The Influence Of Students On Instructor Out-Of-Class Communication, Job Satisfaction, And Motivation

Jennifer L. Knapp

Jennifer L. Knapp (Ed.D., 2008, West Virginia University) is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at SUNY Oswego. Direct all correspondence to (Jennifer.knapp@oswego.edu)
Abstract

The bulk of instructional communication research is concerned with the impact of instructors on students, leaving very few studies that focus on the affects of students on instructors. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to identify the impact students have on instructor out-of-class communication (OCC), job satisfaction, and motivation. Student relational, functional, participatory, excuse-making and sycophancy motives for communicating, along with perceived student motivation were examined in order to learn more about the influence of students on instructors. Participants (college instructors, N = 268) completed an online questionnaire about their OCC, job satisfaction, and motivation, as well as perceived student motivation and motives for communicating. Pearson correlations showed that when instructors perceived students as communicating for the relational and participatory motives, they were more likely to engage in OCC and feel more satisfied and motivated. There was also a relationship between perceived student motivation and instructor job satisfaction.
Historically, instructional communication research has focused on the impact instructors have on their students (Waldeck, Kearney, & Plax, 2001a). Unfortunately, this leads to a lack of research investigating the impact students have on their instructors. As more researchers in the field begin to define the instructor-student relationship as an interpersonal one (Frisby & Myers, 2008; Frymier & Houser, 2000), it becomes increasingly more important to examine how both parties are affecting one another inside, as well as outside, the classroom. The first goal of this study, therefore, was to investigate how instructor engagement in out-of-class communication (OCC) with students affected instructor motivation and job satisfaction.

A second goal of this investigation was to establish whether there were additional variables that influenced instructor feelings of motivation and satisfaction. Specifically, this research examined instructor perceptions of student motives for communicating with instructors and perceptions of student motivation, in an effort to learn more about the affects of student communication on instructors.

Finally, in addition to the specific findings of this study, the last goal of this investigation is to encourage more research on the impact of students on instructors. As the literature review will demonstrate, very few researchers choose to study the impact of student communication behaviors on the student-teacher relationship (Weiss & Houser, 2007). Additionally, even fewer researchers investigate the relationship from an instructor’s standpoint, and no researchers have done it with any sort of consistency or dedication. Naturally students are an educator’s priority, however, students are not students without instructors, nor are instructors capable of being instructors without students.

Before reviewing the literature, one important definition must be provided. This study uses Fusani’s (1994) definition of out-of-class communication (OCC), which is student-initiated visits during office hours, conversations before or after class, and informal meetings on campus between students and instructors. Some scholars do include e-mail as part of their definition of OCC, but in this investigation, only face-to-face communication will be regarded as OCC.

Before research on OCC began in the communication field, researchers from the field of education had examined a similar topic. Often referred to as “out-of-class experiences,” a series of education scholars studied the effects of various types of non-classroom experiences on college student academic, cognitive, and social development. Topics ranged from experiences in residence halls and intercollegiate athletics, to employment and peer interactions (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). These out-of-class experiences differ from out-of-class communication however, since they include other types of college personnel, not just instructors. Ultimately, researchers consistently agreed these types of interactions were instrumental in the intellectual and social development of students (Kuh, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1976; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996; Terenzini, Springer, & Nora, 1995; Terenzini, Theophilides, & Lorang, 1984; Terenzini & Wright, 1987; Tinto, 1975; Wilson, Wood, & Gaff, 1974; Wilson, Gaff, Dienst, Wood, & Bavry, 1975).

Review of Literature

Out-of-Class Communication

Much of the research which has been conducted on out-of-class communication was sparked by the work of Fusani (1994). In this seminal work, the author investigated the frequency of OCC, instructor self-disclosure and immediacy, and student satisfaction. Results of the study indicated a strong positive correlation between OCC and instructor immediacy, with nearly all students identifying immediacy as the most significant predictor of satisfaction. Immediacy, which is defined as any verbal or nonverbal behavior that increases psychological
closeness between people (Andersen, 1979), was also an important variable in a study conducted by Jaasma and Koper (1999). Frequency of office visits, frequency of informal contact (interactions before or after class, on campus), length of office visits, and student satisfaction, were all correlated with verbal and nonverbal immediacy. Studies by Clark, Walker and Keith (2002), and Knapp and Martin (2002), provided further evidence of the positive relationship between OCC and nonverbal immediacy.

As stated previously, Fusani (1994) was also interested in instructor self-disclosure, specifically types and the amount. In most student analyses self-disclosure was insignificant, but the researcher stated that perhaps faculty self-disclose less than they perceive, or students do not pay attention to or recognize teacher disclosure. Later research by Cayanus and Martin (2004) however, did find a positive relationship between instructor self-disclosure and OCC.

One variable often linked to self-disclosure is trust, which can also influence instructor-student communication. Jaasma and Koper (1999) found trust to be positively correlated to the frequency of informal contact, student satisfaction, and socializing during informal contact. Trust was negatively correlated to the discussion of personal problems during informal contact. Looking to extend research on the notion of the student-teacher relationship as a type of interpersonal relationship, Dobransky and Frymier (2004) investigated student perceptions of trust, intimacy and shared control (students and teachers both provide input about the class, assignments, etc) as regular components of the student-teacher relationship. Not only did results indicate students who participated in OCC felt more trust, intimacy, and shared control than students who did not participate in OCC, but trust accounted for the most variance in satisfaction with OCC.

In later research Jaasma and Koper (2001) collaborated again to identify six content categories for interactions: course-related, self-disclosure, small talk, advice, intellectual ideas, and favor requests. Participants in this study were asked to recount one encounter with an instructor, and then describe it. In a related study, Knapp and Martin (2002) identified potential reasons, or “motives,” for students to talk to their instructors outside of the formal classroom. Of the five instructional motives (relational, functional, participation, excuse making, and sycophancy, which will be discussed in detail later) the relational, excuse-making, and sycophancy motives were positively related to OCC. Essentially, students who initiate out-of-class interactions with their instructors do so to potentially (1) develop a relationship, (2) explain why work is late or missing, or (3) to “brown nose.” Other discussion topics during OCC interactions have included career plans, and campus-related problems or concerns (Theophilides & Terenzini, 1981).

Student motivation has also been studied in the OCC context. Both Jaasma and Koper (1999), and Knapp and Martin (2003) found student motivation to be positively related to OCC. Jones (2008) was also interested in student motivation, but operationalized OCC a bit differently. Combining the concepts of OCC and social support, Jones developed what he called OCS: out-of-class support. Out-of-class support was defined as “teacher communication, occurring outside of the classroom setting, that demonstrates a responsiveness to students’ needs; communicates caring; validates students’ worth, feelings, or actions; and helps students manage and cope with stressful situations through provision of information, assistance, or tangible resources” (Jones, 2008, p.375). Jones’ results showed students experienced greater levels of motivation and communication satisfaction with highly supportive instructors.

Learner empowerment, an outcome variable, has also been examined in relation to OCC. A motivation-based construct, learner empowerment is comprised of meaningfulness, impact,
and competence. All three factors of learner empowerment were positively related to OCC (Knapp & Martin, 2003). Similarly, students that reported higher levels of learning indicators, which are essentially communicative manifestations of cognitive learning (such as the ability to explain course content to classmates) also reported they engaged in more OCC (Dobransky & Frymier, 2004).

Nadler and Nadler’s (2000) approach to studying OCC was different from all previous and subsequent studies. Investigating OCC from a faculty perspective, the researchers found the variables of perceived instructor empathy, use of relational messages, and instructor sex to all be related to OCC. More specifically, results of the study found instructor empathy and relational messages to be related to discussion of general academic and personal matters by students. Female instructors reported engaging in more OCC with students, and reported a greater likelihood than male instructors of being approached by students for class-related, general academic and personal matters. Higher levels of empathy, and the core relational messages (immediacy/affection, receptivity/trust, equality), were significantly correlated with more OCC between instructors and students. Finally, female instructors reported higher levels of quality and perceived value of out-of-class interactions with students. With these findings, the researchers support Pascarella & Terenzini’s (1978) assertion that the affective or relational contributions instructors make are just as important as the transmission of knowledge.

Much of the research on out-of-class communication has centered around students’ likelihood of engaging in OCC based on their perceptions and evaluations of their instructors. For example, Aylor and Oppliger (2003) examined student perceptions of instructor humor orientation and socio-communicative style (assertiveness, responsiveness) as antecedents to OCC. Perceived instructor humor orientation (HO) was positively related to the frequency of formal and informal OCC, and student satisfaction with OCC. Instructor HO was also positively related to three topics of conversation: socializing with the instructor, discussion of personal problems, and discussion of course content. Perceived instructor responsiveness, but not assertiveness was positively related to frequency of informal OCC, and satisfaction. Bippus, Kearney, Plax, and Brooks (2003) found students were more likely to engage in OCC when they perceived their instructors as accessible and as capable mentors, and Myers (2004) reported positive relationships between all three components of credibility (competence, caring, and character) with OCC. Finally, Myers, Martin, and Knapp (2005) reported students were more likely to initiate OCC with instructors who were perceived as using functional communication skills and affinity-seeking strategies.

Two studies devoted themselves to studying the relationship between student communication traits as they relate to out-of-class communication. Martin and Myers (2006) had students report their own levels of assertiveness, responsiveness, cognitive flexibility, communication apprehension and talkaholism (“over-communication”). Neither assertiveness nor responsiveness produced significant relationships with OCC. Cognitive flexibility, however, was positively related. The authors suggested because cognitive flexibility involves being able to adapt to new situations, and since OCC tends to be relatively infrequent and potentially “new” to many students, cognitively flexible individuals would be much more likely to engage in OCC than less cognitively flexible individuals. As predicted communication apprehension was negatively related to OCC, but there was no relationship between talkaholism and OCC.

Frymier (2005) hypothesized students who were effective communicators would be more successful in the classroom. By asking students to report their levels of OCC, assertiveness, responsiveness, and interaction involvement (which includes perceptiveness, responsiveness, and
awareness of the environment) the researcher assessed the students’ communication effectiveness. Those scores were then used to predict levels of affective learning and learning indicators, grades, motivation to study, and satisfaction with their communication with their instructor. The students who classified themselves as effective communicators (which includes engaging in OCC), reported higher affective learning and learning indicators, higher state motivation to study, and greater satisfaction with communication between themselves and their instructors. Frymier’s research also contributed one more finding of note: OCC was still reported to be an infrequent behavior. The author concluded the communication that occurs inside the classroom still seems to have a bigger impact on students.

Additional conclusions about OCC have been positive relationships between OCC, affect for the course, and affect for the instructor (Knapp & Martin, 2002). Also, according to Theophilides and Terenzini (1981), perceived instructor preparation, ability, and concern are behaviors that impact whether students participate in OCC. Myers, Edwards, Wahl and Martin (2007) found a negative relationship between OCC and perceived instructor verbal aggression. Finally, Hample, Trowbridge, and Felts (2006) found relationships between two of their OCC scale dimensions, ease and utility, and perceived instructor assertiveness and responsiveness, as well as student locus of control.

According to Terenzini, Pascarella, and Bliming (1996), “most researchers have reported positive associations between the nature and frequency of students’ out-of-class contacts with faculty members and gains on one or another measure of academic or cognitive development” (p. 155). Waldeck (2007) investigated the notion of “personal education,” including the role instructors play in developing perceptions of personalized education. When student-participants were asked exactly what instructors do or say to create the feeling of personalized education, the most frequent response given was the “instructor shares his/her time outside of class for student needs” (p. 417-418). Although the effects of OCC on students have been overwhelmingly positive, nothing is known about the effects of OCC on instructors. To that end, the focus will now shift from students to instructors.

**Instructor Satisfaction**

As stated earlier, little is known about the influence of students on instructors. Jenkins and Deno (1969) offer three potential reasons why there is such a lack of research. First, changing student behavior is the primary reason for education; therefore, most research is directed toward changing student behavior. Second, there is no clear rationale for examining the effects of students on instructors, so researchers are not motivated to do this type of research. Finally, in order to make causal inferences, student behavior needs to be manipulated in an experiment, and student behavior cannot be appropriately controlled. In a survey not directly aimed at assessing the influence of students on instructors, Fedler, Counts and Smith (1984) sought to compare male and female professors’ reports of job satisfaction. Male and female assistants professors had similar reports of satisfaction, but female professors reported more satisfaction with their students and colleagues, but less satisfied than males when it came to promotions. At the associate professor rank the results were reversed, with males reporting more satisfaction with their department chairperson, merit pay procedures, their colleagues, and their lives outside of work. This study is dated however, and even begins describing the disproportionate number of male-to-female professors in the early 1980’s. No matter what the reason for the lack of research on instructor satisfaction however, this noticeable gap in the instructional literature begs for researchers to fill it. The first article summarized is not a study of
the effects of students on their instructors, but the subsequent articles do discuss student influence.

In an effort to determine the effects of instructor temperament on job satisfaction, motivation, burnout and caring, Teven (2007) surveyed 48 faculty members at a medium-sized Southwestern university. Results showed faculty members felt more job satisfaction when they perceived their supervisors as caring. Similarly, participants’ self reports of caring were related to their motivation. As the researcher summed these results, he concluded these perceptions of caring and feelings of motivation were very likely to lead to even more positive outcomes, such as faculty member commitment and dedication.

According to Jenkins and Deno (1969), teachers judge their effectiveness based on student behaviors such as hand-raising, visible excitement, posture, and smiling. To that end, the researchers tested the effects of student-generated positive and negative feedback on instructors. Those teachers who received more positive feedback evaluated their teaching experience more favorably. In a study by Natriello and Dornbusch (1983), characteristics related to student performance, achievement, and social behavior had a positive impact on instructor behavior. Baringer and McCroskey (2000) found nonverbally immediate students increased their perceived credibility, as well as instructor affect and interpersonal attraction for students. Instructors also reported feeling more motivated by the nonverbally immediate students. In addition to findings which provided evidence of the effect of student characteristics and behavior on instructor behavior, there are specific student behaviors that have been linked to instructor satisfaction.

Instructor job satisfaction is defined as “a state of mind determined by the extent to which the individual perceives his/her job-related needs being met” (Evans, 1997, p. 833). According to Duran and Zakahi (1987), “teachers and students hold each other responsible for course satisfaction” (p. 21). Holdaway (1978) stated “working with students” is vital to instructor job satisfaction; and in a study conducted by Braskamp, Fowler, and Ory (1982), instructors’ greatest sense of accomplishment came from teaching and working with students. Similarly, aspects considered intrinsic to the role of teaching, such as transforming student attitudes and behaviors, helping students achieve, and developing positive relationships with students reportedly lead to more instructor satisfaction (Dinham & Scott, 2000). Mottet (2000) concluded student nonverbal responsiveness was related to instructor feelings of satisfaction, and evaluation of the instructor-student relationship. Finally, studies conducted by Shann (1998); Kim and Loadman (1994); and Pena and Mitchell (2000), have documented the impact of the student-instructor relationship on primary, secondary, and college-level educators’ satisfaction.

Rubin and Feezel (1986) stated a majority of an instructor’s time is spent communicating with students both in and out of the classroom. And, since teaching is primarily a communication-oriented activity, job satisfaction is naturally reliant upon satisfying and successful student-instructor encounters (Graham & West, 1992). Not surprisingly then, while studying the relational teaching approach (RTA - which includes the constructs competence, immediacy and humor), Graham and West (1992) reported a positive relationship between RTA and instructor satisfaction. Years later, Mottet, Beebe, Raffeld and Medlock (2004) conducted a study on the effects of student verbal and nonverbal responsiveness on instructors’ perceptions of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. While both verbal and nonverbal responsiveness were found to effect instructor perceptions of self-efficacy and job satisfaction, nonverbal responsiveness had nearly twice as large of an effect than verbal responsiveness. Lastly, instructor satisfaction has also been linked to perceived classroom control (Plax, Kearney, & Downs, 1986), and in-class student-related activities (Cohen, 1973).
While the impact of students on instructors has not been completely overlooked, most research focuses on the influence of teachers on students. A majority of the communication and education research investigates teaching and learning as a “linear, one-directional relationship” (Mottet & Richmond, 2002, p.48). In other words, researchers sometimes fail to recognize the fact that students and their behaviors most certainly affect teachers and their teaching.

**Instructor Motivation**

“When the teacher loves his/her profession, the student learns to love education” (Czubaj, 1996, p. 372). The logical question to follow, then, is what makes a person love his/her profession? According to Czikszentmihalyi (1982), “an activity is intrinsically motivated when the actor experiences it as rewarding in itself, not just as a means to future, external goals” (p. 18). While literally hundreds of studies report how administrators can keep their faculty happy, very few studies investigate other variables’ relationship to instructor motivation. One consistently over-looked variable is the student. As stated previously, researchers continually study the teacher-student relationship as a one-directional relationship, therefore failing to recognize when students affect their instructors. For instance, Lamport (1993) compiled a comprehensive literature review about the impact of student-instructor informal interactions on student outcomes. In the article, the author addressed all of the following: instructors as agents of socialization; instructor influence on student academic achievement; instructor influence on student satisfaction with college; instructor influence on student intellectual and personal development; instructor influence on student persistence and attrition; instructor influence on student and career and educational aspirations. While the primary objectives of higher education are to facilitate student learning and student development, ignoring instructors during the instructional process produces a one-dimensional view of a two-way process. The following section offers a summary of what has been written about instructor motivation.

Eggen and Kauchak (1995) discussed numerous variables that can influence instructors who teach Educational Psychology. Variables that influence instructor experiences with teaching, or Presage variables, include items such as demographics, training, personality, and one’s general trait motivation. Context variables are those that define the instructional situation, and can include items such as neighborhood, culture, and students.

An example of what also may be considered a context variable is the “supportive teaching culture.” According to Feldman and Paulsen (1999) “…faculty motivation to teach, the maintenance of instructional excellence, and the effectiveness of strategies to improve instruction all clearly benefit by the presence of a culture that is supportive of teaching” (p. 71). Within the article the authors briefly discuss external rewards and intrinsic sources of motivation. Two of those intrinsic sources of motivation are related to students: having a sense of making a difference, and feelings of satisfaction resulting from interactions with students. Feldman and Paulsen do state students affect instructor motivation, but do not elaborate on the issue. In a small-scale study of teachers and students in the UK, Atkinson (2000) concluded there was a relationship between instructor motivation and student motivation.

In 1982, the journal *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* dedicated an entire issue to the topic of instructor motivation. Titled “Motivating Professors to Teach Effectively,” the articles within the issue examined the following topics and their relationship to motivation: meanings, messages, and morals; possibilities and obstacles; human needs; rewards; expectancy theory; organizational design; feedback systems; teaching performance, career phases; and intrinsic motivation. All the articles offer unique insight into the under-researched area of college instructors, and examine different perspectives concerning motivation (Bess, 1982).
While the outcome variables of motivation and satisfaction resulting from instructor-student OCC are of primary importance, research investigating these areas cannot discount the importance of potential contributing variables. For example, instructors’ perceptions of student motives for communicating outside of the classroom, as well as instructor perceptions of student motivation, could prove to be important factors with regard to instructor job satisfaction and motivation.

**Student Motives to Communicate with their Instructors**

According to Martin, Myers, and Mottet (1999), instructor communication has a significant impact on students’ perceptions of their own motivation, satisfaction, and learning. Student communication with classmates or instructors may be influenced by factors such as student personality, willingness to communicate, desire for new relationships, or a traditional need for information. Using the 1988 Rubin, Perse, and Barbato study on interpersonal communication motives, Martin et al. (1999) began studying student motives when communicating with instructors inside the classroom. The five motives identified were: relational, functional, excuse-making, participation, and sycophancy.

The *relational* motive refers to the students’ attempt at developing a personal relationship with their instructor. Martin et al. (1999) suggested this type of communication would most likely take place before or after class, and thus have a strong impact. When communicating for *functional* reasons, a student seeks to learn more about the material and assignments for the course. *Excuse-making* occurs when a student explains why work is late or missing, or questions grading policies of the teacher. The *participation* motive shows instructors students are interested and that they understand. Contributing to class discussions would be considered the participation motive. The final motive students may have for communicating with their instructors is identified as sycophancy. *Sycophancy* is “brown-nosing” or “sucking-up.” Students may have this motive when they want to make a good impression on their instructor, or gain the instructor’s approval. If students use praise as a substitute for competency, or when the sincerity of the praise is questionable, the communication motive is more sycophantic than relational.

Martin, Myers, and Mottet have done more extensive work on student motives beyond the seminal work where the construct was developed. Studies have shown that both instructor behaviors (Cayanus, Martin, & Goodboy, 2009; Goodboy, Myers, & Bolkon, 2010; Martin, Heisel, & Valencic, 2000; Myers, Edwards, Wahl, & Martin, 2007; Myers, Martin, & Mottet, 2002a; Myers Mottet, & Martin, 2000) and students’ communication traits (Myers, Martin, & Mottet, 2002b) can affect reasons why students talk to their instructors. For example, Myers, et al. (2007) examined student perceptions of instructor verbal aggression and argumentativeness and their relationship to student communication motives. Perceived instructor verbal aggression was negatively related to the relational, functional and participatory motives, but positively related to excuse-making. Verbal aggression was also negatively related to participation in in-and-out of class communication with instructors. Examining teacher self-disclosure, Cayanus, Martin, and Goodboy (2009) found students who perceived negative teacher disclosures were more likely to communicate for the relational, excuse-making, participatory, and sycophantic motives. In the same study, the researchers found that when students viewed teacher disclosures as more frequent and more relevant, students were more likely to communicate for functional and participatory reasons. Additional research has reported a positive relationship between communicating for relational, participatory and functional motives with affective and cognitive learning (Martin, Mottet & Myers, 2000).
Myers, Martin, and Mottet (2002a) studied the relationship between student motives and information-seeking strategies. Results showed students who communicated with more of a functional motive reported using more overt strategies, while students who communicated with a relational motive reported using observational and indirect strategies. A later study by the same authors investigated the relationships among instructor verbal approach and avoidance strategies and student motives. The relational approach strategies, such as humor, self-disclosure, and responsiveness were positively related to the relational, participatory, excuse-making and sycophany motives (Mottet, Martin, & Myers, 2004). The authors also sought support for their theory based on previous research, which indicated student involvement in the functional motive is predominantly decided by student communication traits, as opposed to instructor communication traits or behaviors.

Williams and Frymier (2007) were interested in student educational orientation and its impact on student motives for engaging in out-of-class communication. Educational orientation has two components: learning orientation, which is a student’s interest in education as a means to achieve intellectual and personal development; and grade orientation, where a student is primarily concerned with education as a means to an end. Williams and Frymier hypothesized that depending on their orientation, students would communicate differently with instructors outside of the classroom. The data supported this, showing students with a learning orientation as more likely to communicate for the relational motive, while students with a grade orientation were more likely to communicate to make excuses, or “brown nose.”

The final three studies to be discussed on student motives are geared more toward the instructor-student interpersonal relationship. First, Myers (2006) used leader-member exchange theory to predict students’ motives to communicate. According to Myers, leader-member exchange theory is a method for examining the interpersonal dimensions of a supervisor-subordinate relationship, and has three types of exchanges: (1) in-group relationships, (2) middle-group relationships, and (3) out-group relationships. Naturally, the in-group relationships are characterized by higher quality interactions, including more communication (compared to the other two groups), and more support, as well as more job satisfaction and possibly preferential treatment. Dividing participants into in-groups and out-groups based on their responses to the leader-member exchange scale, Myers found students classified as “in-group” reported using the relational, functional, participatory and sycophantic motives more than the out-group students. Next, Weiss and Houser (2007) studied interpersonal attraction toward instructors and student communication motives. Interpersonal attraction has three dimensions: (1) social, (2) task, and (3) physical, and has been studied before in the instructional communication context (see Weiss and Houser, 2007, for a brief review). The authors were interested in whether or not student motives were significant predictors of the three types of attraction. Canonical correlations revealed the relational (which was the biggest contributor); sycophantic and excuse-making motives were significant contributors to the prediction of student social attraction to instructors. Student task attraction to instructors was predicted by the relational, functional, excuse-making (the biggest contributor), and participatory motives. Student physical attraction to instructors only had one significant predictor, the relational motive. Overall, these findings indicated a moderate-to-high relationship between students’ interpersonal attraction to their instructors and motives for communicating with them. Lastly, in an effort to develop a measure for investigating communication satisfaction in the instructional setting, Goodboy, Martin, and Bolkan (2009) reported positive relationships between the relational, functional, participation, and sycophancy motives with student communication satisfaction.
**Student Motivation**

Instructor perceptions of student motivation may also influence instructor feelings of satisfaction and motivation. Many variables can impact instructor motivation, and students are no exception. The assumption about the relationship between instructor motivation and student motivation is as follows: those instructors who perceive their students’ motivation to be low would experience lessened feelings of their own motivation. Conversely, instructors who perceive their students’ motivation to be high would experience greater feelings of their own motivation.

Motivation has been known to affect student arousal, as well as a variety of other behaviors. Essentially, motivation is a stimulation that compels students to hold positive attitudes about the course, including feelings of enthusiasm, inspiration, involvement, and fascination (Chory-Assad, 2002). Direct instruction, communication of expectations, modeling, and socialization by teachers all have the ability to stimulate a student’s motivation to learn (Brophy, 1987). The developed motivational schema is characterized by an affective and a cognitive component, which are direct results of strategy building and goal development. This approach suggests therefore, instruction should begin with a grasp of the student’s cognitive abilities, while intertwining affective components along the way (Christophel, 1990).

Richmond (1990) examined the relationship between the five power bases, instructor use of behavior alteration techniques (BATs), and student motivation. When combined, the statistically significant power bases and BATs predicted a total of 18% of the variance in student motivation. In a study on the impact of teacher self disclosure on student motivation, Cayanus and Martin (2008) reported self disclosure amount (4%) and negativity (4%) accounted for 8% of the variance in student motivation. Christophel (1990), using cognitive and affective measures of learning, found a significant positive relationship between teacher immediacy behaviors and student motivation. According to the study, both verbal and nonverbal immediacy impact learning, however nonverbal immediacy appears to have a more significant effect.

Gorham and Christophel (1992) attempted to clarify the role teacher behavior had in motivating and de-motivating college students. Forty-four percent of motivating and de-motivating factors were teacher behaviors. Results suggested students saw themselves as the determinants of motivation and teachers as the determinants of de-motivation. These same student perceptions of motivation and de-motivation were also found in Christophel and Gorham’s 1995 study. In a related study, Gorham and Millette (1997) found instructors’ perceptions of variables that impact student motivation and de-motivation were the same as those reported by students in the 1992 study. Looking at instructor use of affinity-seeking strategies and liking, Frymier (1994) developed a model of motivation. The model indicated instructor affinity-seeking strategies increased liking, liking positively affected motivation, and motivation influenced student learning.

Chory-Assad (2002) investigated the relationship between perceived justice in the classroom and student motivation. Both distributive justice (perceived fairness of outcomes due to allocations such as money or grades) and procedural justice (perceived fairness of the methods used to make those allocations) were positively related to student motivation. In other words, the more “fair” students perceived their instructors, the more motivated they were. Chory-Assad’s (2002) findings were consistent with similar findings in Gorham and Millette’s (Christophel) program of research. Other studies have demonstrated relationships between instructor use of
positive slang and student motivation (Mazer & Hunt, 2008), and perceived instructor rapport and student motivation (Frisby & Myers, 2008).

**Rationale for this Study**

After examining the extant literature, it becomes obvious there is far less research on instructors than there is on students. Why? Is this not a worthwhile area of research? Do students affect their instructors so little that there is no need to investigate the matter? Deci and Ryan (1982) stated the most interesting finding they had encountered in their program of research was the fact that many of the principles derived from their research on students’ motivation to learn were “equally relevant” for instructors’ motivation to teach. The authors also mentioned that when motivation and education are discussed, the focus is almost always on motivating students to learn.

This literature review has provided evidence to show how student perceptions of instructors affect student-instructor communication. Instructional research needs to start paying more attention to instructor perceptions of students however, in an effort to determine the influence of students on their instructors. Thus, the following hypotheses were presented in an attempt to learn more about the impact of student behaviors on instructors:

H1: Instructor OCC will be positively related to perceived student relational, functional, and participatory motives.

H2: Instructor OCC will be negatively related to perceived student sycophancy and excuse-making motives.

H3: Instructor job satisfaction and motivation will be positively related to their OCC.

H4: Instructors’ perceptions of their students’ motivation will be positively related to their OCC, motivation, and job satisfaction.

H5: Instructor job satisfaction and motivation will be positively related to perceived student relational, functional, and participatory motives.

H6: Instructor job satisfaction and motivation will be negatively related to perceived student sycophancy and excuse-making motives.

**Method**

**Participants**

The participants for this study were drawn from two convenience samples totaling 268 instructors (126 males, 138 females, 4 unidentified) from a large mid-eastern university (N = 202) and a small liberal arts college (N = 66). Of the 268 participants, 57% held a doctoral degree, 36% a Masters degree, and 5% a bachelors degree. When asked their rank, 16% were instructors, 27% were assistant professors, 33% were associate professors, 21% were full professors, and a combined 1% indicated they were either emerita/emeritus professor or a graduate teaching assistant. Four participants did not identify their rank. Finally, participants were asked to indicate their years of teaching experience given the following ranges: 0-5 years (43%); 6-10 years (28%); 11-15 years (10%); 16-20 years (3%); and 20 or more years (16%).

**Procedure**

Participants completed a questionnaire via the Internet to determine whether or not student-initiated out-of-class communication, perceived student motivation and perceived instructional motives affected instructor feelings of motivation and job satisfaction. Participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire regarding their own, and student, general behavior. In order to make data collection more efficient and increase the numbers of participants, the questionnaire was administered through the Internet. E-mail messages were sent to all faculty members at both participating academic institutions inviting participation. After reading a letter
from the researcher describing the nature of the survey and the intent of the researcher, participants consented to participation by continuing onto the next screen. Other than the above-mentioned demographic questions, no personal information was collected from participants, and there was no way to attribute responses to any one individual in the online format.

**Instrumentation**

*Out-of-class communication* was measured with a modified version of Knapp and Martin’s (2002) Out-of-Class Communication Scale (OCCS). The 9-item measure asks students to indicate the frequency with which they engage in OCC with their instructors, using a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). For example, “if I see a student on campus, I often talk to them.” In this study, OCCS items were rephrased so instructors could report the frequency with which they engage in OCC with their students. Knapp and Martin (2002) obtained a reliability coefficient of .81 for this scale, as did Myers, Martin, and Knapp (2003). In this study, the coefficient alpha was .86 ($M = 4.04, SD = .66$).

*Instructor job satisfaction* was measured using six questions developed by Plax, Kearney, and Downs (1986). The questions measure satisfaction toward teaching and satisfaction toward students. Examples of questions from this scale include “everything considered, how satisfying has teaching been for you?” with answer choices ranging from very satisfying to very dissatisfying; and “if you had your live to live over, do you think you would go into teaching as a profession?” with answer choices ranging from definitely to definitely not. This 6-item measure uses 5-point scales with responses differing based on the question asked, but in general ask for agreement or disagreement. Reliability coefficients obtained in the original research ranged from .76 to .91. In this study, the coefficient alpha was .81 ($M = 3.80, SD = .55$).

*Instructor Motivation and Student Motivation.* Instructor motivation was measured using a modified version of Christophel’s (1990) Student Motivation Scale. The 7-point scale consists of 12 bi-polar adjectives such as motivated-unmotivated, and excited-not excited. One item was changed in order to make the scale relevant to instructors. “Don’t want to study/want to study” was changed to “don’t want to teach/want to teach.” Past alpha reliabilities have ranged from .79 to .96 (Christophel & Gorham, 1995). *Student Motivation* was measured using the original version of Christophel’s (1990) scale. In this study, the coefficient alpha for instructor motivation was .87 ($M = 5.78, SD = .86$). The coefficient alpha for student motivation was .91 ($M = 4.27, SD = 1.02$).

*Student motives* for communicating with their instructors were measured using Martin, Mottet, and Myers’ (2000) student motives scale. The scale consists of 30 items which ask students to identify reasons why they communicate with their instructors, with responses ranging from (1) not at all like me, to (5) exactly like me. The statements and answer choices were rephrased for this study however, so instructors could report their perceptions of student motives for communicating. The items asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with declarations such as “to learn more about the teacher personally,” and “to explain why work is late.” Response choices were then changed to (1) not at all like students and (5) exactly like students. The scale has five dimensions/motives: relational (items 1-6), functional (items 7-12), participation (items 13-18), excuse-making (items 19-24), and sycophancy (items 25-30). Previous reliability coefficients have ranged from .82 to .89 for each of the five motives (Myers, 2006). In this study, the coefficient alphas for the five motives ranged from .78 to .88 (relational: $M = 3.32, SD = .66, \alpha = .78$; functional: $M = 4.33, SD = .52, \alpha = .80$; participatory: $M = 3.35, SD = .72, \alpha = .82$; excuse-making: $M = 3.79, SD = .77, \alpha = .88$; sycophancy: $M = 3.15, SD = .73, \alpha = .84$).
Results

In order to assess the relationship between perceived student communication motives and perceived student motivation, and instructor motivation, job satisfaction, and out-of-class communication, Pearson correlations were conducted. Post hoc analyses were also conducted to examine potential sex differences, and the relationship between instructor motivation and job satisfaction. Correlations for all variables are presented in Table 1.

Hypothesis One predicted a positive relationship between student relational, functional, and participatory motives and instructor OCC. Pearson correlations were computed between OCC and the relational motive, functional motive, and participatory motive. The hypothesis was partially supported. OCC was positively related to the relational motive ($r = .13, p < .05$), and the participatory motive ($r = .12, p < .05$). There was no significant relationship between OCC and the functional motive ($r = .02, p > .05$).

Hypothesis Two predicted a negative relationship between student sycophancy and excuse-making motives and instructor OCC. Pearson correlations were computed between OCC and sycophancy, and OCC and excuse-making. The hypothesis was not supported. OCC was not significantly related to sycophancy ($r = -.05, p > .05$), or excuse-making ($r = -.02, p > .05$).

Hypothesis Three predicted a positive relationship between instructor motivation and job satisfaction with OCC. Pearson correlations were computed between OCC and instructor motivation, and OCC and job satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported. OCC was not significantly related to instructor motivation ($r = .02, p > .05$), or instructor job satisfaction ($r = .07, p > .05$).

Hypothesis Four predicted a positive relationship between perceived student motivation and instructor OCC, motivation and job satisfaction. Pearson correlations were computed between student motivation and OCC, instructor motivation, and instructor job satisfaction. This hypothesis was partially supported. OCC was not significantly related to student motivation ($r = -.03, p > .05$), nor was instructor motivation significantly related to student motivation ($r = .07, p > .05$). There was a significant positive relationship between instructor job satisfaction and student motivation ($r = .42, p < .01$).

Hypothesis Five predicted a positive relationship between student relational, functional and participatory motives and instructor motivation and job satisfaction. Pearson correlations were computed between the relational, functional and participatory instructional motives, and instructor motivation and job satisfaction. This hypothesis was partially supported. Instructor job satisfaction was positively related to the relational motive ($r = .16, p < .01$), and the participatory motive ($r = .13, p < .05$). Instructor motivation was positively related to the relational motive ($r = .12, p < .05$). No significant relationships were found between the functional motive and job satisfaction ($r = .10, p > .05$) or instructor motivation ($r = -.04, p > .05$). Instructor motivation was not significantly related to the participatory motive ($r = .05, p > .05$).

Hypothesis Six predicted a negative relationship between student sycophancy and excuse-making motives and instructor job satisfaction and motivation. Pearson correlations were computed between the sycophancy motive and instructor job satisfaction and motivation, and the excuse-making motive and instructor job satisfaction and motivation. This hypothesis was not supported. Sycophancy was not significantly related to either job satisfaction ($r = -.08, p > .05$), or instructor motivation ($r = -.05, p > .05$). Excuse-making was not significantly related to either job satisfaction ($r = -.01, p > .05$), or instructor motivation ($r = -.08, p > .05$).
Table 1: Correlations Among All Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OCC</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Sat</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instr Mot</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stu Mot</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RelMotive</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FncMotive</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PartMotive</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExMotive</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SycMotive</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.180**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Post Hoc Analysis

Although the relationship between instructor motivation and job satisfaction was not advanced through a formal hypothesis, it was a viable relationship to explore. A Pearson correlation between instructor motivation and instructor job satisfaction revealed a positive relationship between the two variables (r = .22, p < .05).

Due to the findings of Nadler and Nadler (2000) regarding instructor sex and OCC behavior, independent sample t-tests were conducted to identify potential sex differences among instructors. Results of the tests indicated a significant difference between male and female instructors for motivation (t(260) = 3.01, p < .01), with males (5.94) reporting higher levels of their own (as opposed to student) motivation than females reported (5.63). A significant difference was also observed for the excuse-making instructional motive (t(264) = 2.17, p < .05), with males (3.90) reporting more student excuse-making than females (3.69). The analysis failed to reveal significant differences between males and females for OCC (t(243) = 1.63, p > .05); job satisfaction (t(264) = .03, p > .05); student motivation (t(241) = .32, p > .05); the relational instructional motive (t(264) = .98, p > .05); the functional instructional motive (t(264) = .72, p > .05); the participatory instructional motive (t(242) = .20, p > .05); or the sycophancy instructional motive (t(264) = .57, p > .05).

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the impact students have on instructor job satisfaction and motivation, with a specific focus on how out-of-class communication, perceived student motivation, and perceived student instructional motives affected instructors. While the results were mixed, some patterns did emerge. For example, it appears instructors were more affected by those students they perceived as communicating for the relational and participatory motives. These two motives were both positively related to OCC, and to instructor job satisfaction. Conversely, of the functional, sycophancy, and the excuse-making motives, none were found to have any significant affects on instructors. Perceived
student motivation was found to have the biggest impact on instructor job satisfaction, but was not significantly related to OCC or instructor motivation. Finally, according to post hoc analyses, male instructors felt more motivated than female instructors. Additionally, male instructors perceived students using the excuse-making motive more frequently than female instructors. Post hoc analyses also revealed a positive relationship between instructor motivation and job satisfaction. In sum, these findings suggest students do indeed affect their instructors, but not necessarily in the manner anticipated.

The first hypothesis was partially supported, with the relational and participatory motives being positively related to instructor participation in out-of-class communication. This means instructors are more likely to engage in OCC with students when they perceive students are communicating with a relational motive. In other words, when students appear interested in getting to know the instructor on a more personal level, and to potentially develop a friendship with the instructor, instructors are more inclined to engage in OCC. Previous research on student OCC has shown a relationship between OCC and the relational motive (Knapp & Martin, 2002), and trust and immediacy, which may suggest these kinds of interactions tend to be less formal and more personal in nature (Fusani, 1994; Jaasma & Koper, 1999). Furthermore, when examining instructors and OCC, Nadler and Nadler (2000) reported a positive relationship between relational message use and OCC. These results also provide additional support for Frymier and Houser’s (2000) assertion that the instructor-student relationship can be classified as an interpersonal relationship, and that OCC is an excellent means by which to build that sort of relationship.

Results for hypothesis one also indicated a positive relationship between the participatory motive and instructor OCC. When students communicate with a participatory motive, they do so to demonstrate involvement, understanding and intelligence (Martin, Mottet & Myers, 2000). So even when communicating for this motive outside of the classroom, students would have to be discussing topics related to a course they have with the instructor. These interactions might be categorized as positive for instructors for two reasons. First, it may bolster the instructor’s ego. Instructors could interpret these interactions as students going out of their way to overtly demonstrate their understanding of the content, and to show they recognize the importance of class participation. This can produce a feeling of satisfaction in the instructor (which will be discussed later), a feeling of self-efficacy, and/or validation. Obviously the instructor has “struck a chord” with the student, and the student wants to engage in more discussion about the course. Secondly, OCC might be an opportunity for more communication apprehensive students to demonstrate involvement, understanding, and intelligence. A student suffering from a moderate-to-high level of communication apprehension is going to be very quiet and reserved inside the classroom. If that same student turns up during office hours, it will certainly get the instructor’s attention. The student might be intimidated in the classroom, but willing to talk one-on-one with the professor outside of the classroom. So, instructors are still interacting with students who are motivated to participate in the learning process, it is just happening outside of the classroom.

The last part of the first hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between OCC and the functional communication motive, but was not supported. By definition, the functional motive is probably the most natural form of communication between instructors and students. Students who communicate with a functional motive do so to clarify material, ask questions, and get help with assignments or tests. Past research has identified the discussion of the course as a common topic for OCC (Bippus et al., 2003; Fusani, 1994; Jaasma & Koper, 1999). It is possible, however, that since this kind of communication is assumed to occur, it goes less noticed
Influence of Students on Instructors

by instructors. It is not necessarily exciting or motivating, it is simply part of the job. When a student makes an overt attempt to get to know an instructor (relational motive), that might be perceived as more meaningful than talking to a student about how they can improve their written work. A second reason for the non-significant relationship between these two variables might be that other than visiting an instructor during office hours, the other contexts in which OCC can occur (public places, around campus) are less formal, and not necessarily suited for discussions about coursework.

The second hypothesis predicted a negative relationship between the excuse-making and sycophancy instructional motives and instructor OCC, but was not supported. It is important to keep in mind OCC is defined as face-to-face communication for this research, and delivering an excuse face-to-face can be difficult for anyone. Since the proliferation of e-mail, especially for OCC (Williams & Frymier, 2007), it is much easier for students to send an excuse through that channel, as opposed to picking up the phone or actually physically presenting themselves to deliver the excuse. Moreover, if a student were to see their instructor outside of the classroom, perhaps after having skipped class that day, there is a good chance the student would do everything they could to avoid their instructor. So, seeking a face-to-face encounter to make an excuse is probably not a student’s first choice for a delivery method.

A previous study did link sycophancy with OCC (Knapp & Martin, 2002), however these results were student reported, not instructor reported, as is the case for this research. It could be instructors are less tuned-in to sycophantic behaviors that occur outside of the classroom as opposed to inside. Due to the varying contexts of OCC, it might be easier for students to disguise their sycophancy as another motive, such as participatory or relational.

The third hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between OCC and instructor motivation and job satisfaction. This was not supported, however, and there could be two reasons why. First, the communication that occurs inside the classroom is more important to instructors than the communication that occurs outside of the classroom (Frymier, 2005). For those instructors who define themselves as teachers first, in-class behaviors and interactions will be far more meaningful to them. The classroom is their natural habitat and where they focus most of their attention. Secondly, out-of-class communication between students and instructors is probably still relatively infrequent (Bippus et al., 2003; Frymier, 2005; Fusani, 1994; Jaasma & Koper, 1999). A weakness of this particular study is that instructors were not asked to report an actual number for their out-of-class interactions with students. In the future, participants should be asked how often these types of interactions occur to better understand how much time instructors are devoting to them, perhaps in comparison to the amount of time they spend in the classroom. When it comes down to it, how many times a week do students trail their instructors to their office after class, or stop their instructor in the cafeteria?

Furthermore, looking at the six questions used to measure instructor job satisfaction (Plax et al., 1986), for example, “have you ever considered quitting teaching?” it is probably unlikely out-of-class communication is going to have a big enough impact on instructors that they will want to quit their jobs. According to Feldman and Paulsen (1999), a supportive teaching environment has a major impact on instructor motivation. An unsupportive teaching environment, then, is likely to produce more dissatisfaction than negative interactions with students outside of the classroom, which may not happen often. So, unless an instructor is a campus celebrity and constantly engaging in OCC with students in every context, it is doubtful job satisfaction hinges upon out-of-class communication.
Hypothesis four was partially supported, and predicted perceived student motivation was positively related to OCC, motivation, and job satisfaction. When it comes to the motivation variable in this study, it needs to be mentioned analyses revealed instructors rated themselves higher in motivation than their students. It is not uncommon to rate oneself more favorably than another on this type of behavior, and instructors certainly have their fair share of unmotivated students. It is still interesting however, to see instructors rated themselves more than one point higher on the motivation scale.

While no relationship was found between student motivation and instructor motivation, or student motivation and OCC, there was a sizeable, positive relationship between student motivation and instructor job satisfaction. This result led to a perplexing question: how is it motivated students do not make instructors feel more motivated, but do make instructors feel more satisfied? According to Evans (1997), instructor job satisfaction is “a state of mind determined by the extent to which the individual perceives his/her job-related needs being met” (p.833). So, it is possible instructors are getting their job-related needs met, but that does not have to include feelings of motivation. After all, it is possible to feel satisfied (or in some cases, not dissatisfied, which is not the same as feeling satisfied) with one’s job, but not always motivated. In fact, if one were to apply Maslow’s (1968) hierarchy to this situation, job satisfaction is likely to be a lower-level need, perhaps related to Maslow’s “safety” need, and therefore easier to fulfill. Motivation on the other hand, is a much higher order need, and likely to fit best with Maslow’s “esteem” need. Due to its location in the hierarchy, esteem is a more difficult need to fulfill. Finally, motivation can be transitory, as evidenced by the fact state and trait motivation are often studied separately. Certainly there are days and maybe even semesters when instructors feel more or less motivated. Bess (1982) does state most instructors find satisfaction in teaching, and perceived student motivation would likely be a contributor to overall instructor satisfaction. While student motivation may cause a fleeting fluctuation in instructor motivation, the trait may be stable enough to withstand these fluctuations. A longitudinal study on instructor motivation may prove to be quite interesting. Are instructors more motivated at the beginning of their career, the middle, or near the end?

Hypothesis five predicted a positive relationship between instructor motivation and job satisfaction with the relational, functional and participatory instructional motives. Much like OCC, job satisfaction was related to the relational and participatory motives. These results are not unlike prior studies with student participants, which revealed students who are motivated to communicate with their instructors for the relational, functional and participatory motives felt more motivated to study and felt more satisfied with their interactions with their instructors (Martin, Myers & Mottet, 1999). When considering these results, keep in mind one reason students communicate with a participatory motive is to demonstrate understanding. It seems natural therefore to feel more satisfied if students are regularly showing their instructors they understand the material and are connecting with the content. Results of hypothesis five also indicated a positive relationship between instructor motivation and the relational motive. Referring to hypothesis one, instructors were more likely to engage in OCC when they perceived students as communicating with a relational motive. In a way, this might be an unconscious affinity-seeking strategy on the part of the student. When they appear interested in an instructor in a more interpersonal way, that instructor is likely to feel good about it. The student obviously views the instructor as a person of interest, and someone to develop a relationship with; it might be flattering to some instructors, and refreshing to be viewed as more than a robot whose sole purpose is to deliver information, test you on it, and assign a grade.
Once again, there was no relationship between the functional motive and either job satisfaction or instructor motivation. This could be for the same reason as stated earlier: instructors expect to have this kind of communication with their students; it is assumed it will occur. It does not make instructors feel better or worse, it is just a natural part of the job. Students communicating for relational or participatory motives get noticed, at least more so than students who are seeking information about the course or asking for clarification of assignments.

The last hypothesis predicted a negative relationship between instructor motivation and job satisfaction with the excuse-making and sycophantic instructional motives, but was not supported. According to Martin et al. (1999), instructors can identify chronic excuse-makers, and assertive students are more likely to communicate for excuse-making reasons (Myers, Martin, & Mottet, 2002b). In fact, looking at the means for the instructional motives, excuse-making had the second to highest mean, indicating instructors perceived students as communicating with this motive more often than three other motives. The non-significant relationship for the excuse-making motive is puzzling, but does make more sense for sycophancy, which had the lowest mean. One could conclude from this research that compared to all the other types of interactions between instructors and students, excuse-making and sycophantic behaviors are not making a lasting impression on instructors. Perhaps if instructors are teaching classes with large numbers of students, making communication more formal, there is little extra communication occurring. Again, instructor motivation may be stable enough to withstand occasional excuses, and positive self-esteem might be blurring the lines between sycophantic and relational messages.

**Conclusion**

Examining this project in its entirety, several important things have been established, weaknesses can be identified, and there is potential for future research. The most important finding, however, was that students do affect their instructors. More research needs to be conducted to further illuminate exactly what types of student behaviors are the most influential when it comes to instructor motivation and satisfaction. Perceived student motivation, out-of-class communication, and motives for communicating were a reasonable place to start, but future research needs to address additional types of interactions between students and instructors that affect instructors, as well as other variables with which instructors might be dealing.

As stated earlier, there are two noticeable patterns in the data. The biggest pattern is the non-significant findings for the functional, sycophancy and excuse-making student motives. In other words, only the relational and participatory motives produced any significant results in this study. What qualities, then, do these motives possess that the others do not? What makes these two motives more influential than their counterparts when it comes to the student-teacher relationship? Both motives were positively related to instructor job satisfaction, which means when students talk to their instructors to demonstrate a personal interest in them or in course material, the instructor feels more fulfilled and rewarded. Weiss and Houser (2007) did find a positive relationship between students communicating for the relational motive and their physical, social and task attraction for their instructor. It would seem logical to conclude from both their research and this study that these interactions between instructors and students would be very positive in nature, and would leave the instructor feeling good about the exchange. It is still a bit puzzling, however, why the functional, sycophancy and excuse-making motives failed to produce significant results. Perhaps future research could reinvestigate that portion of this study.

A second pattern uncovered by the data analysis was that instructor motivation was not significantly related to anything other than the relational motive, and instructor job satisfaction,
which was not a formal hypothesis. According to the results, the student communication behaviors identified in this study do not appear to have a major impact on instructor motivation. Perhaps motivation is too intrinsic a quality to be affected by the communication between students and instructors, or there are not enough negative communication encounters between instructors and students to decrease feelings of motivation.

Limitations of this study include the two populations from which the sample was drawn, the fact that it is correlational, and some concerns with the survey. Future research could address which student behaviors are the best predictors of instructor motivation and job satisfaction, or perhaps needs to be more qualitative in nature. As for the two institutions in which the data were collected, they are fundamentally different, which could have impacted the results. Data collection began at a large, research oriented university, but due to the number of participants, additional data were collected from a second institution. The second institution was a small liberal arts college, and has a uniquely different atmosphere compared to the university. The two institutions were selected because of their convenience and easy access.

As for the concerns with the survey, there are three core issues. The first concern involves the measurement of OCC. By excluding e-mail as one of its forms, as well as only questioning faculty about face-to-face interactions, this may have omitted a large percentage of communication between faculty and students. While operationalizing OCC as only face-to-face allows researchers to evaluate what may be considered “richer” interactions, the fact remains e-mail is a key tool for communication between instructors and students, and has been included in some OCC studies (Waldeck et al. 2001b; Williams & Frymier 2007). The second concern is that some items in the instructional motives scale were not worded clearly enough. For example the very first item, “to learn about him/her personally,” would be easier to understand if it said “to learn about me.” The third concern involves the instructor satisfaction scale. Participants were asked questions not only about their satisfaction with teaching, but also their satisfaction with students, how comfortable they were with their students’ abilities, and whether they ever considered quitting. For this reason, as well as response choices for the instrument, its validity is questionable, as well as the generalizability of the results. Future researchers need to consider using a more reliable and valid instrument to measure satisfaction.

More instructional communication research should be done from a faculty perspective. The findings of this study indicate students do have an impact on their instructors, but comparatively few communication researchers choose to study this side of the student-teacher relationship. Although one could argue the contribution of this study is minimal in terms of the results, perhaps its greatest contribution is there is still much to learn about the student-instructor relationship. As evidenced by the literature review, an overwhelming majority of the research reported positive relationships between the frequency and nature of students’ out-of-class communication and their personal and academic achievement. Whether it is face-to-face or through e-mail, these types of interactions are occurring, and they are meaningful for students and instructors. Additionally, to think students have little to no affect on instructors completely goes against the two-way model of communication, and any instructor could share stories about how their students affect them. Perhaps the student-instructor relationship is more complex than previously thought, and more attention needs to be paid to the communication and behaviors of both students and instructors when they are together.
References


Wilson, R., Wood, L., & Gaff, J. (1974). Social-psychological accessibility and faculty-