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# Graduate Education Instructors' Motivation and its Influences on Graduate Students

Katrina Lynn Reeder  
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# Walden University

College of Education

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Katrina Reeder

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Walden University

2019

Abstract

Graduate Education Instructors' Motivation and its Influences on Graduate Students

by

Katrina Reeder

MA, Walden University, 2015

BS, Walden University, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2019

## Abstract

Researchers have discovered that a low level of instructor motivation can have negative effects on instructors, such as low-quality teaching and low engagement for the students. The purpose of this study was to explore university instructors' experience with motivation and how it might be important to their graduate students' experiences and success. This qualitative case study followed the conceptual framework of two motivational theories: the self-determination theory and the achievement goal theory. The research question explored instructor motivation and how students perceived that motivation. Furthermore, the research question and subquestions were designed to reveal ways instructor motivation influences graduate students. The study included 8 graduate students and 6 instructors of graduate students. Data sources were 2 written assignments with instructor feedback and interview responses of graduate students and instructors of graduate students. Data analysis included reviewing responses to interview questions and instructor feedback on written assignments. Open coding and axial coding were used to help ensure that categorization of the data was accurate. The resulting themes were (a) [The belief in student abilities], (b) [Being physically and mentally present], (c) [Relatedness], (d) [Instructor/Student synergy], and (e) [Instructor immediacy]. When the graduate students felt the instructor possessed high levels of motivation, they too felt highly motivated. The findings of this study tie instructor motivation to students and students' motivation back to the instructors. The instructor's and student's levels of motivation also impacted their coworkers or peers' level of motivation. The findings of this study could lead to future studies confirming the tie between instructors' and students' motivation and how it is contagious to those who are exposed to it.

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## Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated to my family. To my husband Josh who has been my rock and has supported me the whole way, you are my hero, my best friend, and better half. Without your support getting a dissertation would have been far more challenging. To my father Tony who told me I could do it when I thought I couldn't, your teachings and guidance helped me through this journey; you made me the person I am today who has tenacity and determination. You showed me that just what I thought I would be, I would be in the end. To my mother Allison who is my best friend, you have encouraged me, listened to my troubles, rejoiced when I rejoiced, and cried when I cried. You truly are a good momma. To my daughter Abby, this blood is for you, I want you to see how hard I have worked so that you will one day work just as hard towards the pursuit of your own dreams and happiness. A wise man once told me where there is a will, there is a way. All you have to do is reach up and grab it. You have all sacrificed your time with me so that I may pursue my goals, my dissertation is just as much all of yours as it is mine because you gave a lot up by letting me step away from our lives in this endeavor, always understanding and believing in me. I am blessed to have so much support and love from all of you.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Within this study, I examined instructor motivation and how it can lead to positive social change. Previous research has shown the positive effects of instructor motivation on adult students. However, there is little research associating graduate instructor motivation with graduate students. Connecting the effects of instructor motivation to graduate students' experiences could lead to the development of innovative approaches to teaching graduate students. At the least, doing so could provide targets for areas of improvement, insight into designing courses for maximum student engagement, and ultimately lead to a positive social change in the educational field. For example, with areas of instruction identified for improvement, instruction could be more engaging and foster increased student motivation.

Past research has connected student motivation with learning and academic performance (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Recent research has indicated that instructor motivation can increase student motivation (Cimen, 2016), and high student motivation can lead to greater academic achievement (Karatas & Erden, 2017). This study aimed to discover how instructor motivation could affect graduate students in particular. Recent research on education and learning focused on skills or other factors affecting learning outcomes (Cimen, 2016; Koludrovic & Ercegovac, 2015). In contrast, this study focused on instructor motivation and how it affects graduate students.

Studying the effects of instructors' motivation on graduate students is important to the field of education because correlations can be made between instructor motivation and graduate student experiences. Discovering ways that instructor motivation impacts

graduate students can lead to advancements in training for instructors since the findings suggest there should be higher levels of instructor motivation. A number of studies have shown internal factors such as motivation to be key in academic achievement.

The study investigated how perceived increases in instructor motivation could lead to increased academic performance of graduate students. Chapter 1 addresses the gap in practice, the expected positive social change, the research questions, conceptual framework, organizational commitment, the nature of the study, and definitions of terms used in the study.

### **Background**

The relationship between graduate instructor motivation and graduate students' academic performance in the United States has not been sufficiently explored. However, motivation in an educational setting has been widely researched (Daumiller, Grassinger, Dickhauser, & Dresel, 2016; Dweck, 1986; Hsieh, 2014; Malouff, Reid, Wilkes, & Emmerton, 2015). Cimen (2016) suggested that high levels of instructor motivation improved students' motivation, while low levels of instructor motivation led to students giving up easily or doing minimal work. Daniels and Pirayoff (2015) suggested the importance of instructor motivation and how it closely related to learning, teaching, and engagement. Because little research has been done on the motivation of graduate instructors and its effects on graduate students, this study offers insight into the phenomenon.

Instructors' and students' levels of motivation were shown to shift, depending on the level of motivation. Kontas (2016) offered an academic motivation scale and an

attitude scale indicating that student motivation was affected when both instructors' and students' attitudes were altered. Similarly, Bunk, Li, Smidt, Bidetti, and Malize (2015) suggested that instructor motivation impacts students positively or negatively. Nissim, Weissblueth, Scott-Webber, and Amar (2016), who investigated the effect of instructor and student motivation, found that motivated instructors created a classroom environment that motivated students. Additional research has shown correlating results. Daumiller et al. (2016) concluded that instructor motivational forces had not been sufficiently studied at the university level. Research has suggested instructors are often unmotivated (Shoshani & Eldor, 2016). If the instructors are experiencing *amotivation* (i.e., lack of motivation), then there is a gap in practice that could be filled by defining target areas needing improvement.

Some studies have suggested that instructor motivation affects undergraduate students or adult students in general (Bozpolat, 2016; Malouff et al., 2015; Sampson, 2016), but many of them are international studies. Few studies conducted in the United States are available showing graduate instructors' motivation and its effects on graduate students. This study could tie graduate instructors' motivation with graduate students' levels of motivation or course outcomes.

### **Problem Statement**

A low level of instructor motivation can have negative effects on not only the instructors, but also the students (Daumiller et al., 2016). According to Daumiller et al. (2016), a low level of motivation produces an instructor who will have a low-level quality of teaching. Past measurement tools have shown a low level of instructor

motivation to present itself as a failure to strive towards goals, low persistence (Dweck, 1986), low engagement with students, low expectations, and being less supportive (Zumbrunn, McKim, Buhs, & Hawley, 2014). Research in the field was needed to investigate instructor motivation and how it affects graduate students (Ross, Perkins, & Bodey, 2016) to help fill the gap in practice of low instructor motivation. In fact, little research exists that shows the effect of graduate instructor motivation on graduate student learning or even on their motivation (Daumiller et al., 2016). For example, in searches of multiple scholarly article databases, several articles came up connecting instructor attitudes to student learning, but few connected instructor motivation to graduate student experiences. According to Kontas (2016), motivated instructors have a positive attitude towards teaching, while the students gain a positive attitude towards learning and the teaching profession. When considering the findings of Kontas (2016), instructor motivation could be considered broadly important for the education field.

Studying instructor motivation in education is relevant and meaningful to education because loss of instructor or student motivation negatively impacts education, whereas a gain in both motivations positively impacts education (Nissim et al., 2016). According to Daniels and Pirayoff (2015), motivation has been tied to effective teaching; an instructor's motivation to teach will affect a student's motivation to learn and ultimately impact the learning outcomes. My goal was to identify how motivation helps instructors teach better and then to use the concept to enhance the learning experience for graduate students, filling in the aforementioned gap in practice. With the likely increased

rate of student satisfaction, instructors would also have an increase in job satisfaction, which would help both the student and the instructor.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of university instructors' motivation and how it might be important to the graduate students' success. The students' perception of the instructors' motivation was especially of interest. The results of this study could benefit the educational field by helping develop new techniques for instruction, which could enhance the learning experience of students.

Discovering how instructor motivation affects graduate students might provide the adult education system with research that could enhance the educational system. Instructor motivation can lead to quality teaching (Salifu & Agbenyega, 2013) because motivated instructors would be determined to transfer learning to their students. For example, according to Viseu, Neves de Jesus, Rus, and Canavarro (2016), instructor motivation is essential in education because a motivated teacher can greatly influence the student by enhancing student academic motivation and improving the student's self-efficacy. Ross et al. (2016) aligned with these concepts and advised that self-efficacy can predict a student's academic motivation.

It was important to identify key factors in increasing instructor motivation so the positive impacts can spread throughout the field of education. Because it has been found that increasing instructor motivation leads to academic success in students, motivation and amotivation should be researched further. To research this problem, in this study, I used a qualitative approach.



### **Research Question**

To explore the effects of instructor motivation on graduate students, I developed the following research question (RQ) and four subquestions (SQs):

1. RQ1: What is the influence instructor motivation has on graduate students?
2. SQ1: How are instructors affected by a high level of instructor motivation?
3. SQ2: How are graduate students affected by a high level of instructor motivation?
4. SQ3: How are graduate students affected by a low level of instructor motivation?
5. SQ4: How do graduate students perceive graduate instructors' motivation?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The phenomenon analyzed was instructors' motivation, as well as how graduate students perceived that motivation as how it affected them. This study's conceptual model stems from two theories of motivation: the self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the achievement goal theory (AGT; Dweck & Nicholls, 1986). This section provides a basic overview of the two theories as they concern instructor motivation and the effects it may have on students.

SDT is relevant because it can help explain instructor motivation and more clearly explain the links between instructors' motivation and the students' experiences.

According to Sheldon, Williams, and Joiner (2003), SDT can be used to explain how individuals become motivated and is grounded in the belief that people perform best when they perceive that they are in control. In addition, Sheldon et al. found self-

determination to be an important factor in enhancing not only the quality of motivation but also the amount of motivation one experiences. AGT suggests that motivation is goal oriented and can help regulate behavior, influence achievement, and control for accomplishments (Covington, 2000). To further elaborate on the AGT, Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006) mentioned that academic work goals, expectations of outcomes of academic goals, and beliefs in academic abilities are all influenced by social context and goal orientation.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study's method was qualitative, using a case study. The population was graduate students at one university enrolled in a graduate course at least half time. In addition, the graduate students had already taken at least two graduate courses within the past year. I also analyzed instructor feedback on written assignments. According to Bowen (2009), analyzing documents in case studies helps triangulate study methods such as interviews, which can validate data obtained in the interviews. Interviews were conducted with the graduate instructors and the graduate students to reveal how graduate instructor motivation impacted the graduate students.

### **Definitions**

Instructor motivation has many components that must be unpacked to be effectively explained. Some of these components are instructor immediacy, verbal immediacy, non-verbal immediacy, and simply having an urge to do something. Ryan and Deci (2000a) defined being motivated as wanting to do something. Key terms for this study and their definitions are as follows:

*Amotivation:* Amotivation is a lack of motivation or state of not being motivated (Cheon & Reeve, 2015; Taylor et al., 2014).

*Attitude:* Attitude, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a learned response rather negative or positive that can guide behavior (Fissbein & Ajzen, 1975).

*Instructor immediacy:* Instructor immediacy has been defined by many scholars as the immediate response of the instructors; being immediate with their response whether it be verbal or nonverbal (Furlich, 2016; Kotaman, Tekin, & Aslan, 2015; Witt, Schrod, Wheelless, & Bryand, 2014).

*Instructor motivation:* For this study, instructor motivation is defined as instructors having positive verbal and nonverbal immediacy, having the will to engage and develop students, participating in the act of motivating students, having the will to advance one's self, and attempting to create positive student relationships (Kontas, 2016).

*Nonverbal immediacy:* Furlich (2016) defined nonverbal immediacy as behaviors such as eye contact, facial expressions, and positive body language. For example, an instructor may make eye contact with students when they talk, which would be considered nonverbal immediacy.

*Verbal immediacy:* Verbal immediacy is defined as engaging in conversations, using humor, examples, referring to the class as "we" or "us," asking for students input and feedback, and praising students for good work (Furlich, 2016).

### **Assumptions**

For this study, I operated under a number of assumptions. First, it was assumed that students answered all interview questions to the best of their abilities, were honest,

and understood the basic terminology within the questions. I also assumed honesty and good intentions on the part of the instructors participating in the study. It was assumed that all participants in the study would be honest because they would not have anything to gain from being untruthful. Further, because graduate students need to have taken many courses to get to graduate school, I assumed that the graduate students had experienced either a high or low motivated instructor at some point during their educational career. With this, it could be assumed the graduate students should have some ideas about their instructors' interactions. Lastly, it was assumed that students' engagement would lead to positive experiences because they would have more involvement, build relationships, and have a sense of connectedness to their instructors.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Specific aspects of the research problem that I addressed in the study are how a low level of instructor motivation affects the instructor and how low levels of graduate instructor's motivation affects graduate students. In addition, I examined whether a high level of instructor motivation affects the graduate student positively or negatively. I also addressed the question of how such effects may change adult education over time. There were also boundaries of the study such as the populations excluded and other frameworks related to instructor motivation that were not investigated.

This was a case study on a population at one university. Because the study focused on graduate instructors and graduate students in the United States, populations excluded from this study were undergraduate students and undergraduate instructors. Additionally, all students and instructors, graduate or undergraduate, who operate at other

universities or in countries other than the United States were excluded. Frameworks or theories of motivation other than SDT and AGT were also excluded from the study because SDT and AGT were well-rounded and well-researched theories of motivation that had been previously used in past research regarding instructor or student motivation.

There is also a potential for transferability of the findings to other institutions. The results of this study could provide a foundation for other studies looking at the effects of graduate instructor motivation and its effects on the educational field. In addition, the study's findings could be useful to university administrators looking to increase employee satisfaction, student retention, or the university's overall success. Conducting a study in the field of education to discuss the effects of instructors' motivation on graduate students could offer research needed to further ascertain the importance of instructors' motivation.

### **Limitations**

This study's limitations concern transferability. The study's population was graduate instructors and graduate students only, which makes the findings difficult to transfer. In addition, the sample was taken from one university, making it difficult to transfer results. To increase transferability, future studies would need to be conducted to find similarities between the students at the graduate school in this study and the population in the future study. An additional limitation was that, because this study did not use an experimental design, I could not claim that a cause and effect relationship existed from instructor motivation since other possible variables were not controlled.

Being reflective can help create a study that has limited research bias. As the researcher, I was a graduate student who has had both motivated and unmotivated instructors. With this, there could be biases that could have influenced the study outcomes. As a result, certain preconceived notions about what an unmotivated or motivated instructor looks like or acts like could have been present. However, merely mentioning this experience helps in resolving the bias. According to Probst (2015), researchers need to be aware of their own influences, and doing so can resolve bias. I mentioned my preconceptions in an effort to lessen the possibility of a bias occurring. One last effort was to keep a reflexive journal in which I made regular entries during the research process, recording reasons for decisions made throughout the research process, reflections, concepts, logistics, and epiphanies.

### **Significance**

In the field of education, many people focus on working towards improvement and positive change. This study's findings could reveal new strategies that might be implemented into future teaching methodology. In addition, this study contributed to identifying ways to enhance instructor teaching by providing findings that advanced knowledge of the effects of instructors of graduate students' motivation.

The findings also advanced knowledge in the field of education since the problem addressed instructor motivation and its effects on graduate students. There is also a potential for positive social change by providing target areas needing improvement in the educational field by revealing how instructor motivation affects students. In addition, the

study revealed a need for development of more comprehensive instruction, instructor training, and other instructor support models.

### **Summary**

In this study, I looked at instructor motivation and how it can lead to positive social change. Because there is little previous research on the connections between graduate instructor motivation and graduate students' experiences, the effects of instructor motivation needed to be studied in order to understand these connections. Many of the studies available were based on student or instructor reports of motivation. This study addressed both the instructors and graduate students' perspectives on instructor motivation, thus addressing a gap in literature.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature surrounding instructor motivation and how it relates to graduate students. The first sections discuss types of instructor motivation and the relevance to graduate students' experiences. In addition, the chapter includes the research strategies used and discussion of the conceptual framework as it relates to past research on instructor motivation. The literature was synthesized and compared to primary writings by key theorists and researchers related to instructor motivation. The gap in literature is further discussed, showing how additional research on graduate instructor motivation would benefit the educational field. The primary benefit would be the insights that could lead to the creation of new strategies to possibly enhance the learning experience of graduate students.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

This study addressed instructor motivation and how that could impact graduate students. Having motivated instructors might enhance graduate students' learning experience. The purpose of Chapter 2 is to present a synopsis of motivational theories as they apply to academics and then to present findings of previous research to create a foundation for the benefit of instructor motivation and how it can be used to enhance the graduate student's learning experience. After the synopsis, I provide search strategies used for this literature review. A detailed description of the theoretical framework is then discussed, followed by a review of the current peer-reviewed literature on instructor motivation and its constructs. In addition, I include discussion of ways researchers in education have approached instructor motivation. Lastly, I justify the selection of instructor motivation as a topic and a current problem, synthesize studies as they relate to the research questions, and provide a summary of the chapter with conclusions.

### **Synopsis of the Literature Related to the Problem**

In this study, I investigated the effects of instructor motivation or the lack thereof (i.e., amotivation) on graduate students and the effects of instructor motivation on the graduate students. The purpose of this study was to fill a gap in research that could enhance the learning outcomes for graduate students through the use of heightened motivation in graduate instructors. According to Shin, Ranellucci, and Roseth (2017), there is a gap in the literature indicating why instructor motivation is effective in teaching and what techniques are effective in teaching. If the gap in literature were to be filled,



strategies could be implemented that would help reach more students. Zumbrunn et al. (2014) found that instructor motivation helped students feel like they belonged; however, they noted that more research on graduate students' feelings about instructor motivation in the classroom was still needed.

Since there is a need for future research on instructor motivation and how it affects students, I decided to research the impact instructor motivation has on graduate students. A low level of instructor motivation or amotivation can have effects on not only the instructors, but the students as well (Daumiller et al., 2016). The study at hand investigated the effects of graduate instructors' motivation and its connection to graduate students. According to Ross et al. (2016), in the field of education, research was needed on graduate instructor motivation and how it affects graduate students. In fact, little research existed that showed the effect of graduate instructor motivation on graduate student learning or even on their motivation (Daumiller et al., 2016). According to Kontas (2016), motivated instructors have a positive attitude towards teaching, whereas the students gain a positive attitude towards learning and the teaching profession. Educational scholars have been interested for decades in instructor motivation and the relationship it builds (Kotaman et al., 2015; McEown & Takeuchi, 2014). When considering the findings of Aslan (2015), Kontas (2016), Deci (1985), and Kotaman et al. (2015), instructor motivation could be essential in the education field.

Two forces within motivation are extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Many researchers have concluded that extrinsic and intrinsic forces are important for instructor motivation (Can, 2015; Cheng, Tand, & Cheng, 2015; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Gultekin &

Acar, 2014; Tand, Cheng, & Cheng, 2014). Extrinsic motivators are those such as employment salary, workplace rewards, working conditions, job security, etc. Intrinsic motives are more complex, according to Bozpolat (2016). Some examples of intrinsic motivation are doing something for the challenge or for the gratification it produces, not for rewards or other external drives (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Intrinsic motivation is effective in the educational workplace, but together, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are more powerful by helping the instructors be persistent.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

While conducting this literature review, I used several databases. I used the Walden Library and started with Academic Search Complete, Psyc Articles, Psyc Info, Psyc Extra, Research Starters, Soci Index, ERIC, and Education Source. This yielded peer-reviewed articles published from 2015 to 2018. I reviewed a multitude of them and selected several for use. Some of the key search terms and combinations of search terms used were *teacher motivation*, *instructor motivation*, *graduate students' motivation*, *self-efficacy*, *intrinsic motivation*, *extrinsic motivation*, and *motivation*. Later, I narrowed my search by using only the ERIC database and only searched the term *motivation* with results limited to peer-reviewed articles published from 2015 to 2018. This produced results that focused on instructor motivation as it pertained to undergraduate education and a few pertaining to K-12 education. Few journal articles specifically addressed graduate education and instructor motivation. Out of those results, I reviewed several articles and used some of them.

Given that there were few research studies on graduate instructor motivation, I searched other terms and widened the parameters of my search to include publications from 2014. I searched all educational databases available to me and used some new keywords; for example, I added *graduate education* to the search terms and combined it with *motivation* and *instructor*. In addition, the Taylor and Francis journal database were used to narrow down the results. This yielded a larger bank of results, which provided the information I needed to move forward.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The phenomenon that grounded the study is graduate instructors' motivation and its connection to graduate students. A conceptual framework, based on the AGT (Dweck & Nicholls, 1986) and SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) helped create the lens for this study. These two theories were relevant because they contain educational attributes, are motivation theories, have correlational attributes, and pertain to the adult education field (Han & Yin, 2016).

Instructor motivation appears to be discussed only broadly or generically. For example, the National Center for Education (2017) mentioned instructor motivation briefly and then lightly addressed student motivation but never made the connection from instructor motivation to student satisfaction, experiences, or motivation. This overview of instructor motivation was not new, as most of the current literature focused on aspects of motivation, gave brief outlines, and moved on; researchers touched on it but did not expand. Universities even mention motivation in their mission statements but do not

propose ways to become motivated, nor discuss what motivation is and what it can do for those involved. This paper examined motivation and explored its multifarious nature.

### **Features of Self-Determination Theory**

SDT is complex and has six minitheories, which I will address in the following sections after explaining SDT. In short, SDT suggests that all people are active organisms and have evolved to master challenges and incorporate their experiences into their sense of self. As stated, SDT shows that motivation is complex and works on extrinsic and intrinsic factors where needs must be met (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leaone, 1994). Its main focus is on innate forces that guide behavior to restore safety or wellness (Krapp, 2005).

Research on SDT suggested that intrinsic motivation plays a role in academic achievement (Taylor et al., 2014). Moreover, a lack of motivation, referred to as amotivation, has been tied to low academic achievement (Cheon & Reeve, 2015). The theory proposes that individuals' perceptions can influence their own autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which all need to be fulfilled in order to become motivated (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Researchers have argued in SDT that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are psychological needs that must be fulfilled in order to support the individual's wellness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Thus, a person's behavior will be guided by these needs. The environment is important as well. Theories such as SDT have been studied in many environments. Some of these environments include classrooms, homes, teams, cultures,

and organizations. The framework suggests extrinsic and intrinsic forces will increase or diminish an individual's motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

### **Minitheories of Motivation**

Six minitheories comprise SDT: (a) cognitive evaluation theory, (b) organismic integration theory, (c) causality orientations theory, (d) basic psychological needs theory, (e) goal contents theory, and (f) relationships motivation theory. Cognitive evaluation theory involves intrinsic motivation, that is, doing something to fulfill an internal need such as ego, enjoyment, or other self-fulfilling reasons (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This theory suggests that competence and autonomy are crucial for intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000a). Organismic integration theory, on the other hand, addresses the influence of extrinsic motivation on behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000a). Extrinsic motivation includes external regulation, identification, and integration, which can lead to internalization (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Organismic integration theory highlights autonomy and relatedness as main forces influencing motivation. The third minitheory, causality orientations theory, concerns autonomy, control, and interpersonal orientation (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) and suggests that if individuals can act as a result of their interest, be in control of their rewards, and be competent, they will be motivated. Basic psychological needs theory argues that psychological needs drive motivation and suggests that if psychological wellbeing is present, autonomy will follow, which leads to competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The end result of having those needs met will be motivation. The fifth minitheory, goal contents theory, suggests that basic needs are associated with extrinsic and intrinsic goals, and that when these goals are met, motivation will occur.

Lastly, relationships motivation theory implies that relationships are essential for wellbeing because they satisfy the need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000b).

### **Features of Achievement Goal Theory**

In the AGT there are two goals, performance and mastery. Performance goals are thought of as judgements of competence (Dweck, 1986). Mastery goals are thought of as learning goals where individuals want to increase competence (Dweck, 1986). In short, both goals weigh competence. One theory is seeking positive judgement from social contexts and the other is proving to individuals they are competent.

The mastery goal aligns with competence in evaluative standards (being competent to master a goal), while the performance goals are competence in terms of comparisons (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). An example of this motivation in an academic setting would be students being motivated to have academic success so they can have self-actualization and to also compare to others by getting better grades than other students. It is when the goals are met that competence and mastery are met. According to Dweck (1986), motivation is goal oriented and those goals are met when the needs are satisfied. This theory is especially applicable to instructors' and students' motivation because students want to get good grades and compare to others while instructors want to teach well and appear more effective than others. All things considered, two theories were investigated to create a lens through which the phenomenon was studied.

### **Relationship Between Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory**

SDT and AGT concepts are comparable; they both suggest motivation is a result of meeting psychological needs, the need to have competence and the need for

recognition of that competence. Thus, competence is an important factor. Both theories consider the ability to evaluate experiences to be important in motivation, which could contribute to one's self-perceptions (Sinclair, Bromley, Shorgren, & Murray, 2016). Both theories have considerations for intrinsic value in motivation. For example, SDT considers intrinsic motivation to be paramount in motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000a), while AGT talks about the need to accomplish goals to attain or perceive self-improvement (Dweck, 1986).

When reviewing research, particular contextual lenses were revealed. Numerous scholars obtained the same findings; instructor motivation was viewed as an important factor in university success (Bello & Jakada, 2017; Bozpolat, 2016; Han & Yin, 2016; Tand et al., 2014). The current study benefited from the framework because the two theories are recognized as motivational theories and have been used in many studies concerning various academic motivations. Using SDT caused the current study to focus on the instructor's self-efficacy, while the goal-oriented theory complemented the concepts derived from SDT. Both theories concern motivation and how it can be applied in an academic setting.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

Instructor motivation has been researched in past studies; however, little is known about the relationship and connections it has to graduate students. Mintrop and Ordenes (2017) explored instructor motivation, but focused on extrinsic incentives and performance goals. Taylor et al. (2014) focused on the relationship between specific types of motivation and how they related to college students in general. Ross et al. (2016)

considered instructor motivation, but connected it to self-efficacy. The list goes on where academic motivation was connected to different forces, but not directly connected to graduate students.

Nevertheless, careful review revealed that a majority of the studies shared one similar attribute; the research did not focus on the connection of graduate instructor motivation and graduate students' experiences. There is a large amount of research available on student motives where some have correlated instructor motivation to students' motivation. These relevant studies were included in this literature review to show the relationship between instructor motivation and student motivation.

Further, this literature review explored motivation in the educational field and touched on motivation as it applies to graduate instructors and the effects it had on graduate students. Many factors were taken into consideration so that relationships could be revealed, which stimulated new directions for the current study. Correlating the specific group of graduate instructors to graduate students' motivation was not an undemanding task, as there is an evident gap in the literature regarding motivation, this specific population of instructors, and students.

While conducting the literature review, it became apparent there was a shortage of connections to instructor motivation and graduate students' experiences. For example, according to Cerasoli, Nicklin, and Ford (2014) and Marchand and Gutierrez (2017), there was much needed research in the field of instructor motivation. This literature review contains a review of the current research drawn from peer-reviewed journals



showing the relationship or potential relationship between graduate instructors' motivation and the effect it had on graduate students.

### **Past Studies on Instructor Motivation**

Past studies were juxtaposed with the concept of graduate instructors' motivation and its relationship to graduate students. It was found that instructor motivation has been tied to student success (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004). This aligns with original theories that suggested motivation is important across life's domains, to include academics (Deci, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2008). Academics, graduate instructors, and graduate students have been analyzed by researchers to show possible relationships between instructor motivation and student success.

Research has suggested instructor motivation was tied to positive student experiences and was important to both the profession and the individuals involved (Bozpolat, 2016; Kotaman et al., 2015; Reich, Sharp, & Berman, 2015; Viseu et al., 2016). However, as aforementioned above, there were not very many connections made to instructor motivation and graduate students, nor to their experiences or success. The lack of these connections is why future studies should be conducted.

### **Current Studies**

Current academic peer-reviewed studies within the last 5 years were extensively reviewed. Karatas and Erden (2017) found academic motivation to be directly connected to learning and that it can influence persistence to learn. Jaakkola, Piipari, Barkoukis, and Liukkonen (2014) suggested similar findings, reporting instructor motivation creates a climate where student cognitive functions are elevated. Other researchers have agreed

and have concluded that instructor motivation is related to academic achievement of the pupils under them (Cimen, 2016; Koludrovic & Ercegovac, 2015). If instructors' motivation can have an impact on graduate students, then it is worthwhile to delve into the concepts related to the subject.

### **Learning Environment**

The learning environment has been a focus of current studies as well because it was looked at as a factor in learning transfer and even motivation. Lerdpornkulrat, Koul, and Poondej (2018) found that instructor involvement, expectations, and the learning environment were predictors of the students' academic success, and those variables contributed to student motivation. Another study correlated with these findings; Karatas and Erden (2017) suggested finding ways to increase student motivation can significantly improve the learning process. Thus, the successful learning process can cause student motivation and the student motivation can cause a successful learning process (Jaakkola et al., 2014). To clearly explain the links between instructor motivation and graduate students' experiences, the dynamics of motivation are explored and discussed.

### **Dynamics of Motivation**

Theory and research show motivation is multifaceted, containing many elements, and occurring in different ways. Some of these components are intensity, direction, and persistence (Cerasoli et al., 2014) and are considered motivational processes that should be researched further (Marchand & Gutierrez, 2017). Intensity, direction, and persistence can all be stimulated by external and internal forces. For example, according to Cerasoli et al. (2014), intrinsic purposes can trigger persistence while extrinsic motivation is

needed to help reinforce the positive behavior leading to goal attainment. These authors concluded extrinsic and intrinsic motivation works together in tandem.

In a more recent study, Cheon and Reeve (2015) showed extrinsic motivation to be rooted in wanting to attain incentives, making it a type of controlled motivation. The authors continued with an explanation of intrinsic motivation. Cheon and Reeve suggested intrinsic motivation is a result of one's feelings or interests. Nevertheless, there are factors that can affect or influence these types of motivation.

Some factors affecting motivation or sources of motivation are instructor support, self-efficacy, student beliefs, the learning climate (classroom), and relationships (Marchand & Gutierrez, 2017). Jaakkola et al. (2014) explored students' motivation and found students were most motivated when they perceived their learning climate to be oriented towards their learning. Some factors influencing a climate towards student learning are instructor immediacy, or instructor immediate responses (Gultekin & Acar, 2014). These factors that affect motivation are discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

### **Intrinsic Motivation**

Intrinsic motivation has been found to relate to academic research for decades and is thought of as an internal drive or a self-regulation (Vecchione, Alessandri, & Marsicano, 2014). McEown and Takeuchi (2014) also discussed self-regulation and argued that self-regulation helps instructors stay on task so instructional interventions can be applied by the instructors. Taylor et al. (2014) noted similar results, showing intrinsic motivation not only increased academic achievement but also predicted the increase in

achievement over time because the academic achievement itself produced intrinsic motivation.

Interestingly enough, Reich et al. (2015) found individuals intrinsic motivation to achieve had caused a heightened performance over intelligence, showing intrinsic motivation accounted for an 11% grade increase over that of intelligence alone. In another study (Taylor et al., 2014) it was concluded that over a year's time, intrinsic motivation was a continual variable in academic achievement. With these findings, it was inferred that if instructors could increase students' intrinsic motivation, they could potentially enhance the students' academic success.

### **Extrinsic Motivation**

Extrinsic motivation refers to a type of motivation based on external rewards or factors such as grades for students and salary for instructors (Bozpolat; 2016, Pope-Ruark, Ransbury, Brady, & Fishman, 2014). Gultekin and Acar (2014) felt extrinsic motivation was related to instructor motivation because having external forces would keep an instructor motivated to complete work-related tasks. However, the authors (Gultekin & Acar, 2014) suggested intrinsic motivation must also be present for the motivation to persist over the years. This was because intrinsic motivation caused instructor immediacy, which resulted when intrinsic motivation was high. To further explain, this means an instructor would need to have both, extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, in order to keep up the momentum over long periods of time.

An instructor who is only extrinsically motivated may not stay motivated over extended periods of time if the instructor is not receiving student feedback, salaries, or

other external rewards (Cerasoli et al., 2014). However, it has been cautioned that extrinsic motivation can vary in its effects due to the instructor's perceptions. According to Cerasoli et al. (2014), extrinsic factors (e.g., grades, pleasure, success) are only motivational if they are perceived as important to the individual. Perception seems to play a crucial role in motivation for students because if they do not perceive something as a value to them, then they will not pursue it. The same goes for instructors; they must feel it is meaningful to engage, take part in professional growth, provide feedback, and ensure learning transfer occurs.

### **Instructor Immediacy**

Instructor immediacy has been shown to foster positive relationships between the instructor and students. Instructor immediacy can be verbal or non-verbal. According to Kotaman et al. (2015), when instructor immediacy increases, a student's motivation increases. An example of instructor immediacy would be an instructor having positive body language when instructing, using humor in instructing, having a caring attitude, providing positive feedback to students when they are having discussions, or being actively involved in the student's assignments. Furlich (2016) also found instructor immediacy to create motivation to learn, showing that students who experienced a instructor who displayed immediacy behaviors experienced higher levels of engagement, motivation, and positive classroom outcomes. Kotaman et al. (2015) discovered a link between instructor motivation and student motivation, suggesting an increase in instructor immediacy would improve relationships between instructors and students because of the motivation it fosters.

Behaviors that are perceived as caring behaviors were also correlated with student motivation. According to Myers and Goodboy (2014), students preferred instructors who cared because it suggested they would be more involved with the students, which caused the students to be motivated in that course. Furthermore, the research discovered the students also felt feelings of motivation because of the instructor's consideration and responsiveness to student needs, making them feel like an important component in their own learning. Self-efficacy is also an important factor in instructor motivation because the level of confidence an instructor has can affect their motivation (Cook & Artino, 2016).

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy stems from Bandura (1977), who defined self-efficacy as individuals' belief in themselves or the belief that one will succeed at something (Cook & Artino, 2016). With the self-efficacy concept, motivation occurs when instructors have the belief they will succeed (Cook & Artino, 2016). For example, instructors who feel that they would succeed in learning transfer often have a high rate of student success in their classes (Cook & Artino, 2016).

Interestingly enough, it is a two-way street with self-efficacy though, because if students have low self-efficacy, they can perceive the instructor's high self-efficacy as threatening (Canning & Harackiewicz, 2015; Durik Shechter & Noh, 2015). Both instructors and students can have self-efficacy, but when it concerns academics, it is widely termed as academic self-efficacy. Academic self-efficacy is described by You, Dang, and Lim (2015) as individuals' perception of their own learning abilities and

successful achievements in learning goals or academic tasks. Essentially, it is the students' belief in themselves or the instructors' belief in themselves that will lead to motivation. In other words, if an instructor believes he or she can teach well, then the instructor will be motivated to do so, which would in turn encourage the students to try to succeed in class.

With the concept of academic self-efficacy, instructors can be more motivated to teach if they believe they can do it and students will be motivated to succeed if they believe in themselves (Durik et al., 2015). Other researchers (You et al., 2015) agreed with this notion and suggested academic self-efficacy is important for both, the instructor and student, because it helps motivate overall performances and self-regulation. According to Institute for Higher Education Policy (2010), ways to develop self-efficacy in the educational setting are to celebrate achievements, encourage students to succeed, and create positive learning environments. Such actions have also been coined instructor immediacy, where the instructor is responsive to the students' needs or concerns by responding to them.

### **Interpersonal Relationships**

Interpersonal relationships appear to make a difference for the students and can bring about motivation for both the instructor and the students. In short, interpersonal relationships are relationships formed that are strong, close, and meaningful that may or may not last for long periods of time (Frisby, 2016). Goldman, Cranmer, Sollitto, Labelle, and Lancaster (2017) showed instructor responsiveness, competence, caring,

immediateness, humor, and trustworthiness to be behaviors that help create interpersonal relationships.

Additional work by Frisby (2016) showed rapport or a bond between the student and instructor can influence instructor and student motivation, causing both parties to benefit from the relationship. Furthermore, Frisby (2016) discovered the relationship the instructors have with their students caused the instructors to be loyal to their university and experienced an enhanced teaching efficacy.

Goldman et al. (2017) provided important research on student instructor relationships as well. According to Goldman et al., the six specific instructor-student relationship needs are (a) students have relational needs, (b) instructors have relational needs, (c) instructors are more effective when they facilitate relational goals, (d) students have higher motivation, learning, and satisfaction when their relational needs are met, (e) the instructor's goals and the ways they achieve them will depend on the students, and (f) the student's relational needs vary as they move through the educational process. Witt (2014) had similar findings, showing that the teacher student relationship is paramount in motivation for both parties because it can lead to student satisfaction and even motivation.

### **Influence of Instructor Motivation**

Research findings indicated instructor motivation was positively correlated with student academic success (Perry, Brenner, Collie, & Hofer, 2015). Empirical findings have provided evidence of instructor motivation being important because of the positive impact it has been shown to have on students (Alsharif & Yongyue, 2014). According to



Alsharif and Yongyue (2014), instructors' motivation impacted students' learning outcomes, attitudes, and ultimately their intrinsic motivation by causing them to internally want to succeed. Lliya and Ifeoma (2015) conducted research on instructor motivation and how it affected students and found similar results. The authors discovered instructor motivation influenced the students' attitudes, which in turn positively impacted their academic performance.

Lliya and Ifeoma (2015) concluded the instructor's level of motivation and desire to instruct with passion led to successful learning transfer and students' self-efficacy, causing the students to complete their learning goals. Additional research has shown the effects of instructor motivation to have been linked to the quality of teaching the students received. For example, according to Daumiller et al. (2016), a high quality of teaching is present when an instructor has a strong motivation to teach. Bolkan (2015) suggested motivation is foundational and essential to education because of the relationship motivation has to instructor teaching and student learning. Focusing on instructor motivation, Butz and Stupinsky (2016) found graduate instructors' motivation impacted students' motivation because students felt connected to the instructor when the instructor was motivated.

McGinley and Jones (2014) found similar results suggesting instructors' motivation impacted students. In this experimental intervention study, students reported higher motivation when they perceived the instructor to be caring. With this study, the instructors who provided thorough introductions, student interviews, and discussions had more highly motivated students who even had a greater completion rate. Bolkan et al.

(2016) continued their work on instructor motivation and further elaborated on its effects by pointing out instructor motivation was crucial to the students' processing of instruction and information.

Similarly, Perry et al. (2015) linked teacher effectiveness with the instructor's motivation, finding the higher levels of motivation there were, the higher level of effectiveness the instructors had on teaching their students. For example, the authors examined how instructors' motivation supported their teaching effectiveness, concluding the instructors' motivation caused them to thrive and be more effective as educators. Lastly, the authors discovered instructor retention was linked to the instructors' motivation.

Job satisfaction was another benefit of instructor motivation and worked in a continual cycle. According to Tentama and Pranungsari (2016), instructor motivation can contribute to job satisfaction and job satisfaction can lead to positive outcomes in student learning, sustain instructor motivation, and increase the overall quality of the academic organization. Tentama and Pranungsari (2016) have also suggested organizational success is dependent on the staff's motivation because factors such as commitment are outcomes of that motivation.

### **Organizational Commitment**

When organizational commitment was reviewed, research demonstrated one's work motivation was tied to job satisfaction, which resulted in higher levels of commitment (Tentama & Pranungsari, 2016). Positive attitudes were also associated with instructors' motivation and organizational success. Cimen (2016) found attitude to either

increase institutional success or decrease the success. Berkovich and Eyal (2016) enumerated similar findings, showing graduate instructors' motivation to be linked to their commitment, which led to positive student experiences and overall institutional success. The conceptual framework revealed there were key variables and concepts involved in instructor motivation and the effects it has on students. To address these variables, much of the studies on instructor motivation were mixed methods or quantitative.

### **Methodology Related to the Study**

After reviewing the literature, several methods were revealed that addressed instructor motivation and the effects it can have on graduate students. A multitude of studies were qualitative while some were quantitative and a few used were mixed methods. My study's qualitative methods related to other studies' methods in finding a relationship between instructor motivation and students' experiences. For example, Sampson (2016) provided a study rich in qualitative data concerning teacher motivation levels over the span of one year. Sampson (2016) used action research and employed an autoethnographic case study to focus on a single case of instructor motivation.

In another study, Daumiller et al. (2016) provided a study on the relationship of instructors' motivation and students achievement. Daumiller used questionnaires and interviews to show the relationship between instructors' motivation and student learning. However, this was a correlational study that utilized statistical analysis to generate results. The authors used a confirmatory factor analysis to find their correlations. Berkovits (2016) provided another study that brought insight into the impact of instructor

motivation. The authors used a quasi-experimental design with college students, seeing what motivated students and if instructors had anything to do with it.

Another interesting study on graduate students' self-determined motivation was looked at. This was a mixed methods study that tested SDT of motivation (Butz & Stupinsky, 2016). The study used qualitative themes, looked at instructor impact, technology influences, and the program's structure.

### **Constructs of Interest**

Studies related to the constructs of interest, chosen methodology, and methods that were consistent with the scope of the study were reviewed. These studies proposed instructor motivation is important in the field of education because it can encourage or even stimulate academic motivation in students (Alsharif & Yongyue, 2014). This study focused on graduate education and how instructor motivation impacted graduate students. I have chosen this aspect of education because little research is available on graduate education and instructor motivation. If more information existed on the relationship between instructor motivation and graduate students, course design could be enhanced.

### **Research Approaches Used in Instructor Motivation Studies**

Researchers in education have approached the problem of a low instructor motivation by providing findings on the effects of instructor motivation and how students and the universities have been affected. Scholarly research has been provided that shows instructor motivation can affect the instructor's level of output, instructor's life satisfaction, student success, instructor's personal attitudes, and institutional success (Daniels & Pirayoff, 2015; Kontas, 2016; Salifu & Agbenyega, 2013). One study also

found a correlation between students' motivation and their instructor's resulting motivation (Bolkan, Goodboy, & Kelsey, 2016).

One interesting correlation with instructors and motivation is the effects students' motivation can have on instructors. Bolkan et al. (2016) discovered students' motivation actually caused the instructors to have more clarity when providing instruction amongst other forces that caused the instructors to be motivated to teach. For example, the mere presence of motivated students in the classroom helped the instructors have more clarity while giving instruction, which led to motivation to continue the instruction (Bolkan et al., 2016).

There have been research studies that investigated motivation as it applies to faculty motivation and turnover, along with student motivation and student turnover (Fuller, Waite, & Irribarra, 2016). However, there has been little research provided on how graduate students could be affected. The learning environment is another approach to instructor motivation. Research has found that instructor motivation can be heightened by the classroom environment or climate (Bolkan et al., 2016). This notion correlates with further research that suggested a positive learning climate caused students to be more motivated to participate in high quality work, ultimately leading to a higher likelihood of academic success (Marchand & Gutierrez, 2017). One could therefore deduce that findings suggested the learning climate (classroom) could influence both, the instructor and student motivations, which could strengthen this study's impact or weight.

One essential strength in Marchand and Gutierrez, (2017) study is it helped fill a gap in research by providing more insight into instructor motivation and correlated it with

the effect, if any, it had on graduate students. In addition, the study revealed how instructor motivation affected graduate students, which led to suggestions for new approaches. The weaknesses of the study are the population, which is graduate students from one university. The sample will be a number of students who have been enrolled as graduate students at least half time at the university and have completed at least two graduate courses prior to the one they are in now. This will cause the study to lack in transferability and may not produce the same results if a similar study were to take place in a different university or setting.

### **Synthesis of Studies Related to Key Concepts**

It is generally known that instructor motivation is an internal process that can determine the instructor's involvement or lack of involvement in teaching activities (Gultekin & Acar, 2014; Viseu et al., 2016). The instructor's motivation is influenced by several factors, many of them already discussed. Some of these factors according to Lliya and Ifeoma (2015) are salaries, classroom success, student involvement, professional development, the instructor's dedication to the field, and their needs. Professional development is important for instructors' motivation, as it helps them obtain skills and support needed to remain motivated instructors. According to Caddle, Brizuela, Bautista, et al. (2016) the instructor's perceived needs (extrinsic or intrinsic) will reflect in the instructor's motivations. It has been argued by Caddle et al. (2016) that the instructor's needs and desires are the largest predictors of instructor motivation or amotivation. Other research (Can, 2015; Mintrop & Ordenes, 2017; Shin et al., 2017) suggested instructor motivation was narrowed down to extrinsic or intrinsic forces, but not solely the

instructor's needs and desires. While other researchers (Cheng & Cheng, 2015; Emo, 2015; Han & Yin, 2016) felt instructor motivation is a combination of a multitude of factors such as work environment, professional factors, extrinsic values, intrinsic values, and demography.

### **Justification for Selection**

Instructor motivation is important because it has been shown in past studies to enhance the learning experiences of adult students (Bolkan et al., 2016; Daumiller et al., 2016; Tentama & Pranungsari, 2016). If the motivation of graduate instructors could be assessed and compared to the graduate students' experiences, the educational field could be improved by seeking ways to promote highly motivated instructors. In addition, target areas that need enhancement may be identified and improved to better the quality of instruction and teaching.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Some major themes in the literature were instructor immediacy, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy. Instructor immediacy helped the students feel their instructor was motivated to teach (Kotaman, Tekin, & Aslan, 2015). The instructors' intrinsic motivation helped the instructors want to be fully invested in their teaching and the instructors' motivation transferred to their students (Vecchione et al., 2014). Extrinsic motivation helped instructors be externally motivated to continue their work as instructors (Pope-Ruark et al., 2014).

What is known about instructor motivation is that it has helped other adult students feel motivated and have successful experiences. What was not known is how

graduate instructor motivation affected graduate students. It would be advantageous to know if there is a difference between the undergraduate student experiences and the graduate students' experiences so course understandings and development measures could be enhanced.

The present study filled a gap in the literature because there is a shortage in studies looking at the instructors' teaching of graduate students and their motivation. In addition, the bulk of the current literature on graduate instructor motivation has been done in universities internationally; not many of the studies have been done in the U.S. This study filled that gap by providing a current study focused on graduate instructors' motivation and the effects it has on graduate students' experiences and it was conducted in the U.S.



### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to discover the influence of graduate instructors' motivation on graduate students' experiences. The results of the study can benefit the educational field by helping reveal areas that need to be strengthened in instruction. Furthermore, new techniques can be developed for instruction that could enhance the overall experience of the graduate students.

Some major sections of Chapter 3 are Research Design and Rationale, The Role of the Researcher, and Methodology. Methodology encapsulates the instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, along with the data analysis plan. The chapter then concludes with a discussion on trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and a summary capturing the main points.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

In this study I explored instructors' motivation and the effects it could have on graduate students. I examined the presence of extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, self-awareness, and instructor immediacy. I then wanted to make my research more specific so I chose instructor motivation of graduate students and how that affected graduate students. I based this qualitative case study on the following central research question and four subquestions:

RQ 1: What is the influence instructor motivation has on graduate students?

SQ1: How are instructors affected by a high level of instructor motivation?

SQ2: How are graduate students affected by a high level of instructor motivation?

SQ3: How are graduate students affected by a low level of instructor motivation?

SQ4: How do graduate students perceive graduate instructors' motivation?

The research tradition for this study was a qualitative case study approach where a population from one university was selected. The phenomenon studied was whether and how instructors' motivation impacts graduate students. The graduate student participants needed to have been enrolled in two prior graduate courses before being considered for this study's population. I chose a qualitative case study because this approach would offer insight into how the graduate students felt they were learning in relation to how the instructors demonstrated their motivation for teaching. In addition, the approach provided an understanding of instructor motivation and its implications for the educational field. The basic framework for this study was Deci and Ryan's (1985) SDT and Dweck's (1986) AGT.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as the doctoral student researcher was that of an interviewer and data analyzer. As the interviewer, I spoke with participants, asked interview questions, talked about instructor feedback on two previous assignments, and gathered the answers to use as data for this study. I also transcribed and analyzed the data. As the data analyzer, I looked at instructor feedback on student assignments, which I had previously discussed with students during the interview process. During the time of obtaining the students' informed consent forms, I asked students if we could discuss the instructor feedback on at least two assignments completed in the current term or last 5 months. During the interview process, I asked the students about their response to the feedback.

As the researcher, I had no personal or professional relationships with my participants that might affect their responses. However, as a current doctoral student, I have had instructors I could consider motivated or unmotivated. This could cause a researcher bias. Being the researcher and the only individual performing the data analysis, there was the potential for researcher bias.

Because I was aware of the possible researcher bias, I took measures to limit the possibility of the bias affecting my work. For example, to resolve any researcher bias, I practiced reflexivity by regularly documenting reflections in a journal. I also mentioned the possibility of researcher bias to help resolve the issue. According to Probst (2015), being aware of a researcher's own influences could resolve bias. I also chose a research site with which I have had no affiliations and participants whom I have never before met, so there were no power conflicts.

### **Methodology**

In this section, I discuss the sampling strategy and participant selection criteria and state the number of participants. In addition, I state specific procedures for how participants would be used for the study. For this qualitative case study, I selected participants from one higher education institution in Washington state. During the document analysis, I analyzed instructor feedback on the selected participants' previously graded assignments. According to Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013), a case study in education research can help the researcher gain a higher understanding of programs, individuals, and specific situations. I chose a case study so that I could understand how graduate instructor motivation was connected to graduate students' experiences.

## **Participant Selection**

The participants for this study, selected from one university in Washington state, were eight graduate students enrolled in at least two graduate courses and six instructors who have been teaching graduate courses for three consecutive years. The reason the students needed to have completed two prior courses is so they would have an idea of how graduate instructors operate and function, and so they would have an idea of the graduate instructors' levels of motivation.

The students I selected for this study were in face-to-face traditional graduate courses because the aim of the study was to explore traditional graduate instructors' motivation. The sampling strategy was purposeful, as is common with qualitative studies. I used purposeful sampling because the study needed graduate students who have experienced instructor motivation in graduate level courses. According to Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011), purposeful sampling is used when the population needed has knowledge or experiences with what is being studied.

To be considered for this study, instructors needed to have been teaching at the graduate level for at least 3 years. I asked the administration at the selected university to identify potential participants (instructors) who met the criteria for the study, and I then reached out to these individuals by email. After potential participants responded, I sent them more details on the study by email. The next contact was made by phone to schedule the interview.

The sample size, as mentioned above, was eight graduate students and six graduate instructors. I determined that the sample size was sufficient because I could

collect data until I had met saturation. According to Lodico et al. (2010), with saturation, a researcher can decide when more participants are needed or when the data have become redundant and no further participants are needed. The number of participants was neither too small nor too large and could provide a contextual understanding of instructor motivation. To identify the student participants, I visited the research site. I observed to see what students were attending graduate courses and met them in person to share the outline of the research study I would be conducting.

### **Instrumentation**

The primary instruments for this qualitative study were the interview protocols produced by me. The basis for instrument development was published literature on instructor motivation and other similar studies that had provided research on instructor motivation in the past. An audio recorder was used during interviews and consent forms were provided.

The interview questions were relevant to instructor motivation because the interviews were semistructured and the interview questions were specifically designed to measure instructor motivation. In addition, the interview questions had high content validity because they used an inductive approach that adequately assessed the participants' views on instructor motivation (Mayring, 2000). That was because I used the literature review to help with constructing the interview questions for the graduate students and the instructors of graduate students. For example, the responses to my questions could adequately reflect the perspectives of the graduate students and

instructors of graduate students because they focused on the experiences and viewpoints of the participants.

Because instructor motivation has been linked to student success (Reeve et al., 2004), I also asked questions designed to assess the student participants' overall feelings of success in the course to gain more insight into their experience. In addition, I included a question asking students how instructor motivation affected them. I aligned my research question and subquestions with my interview questions to be sure the interview questions correlated with the research question.

As mentioned above, I analyzed instructor feedback on student written assignments to help triangulate the results. At the time of acceptance to participate in the study, the students were asked if they could provide two written assignments with feedback from the instructor. By using a researcher-created form where data could be notated (see Appendix A), I was able to begin document analysis of the feedback before interviewing the students.

**Interview protocols.** The interview protocol included the list of open-ended interview questions. The student participants were interviewed at the research site or by using Skype, depending on what fit the student's needs. While interviewing students, I used the interview protocol to ensure that I asked all relevant questions and to help keep the interactions focused while gaining insight into the students' perceptions.

**Graduate students.** The graduate student interview protocol (see Appendix B) started with an introduction where I introduced myself and then the project and its importance. Next, I asked some general questions about the participants' day or thoughts

about the study to get the interviewee warmed up to answering questions. I also asked the participants to tell me as much as they could about how they became a student or instructor. According to Seidman (2015), it is important to have a contextual history of participants in order to understand the participants' current experiences better. I built rapport with the participants by showing my positive attitude on the topic and ask them if they had any thoughts on the study they would like to share. The interview protocol started after the study was introduced and the interviewees have been asked nondata generating questions. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) suggested researchers should ask background information and share a little of their own background to build a rapport with participants. I then reflected on what the interviewee had stated and asked for elaboration or clarification when needed. According to Jacob and Furgerson, a researcher should ask follow-up questions if they come up, so the study can emerge as research is conducted. Lastly, I wrapped up by thanking the participants for their time, asking if they had any questions for me, and sharing how important their participation was.

***Instructors.*** For instructors, there was a different, but similar interview protocol containing open-ended interview questions (see Appendix C). According to Turner (2010), open-ended interview questions are most common in qualitative research and can allow participants to contribute information as they desire. The following day after the students had been interviewed, the instructors were interviewed at the research site or using of Skype. I used a similar interview protocol with instructors as I did with students, called an in-depth interview. According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), an in-depth interview is semistructured and helps the researcher collect rich attitudinal and

behavioral data from the participant. The interview began when I introduced myself, re-introducing the project, and built a rapport by having small talk, warming up the participants for answering questions. I then began with the open-ended interview questions. Open-ended questions can provide the participants an opportunity to fully express themselves and their perspectives on a topic (Turner, 2010). Lastly, I had a reflection period where I asked for any needed clarification. I wrapped up by thanking the interviewees for their time and let them know how grateful I was for their participation.

**Sufficiency.** Open-ended questions were used so the perceptions of instructors and graduate students could be collected. I wanted the participants to be able to freely share their feelings and thoughts on their experiences while answering questions. The interview questions helped answer SQ 1, 2, 3, and 4, which ultimately helped answer RQ 1, which was to discover what the relationships between instructor motivation and the influence on graduate students' experiences are.

In addition, to help me recall data, I used a tape recorder to capture all interviews so responses could be accurately transcribed within 48 hours of the interview in case there were some areas I needed to clarify. I wanted to be sure my data were accurate and reviewing recorded responses helped with that confirmation. All participants were notified of the recording device at the time of their interview.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The recruiting procedures for instructors were to locate a Washington state higher education institution that had instructors teaching graduate courses. Then I utilized their participant pool to locate instructors who fit the criteria for the participation of



instructors. Because there were not enough instructors available in the participant pool, I then had administration recommend instructors fitting the criteria. However, the instructors did not know the university had recommended them so there were no concerns for power threat.

I recruited student participants through the use of flyers, personal contact, and the university's research participant pool. The researcher participant pool is a collection of students and faculty who have signed up to be contacted for various research studies. The chosen institution has a participant pool and I was able to use it for a few of my participants. The instructors' and students' participation were not revealed to either party, therefore instructors did not recommend students for this study to avoid any power conflicts that may arise when instructors recommend student participation.

**Procedures for recruitment.** After receiving approval from Walden University's IRB, I reached out to the chosen university in Washington state and began communication about the research study. I had already reached out and gained permission to provide them with an IRB approval from Walden University (#08-20-18-0163592). I gained permissions from the university in Washington state and proceed with participant selection efforts. I then posted flyers for student recruitment on campus along with hand out flyers in person at the university. While on site, I answered any potential participant questions. I also communicated the need to program directors at the study site for the necessity of instructor participants to gain recommendations of participants that fit the instructor criteria. I contacted potential participants to request participation in the interviews by visiting in person and following up with written communications in email

form. I left flyers in common areas of the university to see if I could generate any volunteer participants.

**Procedures for participation.** The university in Washington state had already been notified of my intent to use their institution as a study site. They had agreed to consider letting me conduct my research after obtaining an IRB approval from Walden University. Once approval was obtained from Walden University, I obtained formal written consent to use the Washington state university as my study site. After gaining approval from the study site's IRB department, I requested to receive access to the faculty and students through the participant pool. The potential instructors from the higher education institution in Washington state were identified by the researcher as potential participants and were contacted. I provided an informed consent form in person or via-email that described the research study, potential risks, non-payment clause, privacy, and benefits of participating in this study. Participants were notified that the information would be used for educational purposes only and personal information would not be shared. I made my contact information available to the participants so they could reach me should they have any questions or concerns.

**Data collection.** Data that were collected were interview responses and artifacts (instructor feedback on written assignments). The instructor and student interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants and held in person, via Skype, or via telephone. The assignments with written instructor feedback were requested from the graduate students at the time of agreement to participate. I requested to have those

artifacts available at the time of the interviews so the students could provide specific judgements on those instructor remarks.

When I received the assignments with instructor feedback from the students, I then asked them in what ways they felt the feedback was sufficient or insufficient. I notated in a research log the students' reactions to the instructor feedback. In addition, I looked at all the comments and asked students specifically about each comment received, using an emerging process where the students set the direction so my views were not imposed (Creswell, 2012). I asked the students to make a judgement about the feedback and had them explain how the feedback amounted to the instructor being motivated or unmotivated.

Reminders were sent out via email 48 hours before the interview to confirm the participant was still available to participate. There was only one data collection event per participant, which lasted approximately 60 minutes. Again, the participants were ensured their responses would be confidential and their answers would be locked in my personal office. At the completion of the interview, I summarized and reviewed with the participants the main points from the interview. The participants were then thanked for their participation, informed of the importance of the study, and reminded of their confidentiality. There were not any follow-up interviews, or debriefing for this study.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Data analysis included reviewing all the answers to interview questions and instructor feedback on two student written assignments for each student, received at the time of the interview. The interviews were primary sources of data because they helped

explore the experiences of the graduate students and the presence of the instructors' motivation. The research question was what is the relationship between instructor motivation and the influence on graduate students. In addition to the research question there were four subquestions that were used to help answer the research question.

I then transcribed the interview responses within forty-eight hours after each interview. Open coding included reviewing responses to interviews to form initial categories (Creswell, 2012). Next, axial coding was used to help confirm the factors influencing the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Both open and axial codes were entered into an Excel spreadsheet to help identify participant common comments and terminology to reveal emerging themes from the data.

The data were analyzed from an inductive manner or emic focus where the participants supplied the information, and open coding categories were the main focus (Creswell, 2012). There was one discrepant case where a student had felt instructor motivation would lead to a heavier workload. When the discrepant case occurred, I recognized it and was committed to including all the data involved. According to Creswell (2014), a discrepant case occurs when information runs counter to the themes discovered and all information must be presented in the findings.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was established by ensuring credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Credibility was established using several methods. Reflexivity, member checks, and peer debriefing were

the chosen methods to establish credibility because they helped ensure researcher bias would not be a factor in the study (Lodico et al., 2010).

Reflexivity was conducted by keeping a journal during the research process that logged events, interactions, and descriptions of my feelings throughout the interview process. Member checks were conducted by sharing the transcribed interviews, as well as the preliminary results, with the participants to ensure the preliminary results were accurate (Lodico et al., 2010).

Peer debriefing was conducted by having a fellow peer examine my reflexive journal (Lodico et al., 2010). The chosen peer as be a fellow doctoral student at Walden University who I have provided assistance to in the past. The peer debriefer met with me often to discuss possible assumptions I could have made and provided alternative ways of looking at the data (Lodico et al., 2010).

The conclusions drawn from this study were shared with administrators at the study sight to ensure there were no biased opinions or missed information. Furthermore, the responses from interviews were logged into the researcher created chart so they could be crosschecked for accuracy. In addition, I utilized the reflective journal in which I had noted environmental factors, preconceived notions, and other feelings that surfaced while researching instructor motivation (Lodico et al., 2010).

### **Transferability**

Transferability can be challenging to prove, so as many details as possible were shared without breaching confidentiality. By providing details about the educational institution, such as the number of students in the program and the courses offered, other

institutions can find similarities. Furthermore, because instructor motivation is not a new concept, it was assumed instructor motivation and its related concepts would transfer to other instructors in other institutions.

Though I cannot prove the research findings can be applicable to all populations, I can provide the experiences and viewpoints of this population of graduate students and their instructors, along with detailed information on the educational institution used as the study site. Additionally, I provided the coding efforts and data findings to help show how I drew conclusions.

Lastly, one strategy I used was thick description of the research setting, participants' daily lives, and the researcher's detailed account of experiences during data collection (Lodico et al., 2010). Dependability was also important to the study. According to Lodico et al. (2010), detailed explanations on data collection should be provided to help track procedures.

### **Dependability**

Having a research study that was consistent and replicable was important so that the results could be trusted. I took measures to show my findings were consistent with the raw data by using methodological triangulation. What this means is I used more than one method for obtaining data. I analyzed the instructor written assignment feedback, the interview transcriptions, and the information documented in the reflexive journal.

Dependability was established by use of triangulation because it helped enrich and add value to the research study (Kennedy, 2009). According to Creswell (2012), triangulation is commonly used in qualitative studies and enhances the accuracy of a

study. I also kept the two theories that made up the conceptual framework for this study (SDT and AGT) in mind during the data analysis and interpretation.

### **Confirmability**

Establishing confirmability was important because as the researcher, I might have included some unwanted or unintended influences from my biases. Confirmability was established by using reflexivity. I kept a reflexivity journal to record any possible judgements, conclusions, viewpoints, or biases I may have held (Lodico et al., 2010). I also recorded day-to-day occurrences during the research process in the research log. Essentially, I made entries every step of the research process. I used a research journal in order to ensure my own preconceptions did not obscure or distort the research outcomes.

### **Ethical Procedures**

IRB permissions were obtained from Walden University before starting the research. In any research there are ethical concerns where principles should be followed. According to Ford (2006), the Department of Health and Human Services had published federal regulations, providing a formality to the role of the IRB for the protection of participants. Some concerns are confidentiality and respect of participants. The participants were treated with respect at all times and their personal information was and will be kept confidential.

All data were kept confidential, such that participant responses cannot be tied to any one participant. The findings derived from data analysis were stored in my personal office, locked in a file cabinet. Furthermore, the researcher was the only individual with

access to the file cabinet. The sharing of the findings does not include any participants' identifiable information; therefore, the identity of the participants was kept confidential.

There are also some ethical concerns related to data collection. Some of these concerns are the tendency to cause participants to revisit personally upsetting situations or participants' early withdrawal (Peter, 2015). No participants refused to participate or withdrew early. To protect participants from becoming distressed, the interviews allowed time for breaks as needed (Peter, 2015).

### **Treatment of Data**

I had the ethical responsibility to ensure data collection was conducted in an unbiased manner, the data were coded correctly, and were properly organized into the Excel program. In addition, the data were treated confidentially at all times. While reviewing the recorded data, I used a single room such that the participants' voices were not heard by any other individuals. The participants' names and personal information were kept confidential. In addition, the least amount of identifying information was obtained for this study. The data kept in digital format were stored on one device that was password protected.

The participants were made aware of the data containment procedures and I ensured the data remained confidential. Furthermore, the participants were reminded that their interviews were audio recorded and those recordings would be kept confidential in a secure locked file cabinet. The only individual having access to the data was myself. The data will be destroyed five years after the study has been concluded by shredding the



research documents and data using a shredder. The audio recordings and digital data will be erased from the hard drive.

### **Summary**

This chapter included the research design, which is a qualitative case study. I discussed the role of the researcher and I discussed the sample and the usage of purposeful sampling of graduate students and graduate instructors. I also discussed the criteria for participant selection of both instructors and graduate students.

Instrumentation was also discussed, where I used interviews to gain insight into the students' perceptions or thoughts of how instructor motivation influences the students' experiences. In addition to interviews, instructor feedback on written assignments was reviewed and considered as instrumentation. Procedures for recruitment, such as university recommendation and flyers were discussed, and a detailed plan to recruit participants was shared. Use of data analysis, Microsoft Excel, and the treatment of information were also addressed. In addition, this chapter included thoughts on trustworthiness and ethical concerns, and how those concerns were addressed.

Concluding Chapters 4 and 5 contain the data collection conditions, procedures, and processes that occurred during the study, as well as discussion, conclusion, and further recommendations.

## Chapter 4: Results

Recent research has indicated that the level of instructor motivation can impact student motivation (Cimen, 2016) and that a high student motivation can lead students to positive academic experiences (Karatas & Erden, 2017). The purpose of this study was to explore university instructors' motivation and how it might be important to the graduate students' success. The students' perception of the instructors' motivation is especially of interest here. The results of this study could provide a basis for creating new techniques for instruction. Furthermore, they could provide instructors with more tools to stay motivated, which could enhance the learning experience of students and ultimately help increase the quality of graduate students' education.

### **Research Questions**

The research question for this study was the following: What is the influence instructor motivation has on graduate students? There are also four subquestions I will answer in detail that are as follows: How are instructors affected by a high level of instructor motivation? How are graduate students affected by a high level of instructor motivation? How are graduate students affected by a low level of instructor motivation? How do graduate students perceive graduate instructors' motivation? This chapter presents the findings of my research. After providing a description of the study setting, I discuss the data collection process along with the data analysis. I also explain the results of the data analysis, the key themes that emerged, and how trustworthiness was balanced in the study. Finally, a summary is included that discusses the research questions and explains how they have been answered.

### **Setting**

The participants in this study were graduate students and instructors of graduate students at a university in Washington State. The instructor sample consisted of five participants who had been teaching graduate students for periods ranging from 5 to 21 years. All instructors had previously obtained a doctorate degree in the field of education or a related field. However, the criterion for the instructor participants was they had to have taught graduate courses for at least 3 years at a university.

The graduate student participants consisted of eight graduate students who were obtaining a graduate degree from a university in Washington State. The inclusion criterion for graduate students was that they had to have been enrolled in at least two earlier graduate courses within a program prior to participating in the study. Throughout the study, the research situation appeared to be stable; there were no changes in participants, changes to the research budget, or changes in myself that could affect the interpretation of the study results.

### **Data Collection**

The first set of data collected was the interview responses from the five instructors of graduate students. The second set was the interview responses from eight graduate students. The third set of data collected were two written assignments with instructor feedback attached from each of the eight student participants.

The interviews of instructors and students, which I conducted by telephone and/or skype, lasted 20-60 minutes each. I interviewed each participant only once. Each student and instructor participant was interviewed individually and at separate times over a 2-

week period. The data were recorded by an audio recording program on my cellular device specifically designed for the purpose of collecting data. I then began transcribing the audio recordings manually within 48 hours after conducting the interviews. There were no variations from the plan previously presented in Chapter 3. I followed my plan precisely as outlined.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis began with transcribing the interviews and reviewing responses to interview questions by reading the transcribed data several times. Each participant was given a participant number to ensure confidentiality during the research process. Instructors numbers begin with the letters IP and student participants begin with the letters SP. In the same timeframe, I also reviewed the instructor feedback on assignments by inputting the number of words the instructor left, the length of the written report the student had returned, and the number of positive and negative comments. The students who had stated that they felt their instructor had high levels of motivation had given samples that had more total written words and positive feedback than did the samples from the students who had felt their instructors were unmotivated. Positive remarks varied but some examples were “perfect structure,” “good point,” “excellent,” and “this is good, but. . . .” Some negative remarks were “this doesn’t make sense,” “what’s missing,” “this whole area needs to be reworded,” and “read the chapter again.”

After manually coding the data using open coding strategies to cluster the information into categories, I performed axial coding so themes could emerge. This process revealed five main themes: (a) the instructors’ belief in their students’ ability to

complete course tasks, understand and apply the core concepts taught, and successfully complete the course; (b) the students' and instructors' physical and mental presence in the course; (c) relatedness between instructors and coworkers and between students and peer students; (d) the instructor and student synergy; and (e) instructor immediacy.

### **Results**

After open and axial coding were completed, themes emerged that suggested the instructors' belief in students' abilities helped increase the students' level of motivation. The students' desire to learn also increased when instructors showed interest in the students' success in the course they were taking. Data also revealed that when instructors felt motivated, they also felt like they were mentally present, were not distracted, and wanted to come to work every day.

The data also suggested that instructors would feed off of their coworkers' level of motivation. For example, one instructor noted a time of low motivation for him was when he was spending time with another coworker who was unmotivated, which made him feel disengaged and unmotivated over time. A student participant had a similar experience when I asked, "In what ways would you say instructor motivation, whether high or low, had a part in your course outcome?"

When all the students are engaged and paying attention, I feel motivated to do the same. This seems to hit me the most when I have a really motivated instructor, you know. If the instructor is not a very motivated one, then my classmates don't seem to engage as much and it stinks. (SP 3)

Not only did students and instructors indicate feeling influenced by the motivation level of their peers, it was also found that instructors' motivation level and students' motivation level influenced each other. The themes that emerged helped answer the research questions and are discussed in detail below.

### **Theme 1: Belief in Student Abilities**

Interview data from the instructors exposed a belief in student abilities to be highly motivational to students. When asked, "How would you say your level of motivation affects your students?" an instructor participant stated,

At the core of being a teacher, I have to believe in my students' abilities and that helps them grow. If I am motivated, I think I am. . . or have more energy to meet my students where they are at. If I am really motivated, I am working hard to find that place where we can meet because I am focused on them, I am a better teacher because I am willing to focus on them. It's motivating to be connected with people, it makes me a better teacher. (IP1)

SP2 shared their instructor written feedback, which was "lets rework this area, you are doing great so far." SP2 had also noted that the instructors' written feedback gave a sense of care and belief in the student's abilities.

My instructor feedback I am sharing made me feel like he was really there for me and read my complete study. He would leave feedback throughout the study, not just a sentence at the end saying to fix it. I can always tell from the feedback if this course is going to work out for me. I need motivated instructors teaching me. I need all the help I can get. (SP2)

When another instructor participant was asked how their motivation affects their students, the participant shared that

My belief in the students I teach is motivating to them. When I am more engaged or motivated, the students feel it. When I am less motivated, I try to hide it, I think they understand I am not happy or that I am worried or concerned and it makes them work harder to make sure they are getting up to par and up to speed. The students need that different kinds of motivation from me to be motivated themselves. (IP4)

Student participants' interview responses correlated with instructor IP4's belief that students could feel the levels of motivation an instructor possessed. When a student participant was asked what effects instructor motivation had, the participant noted,

my instructors' belief in my future success kept me going, it really motivated me. I also needed that constant reminder that I was on the right track or succeeding at the work or I would start to think I was not doing very good. (SP3)

I asked another student participant how a highly motivated instructor affects the participant, and the response correlated with what instructors had sensed—that their motivation motivates their students to engage and keep going.

To me, a highly motivated instructor always motivates me to keep going because they believe in me. I feel like they actually care and are not just there for a paycheck. I also like it when I can tell they love their job; they seem to really care when they like their jobs. (SP1)

This theme connects to the research question, which is as follows: What is the influence instructor motivation has on graduate students?

### **Theme 2: Being Physically and Mentally Present**

The interview data from the instructors revealed feelings of motivation caused the educator to want to be present and to focus in more on the students. Instructors also noted how unmotivated feelings made them not want to be present or they would do the bare minimum. For example, one instructor stated,

Instructors who are motivated are going to be present, productive, and working hard. Those who are not motivated are looking for ways to avoid work, not sleeping well, and are not present. For me, when I'm unmotivated I try to find ways to not meet with the student or dreading it and then not completely reading what I have been given, I just go through the motions and think ohh my gosh, how are we gonna get through this, what will be the minimal passable thing to do here. I also get frustrated pretty quick when I'm in this state of mind. (IP1)

Being physically and mentally present connects to SQ1 (How are instructors affected by a high level of instructor motivation?) and SQ2 (How are graduate students affected by a high level of instructor motivation?). Students felt motivated when instructors were mentally and physically present. Additionally, instructors reported feeling highly motivated when students were mentally and physically present. The written instructor feedback provided also suggested instructors were "present" when writing the feedback because it was more in depth than a simple "great job" or well done". The feedback specifically addressed areas of mastery and areas in need of work.



**Theme 3: Relatedness**

The interview data provided a deep look into how relatedness affected instructor and student motivation. Many of the participants spoke of the importance of coworker motivation or peer student motivation and the effect it has on them. One student stated,

When my peers are motivated, I can't help but to join in because it seems like it feels good to them. Once I act highly motivated like they do, I am really motivated in my heart which made me feel good about what I was doing. (SP2)

Veteran instructor, IP5, explained that while working as an educator, coworker motivation had a big impact on motivation for this participant. The participant shared a story about a coworker who was also a friend.

I have a friend who is really unmotivated to work. He will complain daily about the job and the students. After spending time with him, I too start to feel unmotivated about the job and even start to take on the same perspectives and its a really bad thing to be around. (SP5)

After reviewing all of the raw data regarding relatedness, it became apparent there is an impact coworkers and students had on one another's levels of motivation. This helps answer research subquestions 1 and 3; how are instructors affected by a high-level of instructor motivation and how do graduate students perceive graduate instructors' motivation.

**Theme 4: Instructor/Student Synergy**

Through the interviews, the data revealed that instructors experienced higher levels of motivation when their students were motivated to learn the material or be

present in the class. When I asked one instructor in what ways do you think having motivation affects your students, IP3 stated,

When my students are engaged, I feel empowered and want to keep going, I feel like what I am teaching is really helping them and sinking in. It is motivating to me big time when I see students making progress, its so exciting and I love that.

(IP3)

The instructors also expressed that feelings of motivation they experience were increased when students had a high level of motivation to engage, complete tasks, and participate in class discussions.

During interviews, graduate students also revealed there was a student/instructor synergy concerning motivation. This was also mentioned when asked how the written instructor feedback made them feel. SP1 shared that while reading instructor feedback the student felt like the instructor had really read the assignment and gave useful direction which was motivating.

During interviews, all of the graduate students commented that instructors' levels of motivation affected their level of motivation, whether it be high or low. For example, graduate student participant SP6 was asked in what ways has the experience of instructor motivation affected you positively before, the student shared that

It makes me feel like my work is important to them and that they believe in what they are teaching. When my instructor is responsive to my needs and shows they are motivated to help me, I feel supported and want to put everything I have into my work. (SP6)

Graduate student SP1 was asked the same question and said,

If I have a really motivated instructor, I will make sure I double check everything because I know they will be really reading over my work. Instructor motivation also drove me to pursue my masters in nursing because I felt like I could do it.

(SP1)

This correlates with what IP4 said when it was aforementioned that being motivated made the students work harder.

One interesting finding was discovered when I asked instructors if they thought their level of motivation affected the students' level of motivation. Roughly 60% of them stated they have seen their level of motivation impact their students. About 20% felt the students were used to the fluctuation in instructor motivation or "know to expect different teaching styles", while roughly 20% said their motivation could affect students' motivation but that it was up to the students to succeed in their course.

The student participants had a very different insight on the matter of instructor motivation affecting them. Nearly 99% of the students suggested instructor motivation did correlate with their level of motivation. Only one student participant had a different perspective so I treated it as a discrepant case and followed up with a few more questions.

SP3 (discrepant case) stated "if a instructor is highly motivated, I am afraid I will fail because they will want me to be really motivated as well." As a follow up question, I asked the student participant if she would consider herself a motivated student and she shared she was "not always motivated" and "really wanted to be done with school." I wanted to know if the perspective was a result of the "wanting to be done with school" or

a result of experiencing what she felt was motivated instructors. I asked if she felt motivated instructors were harder on students and she stated “I don’t really know, I just know I have had some who want me to do more work than other instructors.”

I could not ascertain whether highly motivated instructors were the cause of the participants feelings on the matter. As a result, I asked my following graduate student interviewees if instructor motivation was tied to higher demands in their experiences. No further participants shared the previous insight. Participant SP4 stated highly motivated instructors were always “willing to go above and beyond to help me which is always nice.”

The instructor/student synergy theme that emerged answered research subquestion four, which is how do graduate students perceive graduate instructors’ motivation? The graduate student participants had all noted a similar response, that when an instructor was present all the time, prepared in-depth lectures, engaged often, and made frequent eye contact, they appeared to be highly motivated to them. For example, when I asked one student participant what does instructor motivation do for you, the participant said,

Once I see an instructor wants to be there and is excited about their work, I know they are motivated to teach me, which helps a lot. I also know the course will go well and that I will learn something in it. Many courses with unmotivated instructors cause me to just go with the flow, you know. I just do what’s required without trying to really learn the stuff. I tend to have a better experience all around if the instructors are motivated. If they aren’t then it changes everything, I am just another student in there. (SP4)

All of the student participants shared on some level it was very important to them to have a instructor who appeared to want to help and who was available to meet with them when needed.

### **Theme 5: Instructor Immediacy**

The instructor immediacy theme was evident as soon as raw data were being open coded because a vast number of participants stated they have experienced instructor immediacy. To the students, instructor immediacy was experienced by the response's instructors gave through their attention, eye contact, enthusiasm, feedback, and response time on submitted work. SP4 shared that feedback on submitted work was very important because it meant the instructor really cared and took the assignment as seriously as the student had. For example, I asked the student in what ways has an instructor been responsive to you while in the classroom. The student stated,

Instructor responsiveness is when they respond to my needs, they are available for me, and provide feedback that helps me. To me, when a instructor leaves feedback that is thought out and meaningful it tells me they care and took my assignment as seriously as I did. It shows me they care instead of just hearing it. It's the actions that count. If a instructor gives a generic response in written feedback it really shows they just wanted to do the bare minimum or didn't really want to do the job they are doing. (SP4)

In addition, the instructor participants noted that the responses students had to instructor attention and feedback given to the students seemed to help the students "grow" or "succeed" in their courses. Furthermore, many instructors stated that their immediate

attention to student needs had been a strategy they utilized to aid in student engagement or completion of the courses.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness of qualitative studies can often be questioned so measures were taken to ensure the study accurately reflected the viewpoints of the participants. I used a thick description in this qualitative study. I provided block statements from interview participants to help the reader gauge the context of what the interviewees were saying. In this study, I have implemented efforts to ensure the study is trustworthy. Trustworthiness was established by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Some of these methods included reflexivity and member checking.

#### **Credibility**

I used several methods, including reflexivity, member checks, and peer debriefing to establish credibility. To accomplish reflexivity, I kept a reflexive journal where regular entries of reflections, concepts, epiphanies, and decisions made during the research process were made. To accomplish member checks I sent preliminary findings to participants and asked for their feedback. Lastly, peer debriefing was practiced where I asked two colleague doctoral students to review the raw data and share their conclusions with me. An appropriate, well-recognized research method (qualitative) was also used. There were no adjustments to credibility strategies as stated in Chapter 3.

#### **Transferability**

There were no adjustments to the plan for transferability as outlined in Chapter 3. The findings may be transferable to other graduate students in other universities who

experience instructor motivation. Transferability was established by sharing as many details as possible in my research. I provided details about the educational institution and participants without breaching confidentiality. Though I cannot prove findings that could be applicable to all populations of graduate students, I was able to provide the experiences of the graduate students and instructors of graduate students in this study. The documentation of the information to include the themes will also aid in the transferability to other universities. The coding efforts and data conclusions that are discussed in Chapter 4 also strengthen transferability and add to the dependability of the study.

### **Dependability**

The implementation of consistency strategies stated in Chapter 3 remained the same and were not adjusted. I took measures to show my findings were consistent with raw data by using methodological triangulation. For example, I used more than one method for obtaining data. I analyzed the instructor written assignment feedback, the interview transcripts, and the information documented in the reflexive journal. According to Creswell (2012), triangulation is common in qualitative studies and can enhance the accuracy of a study. The reflexive journal also added to confirmability of the study by offering additional information.

### **Confirmability**

There were no adjustments made to the plan for confirmability, as discussed in Chapter 3. I was able to keep a reflexive journal that was used as an ongoing log to record any possible judgements, conclusions, viewpoints, or biases I could have. I have

also included an in-depth methodological description under the methodology section in Chapter 3 to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinized.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 discussed the setting of the study, including the participants demographic information, the data collection, data analysis, research results, and the evidence of trustworthiness. Through my research I learned that instructors of graduate students' motivation do influence graduate students. Research subquestions 2, 3 and 4 are answered when it was discovered that the level of instructor motivation could influence the level of student motivation in the classroom, where it would fluctuate according to the level of motivation the instructor possessed or expressed. For example, if an instructor had what the students perceived as high motivation, the students reported feeling motivated themselves. Whereas, if the instructors had a seemingly low motivation, the students stated they would then become unmotivated. Research subquestions 2 and 3 both asked how graduate students are affected by either high or low instructor motivation. The instructors had similar perceptions.

The instructors stated if they felt motivated, they noticed their students would be more engaged and grow throughout the course. The instructors also shared that when they had low motivation, they thought the students could tell and students did not rate them well on the end of semester student questionnaires. Most of the instructors stated they felt being highly motivated helped them be a better instructor and that when unmotivated they felt like they were just "going through the motions."



High motivation seemed to impact instructors as well. IP4 and IP1 shared how drawn they were to other motivated instructors because they were mentors to them and helped them feel motivated themselves just by communicating with them. IP4 also shared how being motivated helped the instructor engage more often with students and “really get involved in their study.” This answered research subquestion 1, how are instructors affected by high-levels of instructor motivation. Students and instructors alike shared they felt they fed off one another’s levels of motivation and it was contagious, whether it was high or low motivation, which answers the research question: What is the influence instructor motivation has on graduate students?

Chapter 5 will first provide a brief introduction to the chapter where the purpose and nature of the study will be stated. Next, the interpretation of the findings will be discussed where the findings will be analyzed and interpreted. Then the study’s limitations will be highlighted. Finally, recommendations, implications, and the conclusions of the study will be shared.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study expanded on the current research that suggests that instructor motivation affects students. While investigating how instructor motivation impacts graduate students, I narrowed the focus to graduate instructors' low and high motivation and graduate students' experiences with those levels of motivation. The goal of this study was to provide a deeper insight into instructor motivation so areas of instruction can possibly be improved and instructors can be supported in a way that cultivates instructor motivation.

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of university instructors' motivation and how it might be important to the graduate students' success. I focused on the students' perception of the instructors' motivation to see how it impacts the students' education attainment experiences. With this study, I explored instructor motivation and how it can lead to positive social change by helping broaden the current knowledge on the effects of instructor motivation. The results of this study could benefit the educational field by helping develop new techniques for instruction, which could enhance the learning experience of graduate students.

Key findings of the study were that the instructor's level of motivation did impact the graduate students. The data analysis revealed that students felt higher levels of motivation when they perceived their instructor as having a high level of motivation. Additionally, the data uncovered the negative effects of amotivation when experienced by both instructors of graduate students and graduate students. When the graduate students felt the instructor possessed low levels of motivation, they too felt unmotivated and were

less likely to complete assignments on time, struggled more with the material being taught, and did not relate to the instructors in a way that would enhance their learning experience.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings confirm the knowledge presented in the literature review and extend that knowledge to include the effects of motivation to a specific population: graduate students and instructors of graduate students. What was found in the peer-reviewed literature presented in Chapter 2 was that instructor motivation is tied to positive student experiences and is important to both the profession and the individuals involved (Bozpolat, 2016; Kotaman et al., 2015; Reich et al., 2015; Viseu et al., 2016). To further this notion, Karatas and Erden (2017) found that academic motivation is directly connected to learning and that it can influence the student's persistence to learn. The results of this study confirm the conclusions of the aforementioned researchers. It was found that the level of motivation the graduate students perceived their instructors to have influenced their own level of production, engagement, and motivation in the classroom.

The conceptual framework that helped create the lens for this study was the AGT (Dweck & Nicholls, 1986) and SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Both theories are relevant because they contain educational attributes, are motivation theories, and can pertain to adult education (Han & Yin, 2016). After analyzing the data and interpreting the findings, I found that the features of SDT and the AGT align well with the findings of this study.

SDT shows motivation to be complex and focuses on intrinsic and extrinsic factors, where needs must be met in order for there to be motivation (Deci et al., 1994).

The results of this study revealed that graduate students had an intrinsic need for the instructors to be motivated to teach the course. One participant stated, “I can tell when an instructor is motivated to teach. It shows when they are there for the right reasons and like their job! If they don’t, then they don’t motivate me at all.” In addition, an instructor participant told me, “when I teach and students are really into it, I get motivated to do more and share insights or experiences with them; it keeps me going the extra mile.”

The features of the AGT also align with this study’s findings. The AGT suggests that individuals are motivated by performance and mastery or competence. This framework was applicable because the study findings indicated that motivation is connected to mastery. For example, the majority of the instructor participants stated that they liked it when they received positive feedback from students because it let them know they were doing a good job. One participant shared that “If I ever wonder how I did in a course I just read my student feedback and that will tell me if I have done well or not, student feedback is everything and boosts my motivation”. In short, both frameworks aligned with the study’s findings because the frameworks suggest an individual is motivated when they are competent, their psychological needs are being met, and they are getting recognition for those competencies. The results of this study show that the instructors liked having recognition (e.g., student feedback comments) for their hard effort and that the students liked the positive response or instructor immediacy they received from instructors.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study's limitations involve transferability, which included sample size and my role as the researcher. Concerning transferability, the study's population is limited to graduate students and instructors of graduate students at one university in western Washington state. Regarding the limitation of the sample size, the sample was five instructors and eight students acquired from one university. Currently, the university has 1,075 graduate level instructors and 1,995 graduate students, making it difficult to apply the findings to all populations of graduate students or instructors of graduate students. To increase transferability would require future studies on how graduate instructors' level of motivation impacts graduate students and in what ways. An additional limitation lay in the methodology of the study, which was qualitative. This was not an experimental study, so no variables such as the instructor's level of motivation were controlled in order to claim that a cause and effect relationship did in fact exist. As a result, such limitations within the sampling process could potentially risk transferability (Patton, 2002). Future researchers should utilize multifaceted research methodologies.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Further research could include selecting greater sample sizes, seeking the perceptions of graduate students and their instructors from more than one university and completing a study using an experimental design. This study's results suggested that many graduate students perceive instructors' motivation to help them succeed in their classes, foster motivation in them, and help them "want to engage" (IP2, IP4, SP3). Based on this study, I recommend further research be conducted on instructor motivation

as it applies to graduate students in order to explore the root cause of motivation and how that can be increased in order to promote the positive results of instructor motivation on graduate instructors that have been discovered in this study

Additionally, I recommend conducting an experimental study that explores how instructor motivation affects graduate students so cause and effect can be established. Some potential research questions would be as follows: Why is it important to have high instructor motivation? What affects instructor motivation? What causes instructor motivation to increase? Who is impacted when student motivation increases and in what ways? What are the effects of instructor motivation on other instructors? I would hypothesize that several factors cause instructors to have high motivation and instructor motivation would grow as the students' motivation grew. I would also hypothesize that instructors would cause other instructor to have either low or high motivation and students would experience the same relationship with their levels of motivation.

### **Implications**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify how instructor motivation influences graduate students, advance knowledge in the field to improve practices in education, and contribute to positive social change. This research revealed how instructor motivation affects students in a positive or negative way and that those positive or negative effects can be increased by the level of instructor motivation. Concerning advancements in knowledge, this study showed how instructor motivation can impact student motivation in graduate school, a topic which has little prior research.

In relation to positive social change, this study may serve as foundational research that can be the start of a new mindset, a mindset that motivation is imperative in the field of education. This study is the first of its kind to tie instructor motivation to students and students' motivation back to the instructors. Motivation is the alpha and omega, the beginning or the end of the student/instructor synergy. The creation and the maintaining of motivation possibly lie within the instructor and the student together, a connection that has not been widely explored. The synergy between instructor and student motivation has been a phenomenon overlooked and even underestimated, which is why this study could open the door to new perspectives that can bring motivation to the table.

As a result of this study, it was discovered that instructors' levels of motivation can impact not only their students' levels of motivation, but can also influence their coworkers or peers' levels of motivation. The effects instructors and students had on one another was a discovery that could most certainly lead to positive experiences in higher education, which is a positive social change. For example, increasing the amount of positive experiences in graduate school could encourage others to pursue graduate degrees. This would be good for the organizations' sustainability and growth, and would lead to higher graduate rates in graduate school. With more graduates, there could be more organizations thriving, which would possibly lead to more employment opportunities. In addition, strategies could be taught to increase motivation. This would in turn, continue to enhance the teaching experience for instructors and the learning experience for graduate students in higher education. Because it is now known that instructor motivation enhances the learning experience of graduate students, the

development of comprehensive instruction, instructor training, and other instructor support models may be created to aid in instructor motivation. This research may also be built upon and provide a research basis for future research to discover ways instructor motivation can be enhanced and training modules could be created to increase the motivation of instructors.

The recommendations for practice in higher education are to create or foster motivation in instructors to help enhance the learning experience of graduate students and the teaching experience of instructors. It is suggested that instructors be present in the classroom, have high levels of instructor immediacy, relate to their students, and create an instructor/student synergy to foster motivation. Instructors should be present so they can engage with their students in person and have that student/instructor synergy creation. It is also recommended that instructors create strategies that help their students achieve their goals and implement methods that enhance engagement, which is now shown to increase motivation.

Instructors may also want to relate to their students, showing them they are alike in many ways and that they can meet them at their level. It is also important to realize the instructors have the power to raise instructor and student motivation, not only in the classroom, but in everyday life. Essentially, as a result of the instructor/student synergy that was found to occur, the instructors could create high levels of motivation in their classroom by functioning as a motivated instructor themselves. Some examples of motivated behavior were instructors being responsive to student inquiries immediately, having time to meet with students after class, further discussing topics when needed, and



asking if students had any questions. Students reported feeling motivated and comfortable with an instructor who functioned in this manner.

### **Conclusion**

Instructor motivation is a powerful force in the classroom that can either enhance or diminish student motivation. This connection is being referred to as the instructor/student synergy within the classroom or other settings. The instructor/student synergy was a significant finding because it revealed how instructors could fundamentally create student motivation in their own classrooms by showing high levels of motivation themselves. It was shown that graduate students prefer instructors who exhibit the signs of a motivated instructor and that it makes them feel motivated. Instructors reported feelings of high motivation when their students acted in a manner that was consistent with what they thought was highly motivated behavior.

Additionally, it was discovered that instructors can even affect their colleagues' levels of motivation by showing high or low levels of motivation. Not only can instructors affect their students' levels of motivation, they could impact their coworkers' levels of motivation by showing low or high levels of motivation. It was noticed that when an instructor portrayed themselves as unmotivated, other instructors started feeling unmotivated themselves. This was a chain effect that would continue to affect others who were in the area listening to the conversations of their coworkers.

One participant called it "lunchroom talk" where they would begin to feel the way their coworkers discussed they felt at lunch. The instructor participant shared it was a good idea to avoid unmotivated instructors while at lunch or other gatherings because

“their unmotivated feelings really do rub off on you.” Instructor motivation not only presents itself as extremely important to the learning experience of graduate students, but it was also found to be impactful to the working experience of the instructors and those around them. An instructor participant shared they would purposely share positive insights and thoughts with their friends, to help “keep them going” and create higher levels of motivation for themselves in the process. This almost sounded like a well-kept secret that instructors have known about but have not really discovered in its entirety. After considering all of the findings, perhaps the most significant is the effect one instructor had on another, having the power to add to, or take away from, another’s level of motivation. If we all have the power to create higher levels of motivation, education could become a highly motivated field to be a part of and perhaps a highly sought after profession.

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## Appendix A: Instructor Feedback Analysis Document

1.	Physical characteristics of the feedback such as long, short, to the point, not clear, clear:
2.	Things that were important about the feedback:
3.	Things that were unclear:
4.	Things the feedback recommends:
5.	Things the feedback did not recommend:

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Students

The interview would start by an introduction of myself and the study. Some general questions will be asked about the participants day and thoughts on the study. The students will be asked to share up to two past written assignments with instructor feedback. The students will be asked their thoughts on the provided feedback and what they gained from it. The interview questions will begin and are as follows:

1. Please share how you came to be a doctoral student
2. Please explain how instructor motivation affects you.
3. How have you experienced instructor motivation?
4. What does instructor motivation do for you?
5. How would you describe a low level of instructor motivation?
6. How does a highly motivated instructor affect you?
7. Please explain how a low motivated instructor affects you?
8. In what way has the experience of instructor motivation affected you positively before?
9. In what way has the experience of instructor motivation affected you negatively before?
10. In what ways have you received a grade you expected when in a class with a low motivated instructor?
11. In what ways have you received a grade you expected when in a course with a highly motivated instructor?

12. If you have received a grade you expected or did not expect in a course, in what ways was the grade expected or unexpected?
13. In what way would you say instructor motivation rather high or low, had a part in your course outcome?
14. In your opinion, what are some examples of high levels of instructor motivation?
15. In what ways has an instructor been responsive to you while in the classroom?
16. In what way has low level instructor motivation affected you if at all?

After the questions are asked I will reflect on what the interviewee has shared and clarify any answers if needed. The participants will be thanked and reminded of how important their participation is to the general community.

### Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Instructors

The interview would start by an introduction of myself and the study. Some general questions will be asked about the participants day and thoughts on the study. The interview questions will begin and are as follows:

1. Please share how you came to be an instructor of graduate students
2. Please explain how instructor motivation affects you.
3. How have you experienced instructor motivation?
4. What does instructor motivation do for you?
5. How would you describe a low level of instructor motivation?
6. How would you describe a high level of instructor motivation?
7. In what ways have you ever felt unmotivated as an instructor?
8. In what ways have you ever felt more than averagely motivated as a instructor?
9. In what ways do high levels of motivation make you feel accomplished or successful as an instructor?
10. How would you say your level of motivation affects your students?
11. In what ways do you think having motivation while teaching makes you a better educator?
12. In what ways do you think instructors having low motivation would affect their day to day job duties?
13. As an instructor, how would you explain the effects of being highly motivated versus having low motivation?

After the questions are asked I will reflect on what the interviewee has shared and clarify any answers if needed. The participants will be thanked and reminded of how important their participation is to the general community.