Self-determination theory and work motivation

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Summary
Cognitive evaluation theory, which explains the effects of extrinsic motivators on intrinsic motivation, received some initial attention in the organizational literature. However, the simple dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation made the theory difficult to apply to work settings. Differentiating extrinsic motivation into types that differ in their degree of autonomy led to self-determination theory, which has received widespread attention in the education, health care, and sport domains. This article describes self-determination theory as a theory of work motivation and shows its relevance to theories of organizational behavior. Copyright © 2005 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Introduction

Building on Vroom’s (1964) expectancy–valence theory of motivation, Porter and Lawler (1968) proposed a model of intrinsic and extrinsic work motivation. Intrinsic motivation involves people doing an activity because they find it interesting and derive spontaneous satisfaction from the activity itself. Extrinsic motivation, in contrast, requires an instrumentality between the activity and some separable consequences such as tangible or verbal rewards, so satisfaction comes not from the activity itself but rather from the extrinsic consequences to which the activity leads.

Porter and Lawler (1968) advocated structuring the work environment so that effective performance would lead to both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, which would in turn produce total job satisfaction. This was to be accomplished by enlarging jobs to make them more interesting, and thus more intrinsically rewarding, and by making extrinsic rewards such as higher pay and promotions clearly contingent upon effective performance. Implicit in this model is the assumption that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are additive, yielding total job satisfaction.

Porter and Lawler’s model, Vroom’s theory, and other expectancy–valence formulations generated considerable research, much of which confirmed and refined aspects of the approach (see Mitchell,
1974). However, one strand of research concerning the additivity of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was potentially problematic and controversial. Specifically, early studies testing the additivity hypothesis found that tangible extrinsic rewards undermined intrinsic motivation whereas verbal rewards enhanced it (Deci, 1971), thus implying that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be both positively and negatively interactive rather than additive. Based on several early experiments, cognitive evaluation theory (CET; Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1980) was proposed to explain the effects of extrinsic motivators on intrinsic motivation.

### Cognitive Evaluation Theory

Cognitive evaluation theory suggested first that external factors such as tangible rewards, deadlines (Amabile, DeJong, & Lepper, 1976), surveillance (Lepper & Greene, 1975), and evaluations (Smith, 1975) tend to diminish feelings of autonomy, prompt a change in perceived locus of causality (PLOC) from internal to external (deCharms, 1968; Heider, 1958), and undermine intrinsic motivation. In contrast, some external factors such as providing choice about aspects of task engagement tend to enhance feelings of autonomy, prompt a shift in PLOC from external to internal, and increase intrinsic motivation (Zuckerman et al., 1978).

CET further suggested that feelings of competence as well as feelings of autonomy are important for intrinsic motivation. Studies showed that optimally challenging activities were highly intrinsically motivating (e.g., Danner & Lonky, 1981) and that positive feedback (Deci, 1971) facilitated intrinsic motivation by promoting a sense of competence when people felt responsible for their successful performance (Fisher, 1978; Ryan, 1982). Further, negative feedback which decreased perceived competence was found to undermine both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, leaving people amotivated (Deci & Ryan, 1985a).

Underlying these CET propositions was the assumption that people need to feel autonomous and competent, so social-contextual factors that promote feelings of autonomy and competence enhance intrinsic motivation, whereas factors that diminish these feelings undermine intrinsic motivation, leaving people either controlled by contingencies or amotivated.

Spiritual debate ensued concerning both the undermining effect and CET (e.g., Calder & Staw, 1975; Deci, 1976; Deci, Cascio, & Krusell, 1975; Scott, 1975), leading to numerous laboratory experiments and field studies intended to support, refine, extend, or refute the undermining effect and CET. Eventually, a meta-analysis of 128 laboratory experiments confirmed that, whereas positive feedback enhances intrinsic motivation, tangible rewards significantly undermine it (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999).

The Deci et al. (1999) meta-analysis also confirmed CET hypotheses that specified limiting conditions to the undermining effect. Namely, it showed that when rewards were given independent of specific task engagement (as might be the case with a salary) or when the rewards were not anticipated (as might be the case with unexpected bonuses), tangible extrinsic rewards did not undermine intrinsic motivation. Additionally, as found by Ryan, Mims, and Koestner (1983), when rewards were contingent on high-quality performance and the interpersonal context was supportive rather than pressuring, tangible rewards enhanced intrinsic motivation relative to a comparison condition with no rewards and no feedback. Notably, however, these performance-contingent rewards did lead to lower intrinsic motivation than a control group that got positive feedback comparable to that conveyed by the rewards. Still, the Deci et al. meta-analysis pointed to possible ways to use rewards without having detrimental effects.

As noted, the undermining of intrinsic motivation has been controversial from the time it first appeared in the literature (Deci, 1971), and even though the Deci et al. (1999) meta-analysis showed
definitively that tangible rewards undermine intrinsic motivation, recent theories of work motivation have still failed to accept the robustness of the findings. For example, Kehr (2004) suggested that rewards would not undermine intrinsic motivation if they did not deactivate implicit motives related to task enjoyment. However, the statement was pure speculation, and no empirical support for the speculation was provided. Furthermore, support for the hypothesis that expected, tangible rewards administered engagement-contingently or completion-contingently would undermine intrinsic motivation is so strong that, if Kehr’s theoretical speculation were correct, it would mean that these types of rewards must, in fact, deactivate implicit enjoyment motives.

Research in line with CET has also shown that contingent, tangible rewards and other extrinsic factors such as competition and evaluations can be detrimental to outcomes such as creativity, cognitive flexibility, and problem solving which have been found to be associated with intrinsic motivation (e.g., Amabile, Goldfarb, & Brackfield, 1990; McGraw, 1978). For example, McGraw and McCullers (1979) found monetary rewards to decrease cognitive flexibility in problem solving, and Erez, Gopher, and Arzi (1990) showed that monetary rewards decreased performance on a complex task with difficult goals.

The problems with CET as a theory of work motivation

The undermining of intrinsic motivation by extrinsic rewards and the CET account of that phenomenon received attention in the organizational literature in the 1970s and early 1980s, leading Ambrose and Kulik (1999) to refer to CET as one of seven traditional theories of motivation in organizations. Nonetheless, there are several reasons why that attention soon waned.

First, most studies that tested CET were laboratory experiments rather than organizational studies. Second, it was difficult to incorporate CET propositions into the prevalent behavioral and expectancy–valence approaches. Third, and more practically, many activities in work organizations are not intrinsically interesting and the use of strategies such as participation to enhance intrinsic motivation is not always feasible. Fourth, most people who work have to earn money, so using monetary rewards as a central motivational strategy seems practical and appealing. Fifth, CET seemed to imply that managers and management theorists would have to focus on one or the other—that is, either on promoting intrinsic motivation through participation and empowerment while minimizing the use of extrinsic factors or, alternatively, on using rewards and other extrinsic contingencies to maximize extrinsic motivation while ignoring the importance of intrinsic motivation.

In 1985 Ryan, Connell, and Deci first presented a differentiated analysis of extrinsic motivation using the concepts of internalization, which directly addresses the last of the above critiques of CET and also has implications for some of the others. Internalization refers to ‘taking in’ a behavioral regulation and the value that underlies it. The Ryan et al. theorizing, which explains how extrinsically motivated behavior can become autonomous, together with research on individual differences in causality orientations (Deci & Ryan, 1985b), led to the formulation of self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985a, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which incorporated CET but is much broader in scope. In this paper, we present SDT, review the research on which it was based, compare it to other work motivation theories, lay out a research agenda, and discuss its relevance for organizational behavior and management.

Self-Determination Theory

Central to SDT is the distinction between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Autonomy involves acting with a sense of volition and having the experience of choice. In the words
of philosophers such as Dworkin (1988), autonomy means endorsing one’s actions at the highest level of reflection. Intrinsic motivation is an example of autonomous motivation. When people engage an activity because they find it interesting, they are doing the activity wholly volitionally (e.g., I work because it is fun). In contrast, being controlled involves acting with a sense of pressure, a sense of having to engage in the actions. The use of extrinsic rewards in the early experiments was found to induce controlled motivation (e.g., Deci, 1971). SDT postulates that autonomous and controlled motivations differ in terms of both their underlying regulatory processes and their accompanying experiences, and it further suggests that behaviors can be characterized in terms of the degree to which they are autonomous versus controlled. Autonomous motivation and controlled motivation are both intentional, and together they stand in contrast to amotivation, which involves a lack of intention and motivation.

**Extrinsic motivation and the autonomy continuum**

Intrinsically motivated behavior, which is propelled by people’s interest in the activity itself, is prototypically autonomous. However, an important aspect of SDT is the proposition that extrinsic motivation can vary in the degree to which it is autonomous versus controlled. Activities that are not interesting (i.e., that are not intrinsically motivating) require extrinsic motivation, so their initial enactment depends upon the perception of a contingency between the behavior and a desired consequence such as implicit approval or tangible rewards. Within SDT, when a behavior is so motivated it is said to be externally regulated—that is, initiated and maintained by contingencies external to the person. This is the classic type of extrinsic motivation and is a prototype of controlled motivation. When externally regulated, people act with the intention of obtaining a desired consequence or avoiding an undesired one, so they are energized into action only when the action is instrumental to those ends (e.g., I work when the boss is watching). External regulation is the type of extrinsic motivation that was considered when extrinsic motivation was contrasted with intrinsic motivation.

Other types of extrinsic motivation result when a behavioral regulation and the value associated with it have been internalized. Internalization is defined as people taking in values, attitudes, or regulatory structures, such that the external regulation of a behavior is transformed into an internal regulation and thus no longer requires the presence of an external contingency (thus, I work even when the boss is not watching). However, although most theories of internalization view it as a dichotomy—that is, a regulation either is external to the person or has been internalized—SDT posits a controlled-to-autonomous continuum to describe the degree to which an external regulation has been internalized. The more fully it has been internalized, the more autonomous will be the subsequent, extrinsically motivated behavior. According to SDT, internalization is an overarching term that refers to three different processes: introjection, identification, and integration.

A regulation that has been taken in by the person but has not been accepted as his or her own is said to be introjected and provides the basis for introjected regulation. With this type of regulation, it is as if the regulation were controlling the person. Examples of introjected regulation include contingent self-esteem, which pressures people to behave in order to feel worthy, and ego involvement, which pressures people to behave in order to buttress their fragile egos (deCharms, 1968; Ryan, 1982). Introjected regulation is particularly interesting because the regulation is within the person but is a relatively controlled form of internalized extrinsic motivation (e.g., I work because it makes me feel like a worthy person).

Being autonomously extrinsically motivated requires that people identify with the value of a behavior for their own self-selected goals. With identified regulation, people feel greater freedom and volition because the behavior is more congruent with their personal goals and identities. They perceive the
cause of their behavior to have an internal PLOC—that is, to reflect an aspect of themselves. If nurses strongly value their patients’ comfort and health and understand the importance of doing their share of the unpleasant tasks for the patients’ well-being, the nurses would feel relatively autonomous while performing such tasks (e.g., bathing patients), even though the activities are not intrinsically interesting.

The fullest type of internalization, which allows extrinsic motivation to be truly autonomous or volitional, involves the integration of an identification with other aspects of oneself—that is, with other identifications, interests, and values. With integrated regulation, people have a full sense that the behavior is an integral part of who they are, that it emanates from their sense of self and is thus self-determined. If integrated, the nurses would not only identify with the importance of the activities for maintaining their patients’ comfort and health, but regulation of the activities would be integrated with other aspects of their jobs and lives. Thus, the profession of nurse would be more central to their identity, they would be more likely to act in ways that are consistent with caring for people more generally, and they could come to appreciate the importance of doing uninteresting activities.

Integrated regulation is theorized to represent the most developmentally advanced form of extrinsic motivation, and it shares some qualities with the other type of autonomous motivation, namely, intrinsic motivation. Integrated regulation does not, however, become intrinsic motivation but is still considered extrinsic motivation (albeit an autonomous form of it) because the motivation is characterized not by the person being interested in the activity but rather by the activity being instrumentally important for personal goals. In short, intrinsic motivation and integrated extrinsic motivation are the two different types of autonomous motivation (with identified extrinsic motivation being relatively autonomous).

It is important to note that the SDT model of internalization is not a stage theory and does not suggest that people must invariantly move through these ‘stages’ with respect to particular behaviors. Rather, the theory describes these types of regulation in order to index the extent to which people have integrated the regulation of a behavior or class of behaviors. As such, SDT proposes that, under optimal conditions, people can, at any time, fully integrate a new regulation, or can integrate an existing regulation that had been only partially internalized.

To summarize, SDT posits a self-determination continuum (see Figure 1). It ranges from amotivation, which is wholly lacking in self-determination, to intrinsic motivation, which is invariantly self-determined. Between amotivation and intrinsic motivation, along this descriptive continuum, are the four types of extrinsic motivation, with external being the most controlled (and thus the least self-determined) type of extrinsic motivation, and introjected, identified, and integrated being progressively more self-determined.

**Assessing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation**

Intrinsic motivation and each type of extrinsic motivation are reflected in different reasons for behaving, and these reasons provide a means for assessing the types of motivation (Ryan & Connell, 1989). The Ryan and Connell approach has spawned a family of questionnaires that involve asking participants why they would do particular behaviors that are relevant to the situation being researched. Then, participants are presented with various reasons for doing the behaviors that reflect intrinsic motivation or one of the types of extrinsic motivation. Participants rate the degree to which each is true for them. Examples of external reasons are doing the behavior to get a raise or so the boss won’t be upset, whereas examples of introjected reasons are behaving to avoid guilt or to feel worthy. Identified and integrated reasons involve behaving because people personally value the behavior and have fully accepted its importance for their self-selected goals and their well-being. Intrinsic motivation involves
behaving because the activities are interesting, and amotivation involves having no intentions for the behavior and not really knowing why one is doing it. Research using this assessment strategy has confirmed that, in domains such as education (Williams & Deci, 1996), sports (Vallerand & Fortier, 1998), and health care (Williams et al., 1996), the types of regulation adhere to a quasi-simplex pattern, which means that each subscale correlates most positively with the subscales closest to it and less positively or more negatively with subscales farther from it. This pattern is consistent with the SDT assertion of an underlying control-to-autonomy continuum. Accordingly, the subscales can be used individually to predict outcomes, or they can be combined algebraically to form a relative autonomy index (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987).

**Basic psychological needs**

According to the meta-theory that underlies SDT, both intrinsic motivation and internalization (which in its fullest form is integration) are natural processes that require nutriments to function optimally. The theory then postulates that satisfaction of basic psychological needs provides the nutriments for intrinsic motivation and internalization. We argued earlier that the needs for competence and autonomy underlie intrinsic motivation—that people need to feel competent and autonomous to maintain their intrinsic motivation—and experiments were reviewed that provided support for that proposition. According to SDT, satisfaction of these two needs are also necessary for internalization to operate.
effectively, but a third basic need—the need for relatedness—is also crucial for internalization (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995). More specifically, SDT postulates that when people experience satisfaction of the needs for relatedness and competence with respect to a behavior, they will tend to internalize its value and regulation, but the degree of satisfaction of the need for autonomy is what distinguishes whether identification or integration, rather than just introjection, will occur. Stated differently, satisfaction of the needs to be connected to others and to be effective in the social world support people’s tendency to internalize the values and regulatory processes that are ambient in their world. However, such internalization does not ensure that the resulting behavior will be autonomous. Satisfaction of the need for autonomy while internalizing the behavior is also necessary for the value and regulation to be more fully internalized so the subsequent enactment of the behavior will be autonomous.

The concept of psychological needs has been central to organizational behavior for decades, although there has been some debate about the utility of the concept (e.g., Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). When used in organizational theories, needs have typically been treated as individual differences; that is, people are viewed as differing in the strength of particular needs. From that perspective, need strength is assessed and used either directly or in interaction with job characteristics to predict motivation, job satisfaction, and work outcomes (e.g., Hackman & Lawler, 1971; McClelland & Burnham, 1976).

SDT defines needs differently. Specifically, consistent with the positions of psychologists such as Harlow (1958) and White (1959), SDT defines needs as universal necessities, as the nutriments that are essential for optimal human development and integrity (Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Deci, 1996). According to this definition, something is a need only to the extent that its satisfaction promotes psychological health and its thwarting undermines psychological health. Using this definition, the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are considered important for all individuals, so SDT research focuses not on the consequences of the strength of those needs for different individuals, but rather on the consequences of the extent to which individuals are able to satisfy the needs within social environments.

Many studies guided by SDT have provided support for this perspective (see Deci & Ryan, 2000, for a review). For example, Reis et al. (2000) examined satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs in people’s ongoing lives. Using both individual-difference and daily-diary procedures they predicted well-being from satisfaction of all three needs. They found first that trait measures of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as well as aggregates of the daily measures of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, all made independent contributions to well-being indices, thus confirming these relations at the between-person level. Then, after between-person variance was removed, daily fluctuations in satisfaction of the three needs independently predicted daily fluctuations in well-being. Thus, the study showed an association between need satisfaction and well-being at the within-person as well as between-person levels of analysis, with independent contributions being made by satisfaction of each basic need. Similarly, Gagné, Ryan, and Bargmann (2003) found that gymnasts’ daily experiences of satisfaction of the basic needs predicted change in well-being over the 4 weeks of the study.

With respect to organizations, we argue, based largely on laboratory experiments and field research in other domains, that work climates that promote satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs will enhance employees’ intrinsic motivation and promote full internalization of extrinsic motivation and that this will in turn yield the important work outcomes of (1) persistence and maintained behavior change; (2) effective performance, particularly on tasks requiring creativity, cognitive flexibility, and conceptual understanding; (3) job satisfaction; (4) positive work-related attitudes; (5) organizational citizenship behaviors; and (6) psychological adjustment and well-being.

There has been some organizational research that provides support for this view and will be discussed more fully later in the paper. For example, in a study conducted in Bulgaria and the United
States, Deci et al. (2001) assessed satisfaction of employees’ needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness at work and found direct positive relations in both countries between the degree of need satisfaction and both work engagement and well-being on the job. Baard, Deci, and Ryan (2004) found relations between satisfaction of these needs and employees’ performance evaluations. Further, there has been some research that relates SDT concepts to those from theories of organizational commitment, and they too will be discussed later.

**Social contexts and internalization**

One the most important reasons for postulating that there are basic psychological needs, defined as we have done, is that they provide the basis for predicting which aspects of a social context will support intrinsic motivation and facilitate internalization of extrinsic motivation. For example, a study by Grolnick and Ryan (1989) confirmed that mothers’ and fathers’ provision of supports for competence, relatedness, and autonomy with respect to their children’s homework predicted the children’s maintaining intrinsic motivation for school work and internalizing the importance of school-related activities, which in turn predicted the children’s school performance and adjustment.

We noted earlier that autonomy support is the most important social-contextual factor for predicting identification and integration, and thus autonomous behavior. Indeed, several studies have found autonomy-supportive interpersonal environments to promote internalization and integration of extrinsic motivation and in turn positive outcomes. A study by Black and Deci (2000) showed that the autonomy supportiveness of instructors in a university organic chemistry course predicted not only increases in autonomous motivation over the semester but also course grades after controlling for SAT scores and GPAs. The finding was especially strong for students with initially low levels of autonomous motivation. A study of internalization of values by medical students provided further support for SDT by revealing that when the instructors were more autonomy supportive students showed greater internalization of the values presented in the course and this predicted autonomous, value-congruent behaviors 6 months after the course ended (Williams & Deci, 1996). Finally, field studies in medical clinics have shown that health care providers’ autonomy support predicted patients’ becoming more autonomously motivated for health behavior change, which in turn led to greater maintained health behavior change (see Williams, Deci, & Ryan, 1998, for a review).

To examine specific factors that constitute autonomy support and facilitate internalization of extrinsic motivation, Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, and Leone (1994) performed a laboratory experiment. They found that three specific factors—a meaningful rationale for doing the task, acknowledgment that people might not find the activity interesting, and an emphasis on choice rather than control—led to greater internalization, assessed both by the amount of time participants spent with the task during a subsequent free-choice period and by their self-reported attitudes toward the task.

There was another important finding in the study. Deci et al. (1994) divided participants into two groups: those for whom two or three of the facilitating factors were present and those for whom none or one of the factors was present. In both groups, there was some internalization, although of course there was more internalization in the group with more facilitating factors. The two groups were created to test the hypothesis that the type of internalization would be different when different amounts of autonomy support were provided. Results showed that in conditions with two or three facilitating factors the internalization was integrated as reflected in significant positive correlations between the amount of subsequent behavior and self-reports of valuing the task and feeling free while doing it; whereas in conditions with zero or one facilitating factor the internalization was introjected as reflected by negative correlations between the behavior and the self-report variables. In the less autonomy-supportive conditions, people who behaved did so in spite of feeling less free and valuing.
the activity less. Joussemet, Koestner, Lekes, and Houlfort (2004) recently found comparable results in a study with children. Thus, autonomy-supportive conditions not only led to more internalization of extrinsic motivation but also ensured that the internalization that occurred was more integrated rather than just introjected.

It is interesting that the factors shown by Deci et al. (1994) to facilitate integration bear similarity to the elements of communication, empathy and concern, and participation and involvement which Kirkpatrick (1985) said were critical to promote acceptance of organizational change, a view supported by Gagné, Koestner, and Zuckerman (2000).

In sum, field and lab studies have found that supports for the basic needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy facilitate internalization and integration of extrinsic motivation, with supports for autonomy being the most important for facilitating integration. Supports for autonomy fall within two general categories: (1) specific factors in the social context, such as choice and meaningful positive feedback, which can be thought of as being analogous to specific aspects of job contents and contexts; and (2) the interpersonal ambience, which can be thought of as being analogous to the organizational climate and managers’ interpersonal styles.

There is considerable similarity between the social-contextual factors that maintain intrinsic motivation and those that facilitate integration of extrinsic motivation. Specifically, autonomy-supportive climates, as well as such specific factors as choice and acknowledgement, promote both types of autonomous motivation. However, there are two notable differences between the factors that maintain intrinsic motivation and those that facilitate internalization. First, people do not necessarily require structures, limits, or contingencies to maintain intrinsic motivation, but these are essential elements for internalization because it is they that get internalized. Second, internalization is facilitated by explicit or implicit endorsement of behaviors by significant others, whereas that is less important for maintaining intrinsic motivation. Noting the differences between the conditions that support intrinsic motivation and those that promote internalization is important because autonomous (i.e., well-internalized) extrinsic motivation predicts somewhat different outcomes from intrinsic motivation. Specifically, as we will see later, autonomous extrinsic motivation is more predictive than is intrinsic motivation for behaviors that are not themselves interesting and require discipline and explicit effort (Koestner & Losier, 2002).

**Individual differences: general causality orientations**

SDT also addresses individual differences in people’s orientations toward the initiation and regulation of their behavior. Referred to as general causality orientations (Deci & Ryan, 1985b), they index the degree to which people are **autonomy oriented**, **control oriented**, and **impersonally oriented**. The autonomy orientation reflects a general tendency to experience social contexts as autonomy supportive and to be self-determined; the control orientation reflects a general tendency to experience social contexts as controlling and to be controlled; and the impersonal orientation reflects the general tendency to be amotivated. Research (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Hodgins, Koestner, & Duncan, 1996; Koestner, Bernieri, & Zuckerman, 1992; Williams et al., 1996; Vallerand, 1997) has shown that the autonomy orientation is positively related to self-actualization, self-esteem, ego development, integration in personality, and satisfying interpersonal relationships; that the control orientation is associated with public self-consciousness, the Type A behavior pattern, defensive functioning, and placing high importance on pay and other extrinsic motivators; and that the impersonal orientation is related to external locus of control (i.e., the belief that one can not control outcomes) and to self-derogation and depression.
In sum: an overview of the structure of SDT

SDT distinguishes between amotivation (i.e., lack of motivation) and motivation. Amotivation involves not having an intention to act, whereas motivation involves intentionality. Within motivation, SDT distinguishes between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation includes intrinsic motivation and well-internalized extrinsic motivation. Thus, being autonomously motivated means being motivated by one’s interest in an activity (i.e., intrinsic motivation) and/or because the value and regulation of the activity have been integrated within one’s self (i.e., integrated extrinsic motivation). Controlled motivation consists of external regulation (the only type of extrinsic motivation that was considered when research focused on the dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) and introjected extrinsic motivation. Thus, the degree of one’s controlled motivation reflects the degree to which one feels coerced or seduced by external contingencies or by their introjected counterparts.

The concepts of autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and amotivation concern a person’s relation to an activity (e.g., writing a report) or sets of activities (e.g., doing one’s job). Thus, they are relatively state-like motivational concepts. These motivational variables are predicted from both (1) aspects of the social environment, including both aspects of the job and the work climate, that can be characterized as autonomy supportive, controlling, or amotivating; and (2) individual differences in causality orientations, namely, the autonomous orientation, the controlled orientation, and the impersonal orientation, which are more trait-like concepts. As such, the degree to which people are autonomously motivated for their jobs would be predicted from the supports for autonomy in their work contexts and their own autonomous causality orientation. Similarly, the degree of their controlled motivation would be predicted from the control in the work context and their own controlled causality orientation. People’s amotivation would be predicted from the amotivating aspect of their work context and from their impersonal orientation. Finally, the concept of basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy specifies the nutriments that are necessary within a social environment for it to be classified as autonomy supportive, controlling, or amotivating.