

Optimal Motivation at Work

**Self-Determination Theory:**

**An Approach to Enhancing Employees'  
Motivation and Wellness**

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# Structure of the Colloquium

- Your perspectives on motivation in the workplace
- An overview of self-determination theory
- An application of self-determination theory to organizational behavior
- Creating need supportive workplace climates



# **Your Perspectives on Motivation in the Workplace**

# Why We Do What We Do at Work

- **Employees complete their tasks at work for a variety of reasons:**
  - **Andy** completes tasks to earn a merit-based bonus or to avoid reprimand
  - **Barb** completes tasks to feel pride for being a “good employee” or to avoid guilt for not having worked hard enough
  - **Chris** completes tasks because he finds his work to be valuable and important
  - **Dom** completes tasks because doing so allows him to help those who are in need, which aligns with his life values
  - **Ed** completes tasks because doing so is inherently satisfying and enjoyable

# Why We Do What We Do at Work

- Who do you think will perform best at work?
  - **Andy** completes tasks to earn a merit-based bonus or to avoid reprimand
  - **Barb** completes tasks to feel pride for being a “good employee” or to avoid guilt for not having worked hard enough
  - **Chris** completes tasks because he finds his work to be valuable and important
  - **Dom** completes tasks because doing so allows him to help those who are in need, which aligns with his life values
  - **Ed** completes tasks because doing so is inherently satisfying and enjoyable



# Why We Do What We Do at Work

- Who do you think will be happiest at work?
  - **Andy** completes tasks to earn a merit-based bonus or to avoid reprimand
  - **Barb** completes tasks to feel pride for being a “good employee” or to avoid guilt for not having worked hard enough
  - **Chris** completes tasks because he finds his work to be valuable and important
  - **Dom** completes tasks because doing so allows him to help those who are in need, which aligns with his life values
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# **An Overview of Self-Determination Theory**

# A Focus on Human Motivation

- Motivation has been a long-standing topic of inquiry within psychology
- Applications cut across psychological sub-disciplines and domains of life
  - Including organizational behavior
- Two views on motivation:
  - The “traditional” view
  - The “differentiated” view





# Intrinsic Motivation



- Doing an activity because it is inherently satisfying and enjoyable
  - No separable outcomes or contingencies
  - Behavior occurs spontaneously (exploration, play)
- Think about those times in *your* life when you experience intrinsic motivation. How does it feel?
- The prototype of autonomous, self-determined behavior

# Effects on Intrinsic Motivation

- Rewards, threats of punishment, deadlines, surveillance, and evaluations undermine intrinsic motivation
- Providing choice enhances intrinsic motivation
- Providing rationale enhances intrinsic motivation
- Negative feedback undermines intrinsic motivation, whereas positive feedback enhances intrinsic motivation

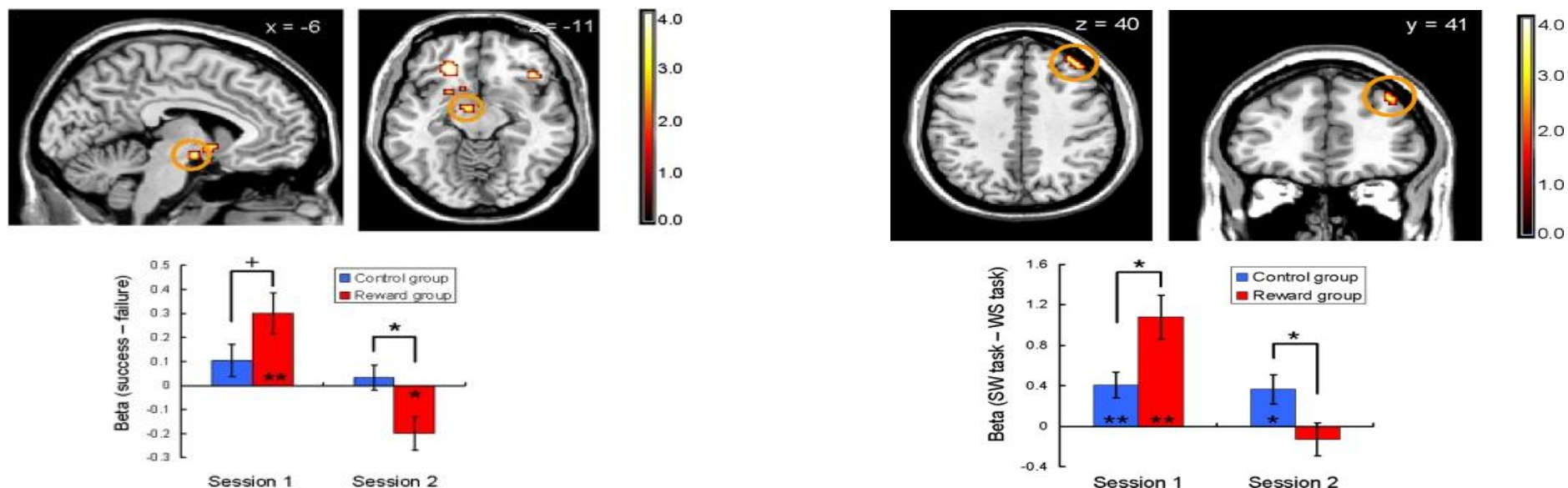


But why?!?



# Neuropsychological Support for the Undermining Effect

- Performance-contingent rewards undermine the reward network of the brain (viz., the anterior striatum and midbrain) and the part of the brain that is responsible for cognitive engagement (viz., the right lateral prefrontal cortex)



Murayama, K., Matsumoto, M., Izuma, K., & Matsumoto, K. (2010) Neural basis of the undermining effect of monetary reward on intrinsic motivation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107, 20911-20916.

# Extrinsic Motivation

- Intrinsic motivation tends to decline with age



- Extrinsic motivation refers to doing an activity because it leads to a separable outcome or consequence, such as obtaining a reward or avoiding a punishment





# Can Extrinsic Motivation be Internalized?

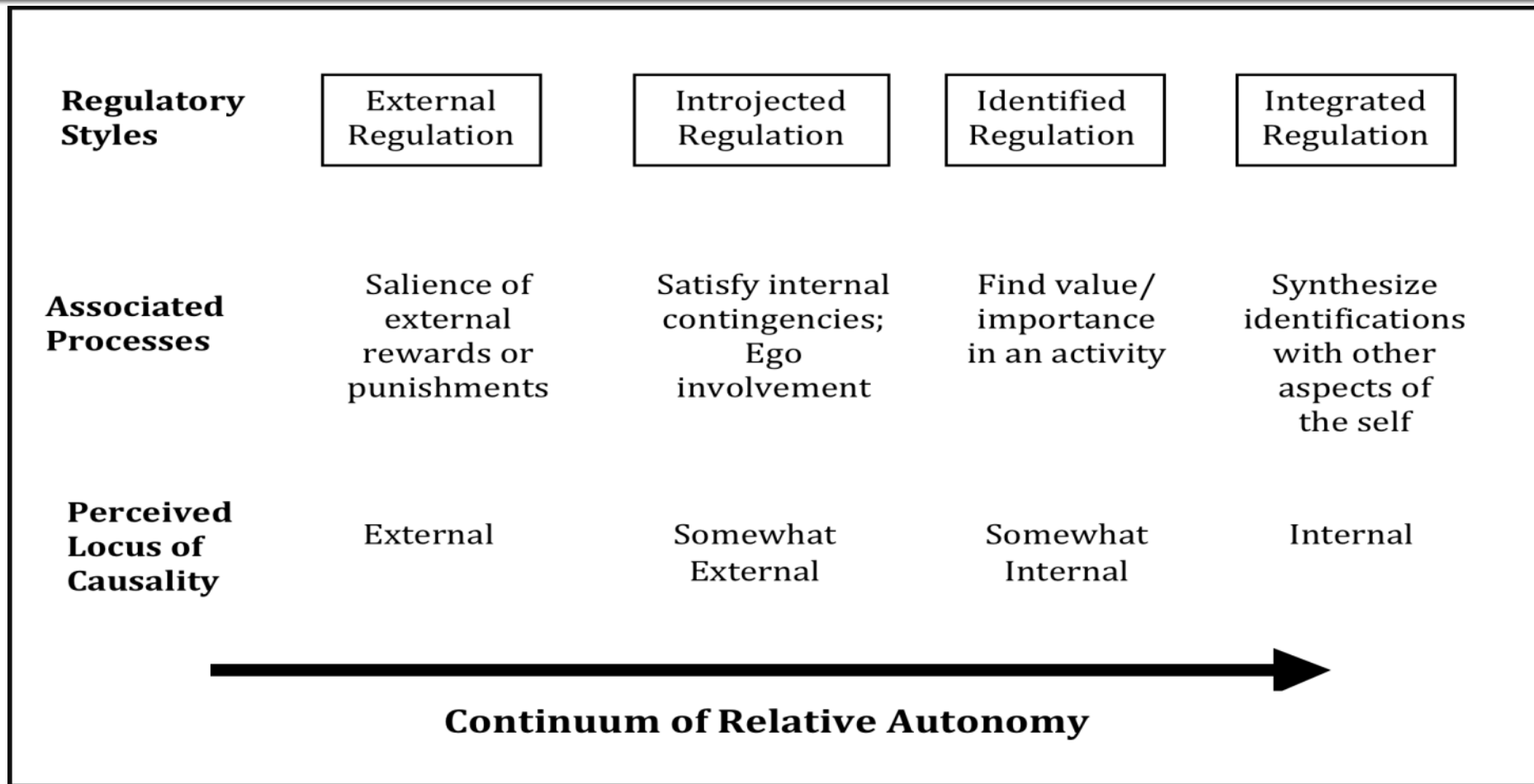
- The process of internalization
- People tend to internalize aspects of the environment that are endorsed by important others



But why?!?



# A Continuum of Internalization



Niemiec, C. P., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7, 133-144.

# Autonomous Versus Controlled Motivation

- Autonomous motivation

- To endorse one's behavior fully
- Accompanied by experiences of choice and volition
- Intrinsic motivation, integrated regulation, and identified regulation



- Controlled motivation

- To be coerced into behavior by external or internal forces
- Accompanied by experiences of pressure and obligation
- External regulation and introjected regulation



# Correlates of Autonomous Motivation

- Across a variety of important life domains, autonomous motivation is associated with higher levels of:
  - Task persistence and performance
  - Task interest, enjoyment, and creativity
  - Relationship quality
  - Psychological and physical health



For reviews, see:

Niemiec, C. P., Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2010). Self-determination theory and the relation of autonomy to self-regulatory processes and personality development. In R. H. Hoyle (Ed.), *Handbook of personality and self-regulation* (pp. 169-191). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Vansteenkiste, M., Niemiec, C. P., & Soenens, B. (2010). The development of the five mini-theories of self-determination theory: An historical overview, emerging trends, and future directions. In T. C. Urdan & S. A. Karabenick (Eds.), *Advances in motivation and achievement*, v. 16A—*The decade ahead: Theoretical perspectives on motivation and achievement* (pp. 105-165). London: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.



# Review of Self-Determination Theory

- Focuses on the *type* of motivation, rather than on the *amount* of motivation
- Intrinsic motivation is supported by choice and positive feedback, and is undermined by external contingencies and negative feedback
- Extrinsic motivation can be internalized to varying degrees and, as a result, can be experienced as more or less autonomous
- Autonomous (relative to controlled) motivation is associated with positive outcomes across a variety of life domains



# **An Application of Self-Determination Theory to Organizational Behavior**

# On the “Bright Side” of Work

- Among teachers from the African state of Gambia...
  - Autonomy support from supervisors is associated with higher levels of autonomous motivation for work, which is associated with higher levels of **job satisfaction** and **life satisfaction** (Levesque et al., 2004)
- Among French-speaking police officers in Canada...
  - Autonomy support from supervisors is associated with higher levels of autonomous motivation for work, which is associated with lower levels of **daily hassles** and **physical symptoms**, and higher levels of **intention to remain on the job** (Otis & Pelletier, 2005)

# On the “Dark Side” of Work

- Among public school teachers...
  - Perceptions of pressure on the job are associated with lower levels of **autonomous motivation** and higher levels of **emotional exhaustion** (Fernet, Guay, et al., 2012)
- Among nurses...
  - Perceptions of psychological harassment on the job are associated with lower levels of **autonomous motivation** and **psychological wellness**, and higher levels of **controlled motivation** and **turnover intention** (Trépanier et al., 2013)

# Some Additional Findings

- **Family alienation, emotional exhaustion**
  - Senecal, Vallerand, & Guay (2001)
- **Work satisfaction**
- **Emotional exhaustion, turnover intention**
  - Richer, Blanchard, & Vallerand (2002)
- **Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization**
- **Personal accomplishment**
  - Fernet, Guay, & Senecal (2004)
- **Job satisfaction, job commitment**
  - Lam & Gurland (2008)
- **Identification with the organization**
- **Internalization of organizational values**
  - Gagné & Koestner (2002)



# **Creating Need Supportive Workplace Climates**

# Need Supportive Techniques at Work

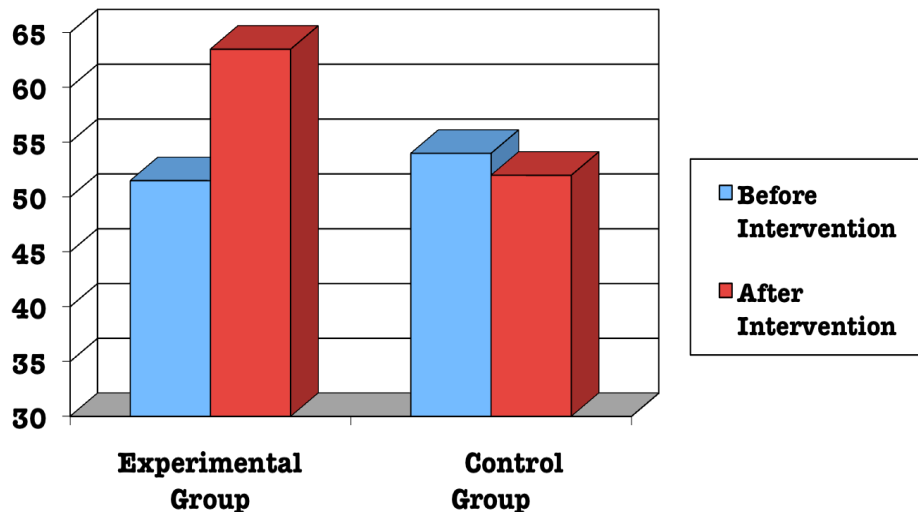
- It is critical for managers to provide support for their employees' autonomy, competence, and relatedness
  - **Support for autonomy:**
    - Relate from the employee's perspective
    - Encourage self-initiation and choice
    - Provide a rationale for requested behavior
    - Minimize use of controlling language
  - **Support for competence:**
    - Be positive that the employee can succeed
    - Create optimal challenges
    - Give accurate, effectance-relevant feedback
  - **Support for relatedness:**
    - Develop a warm, empathic, non-judgmental relationship
- **Managers can learn to be more need supportive...**



# In the Workplace

## Deci et al. (1989)

- Involved training managers in a Fortune 500 Company to be more need supportive
  - Worked with branch manager for 1 day
  - Worked with management team for 5 days
  - Worked with field managers for 7 days
- Managerial need support
- Ripple effect to employees
  - Higher trust in corporation
  - Higher job satisfaction

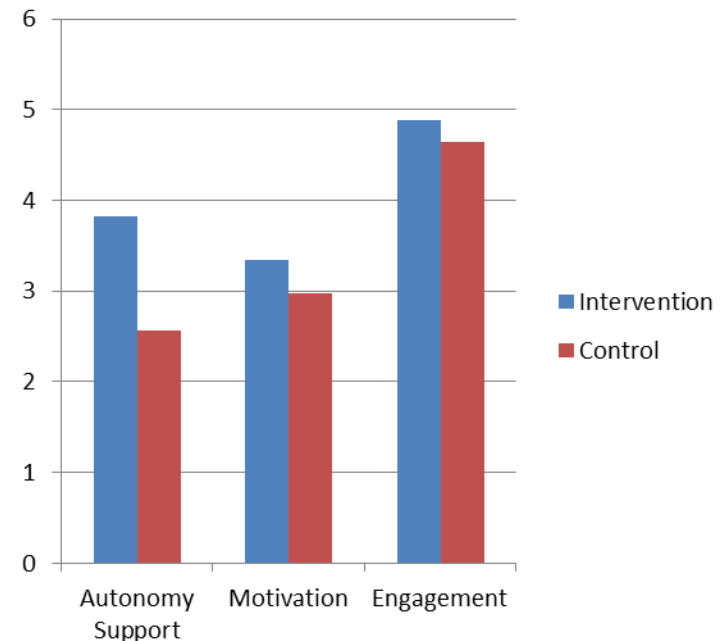




# In the Workplace

## Hardré and Reeve (2009)

- Involved training managers in a Fortune 500 Company to be more need supportive
  - Group-delivered training session for 1 hour
  - Group-delivered Q & A session for 1 hour
  - Individual study of a training booklet
- Managerial need support
  - At 5 weeks after the training
- Ripple effect to employees
  - At 10 weeks after the training



Hardré, P. L., & Reeve, J. (2009). Training corporate managers to adopt a more autonomy-supportive motivating style toward employees: An intervention study. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 13, 165-184.

# Conclusion

- The *quality* of employees' motivation matters
- Autonomous (relative to controlled) motivation is associated with higher levels of employee health and work-related functioning
- Managers can facilitate autonomous motivation in the workplace by providing support for their employees' autonomy, competence, and relatedness



**Thank You!!!**