the method we adopted had some drawbacks. Data were collected from a sample of students of only one private university in Tokyo. This university has a unique educational philosophy and is famous for providing empathetic care to students. Only students who expected to form a close relationship with their professors may have chosen to enter this university. Therefore, data must be collected from students of other universities in order to examine whether or not the finding is consistent. Further, this study utilized three items to measure diligence as UCB in class. However, these three items might be insufficient to measure the various aspects of UCB in class. Future study is expected to explore and establish appropriate items to measure UCB in class utilizing

statistically validated methods such as exploratory factor analysis. In addition, all the variables were measured with an ordinal 4-point scale. A 5- or 7-point scale would probably be better for this type of study.

Finally, a professor usually lectures in front of all the students at one time instead of talking separately to each of them. However, it was found that a professor's explanation or sincere attitude gave a different impression to each student. Therefore, future research must also focus on the factors that influence students' perceptions of a professor's behavior and manner in class.

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