

## Evaluating existing and new validity evidence for the Academic Motivation Scale

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### Abstract

The current study evaluates existing and new validity evidence for the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; Vallerand et al., 1992). We first provide a narrative review synthesizing past research, and then conduct a validity investigation of the scores from the measure. Data analysis using a sample of 1406 American college students provided construct validity evidence in the form of a well-fitting seven-factor model and adequate internal consistency of the item responses. Convergent and discriminant validity evidence provided insight into the distinctiveness of the seven subscales. However, support for the scale's simplex structure, which would represent the self-determination theory continuum, was not fully substantiated. Implications for theory and the scale's use in the current form are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Self-determination theory proposes that humans have an innate desire for stimulation and learning from birth, which is either supported or discouraged within their environment (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). The degree to which this natural drive, or *intrinsic motivation*, is realized is contingent on the fulfillment of one's psychological needs. That is, fulfillment of these needs is a necessary precursor to intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory delineates three psychological needs that impact intrinsic motivation: the need for competence, the need for autonomy, and the need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Throughout development, social contexts can either stifle or promote intrinsic motivation based upon fulfillment of these needs.

### 1.1. The motivational continuum

Theorists have since been able to differentiate several specific types of motivation based on the interaction of these needs and the environment: (1) *intrinsic motivation*—the drive to pursue an activity simply for the pleasure or satisfaction derived from it, (2) *extrinsic motivation*—pursuing an activity out of a sense of obligation, or as a means to an end, and (3) *amotivation*—the absence of intent or drive to pursue an activity due to one's not valuing the activity, feeling incompetent, or feeling unable to obtain a desired outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Vallerand et al., 1992). These differential states have been argued to fall along a motivational continuum that reflects the degree of self-determined behavior, ranging from amotivation to extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Importantly, researchers have tested and supported this representation of self-determination theory as a continuum in a number of different domains (Blais, Sabourin, Boucher, & Vallerand, 1990; Goudas, Biddle, & Fox, 1994; Villacorta, Koestner, & Lekes, 2003).

With amotivation and intrinsic motivation anchoring the ends of the motivational continuum, Deci and Ryan (1985) further distinguished between various forms of extrinsic motivation. Specifically, they outlined four types of extrinsic motivation: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. These four types of extrinsic motivation vary in the degree of self-determination that the individual associates with the behavior, where more internalized or more integrated behaviors produce a greater sense of self-determination (see Fig. 1).

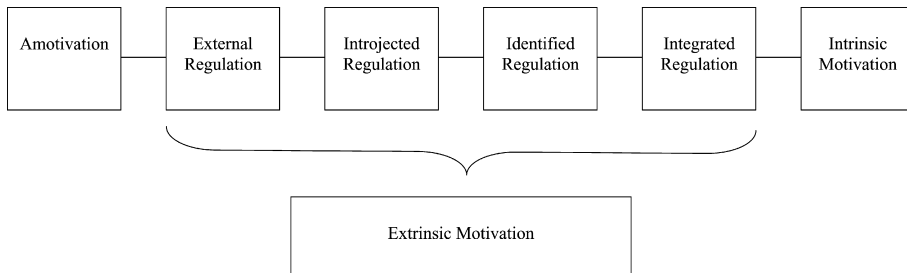


Fig. 1. The motivational continuum of self-determination theory.

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