

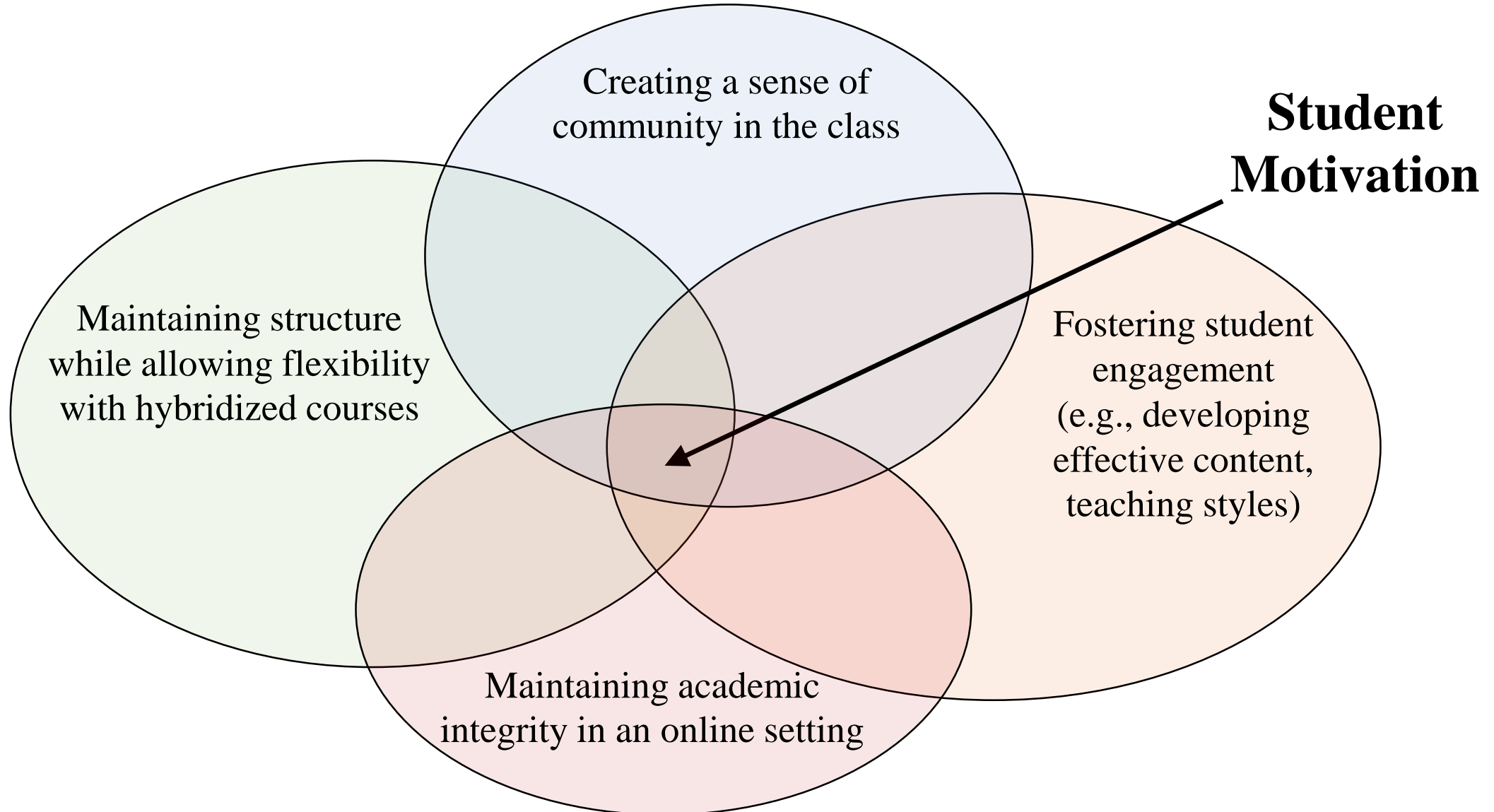
*On perfectionists and procrastinators:  
Understanding student motivation in an  
online learning environment*

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# Why Consider Student Motivation?



# Why Consider Student Motivation?

- “[Motivation is] a hypothetical construct used to explain the internal and/or external forces that give behaviour its initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence” (Vallerand & Thill, 1993)
- Motivation is the driving force behind all goal-directed behaviour
- Focusing on motivation can help us understand:
  - How, and how often students study
  - Students’ attitudes towards a course
  - Why students attend classes and participate
  - How, how often, and why students contact their instructor
  - When and why students may engage in academic dishonesty

# Understanding Student Motivation

Why do students study and attend lectures?

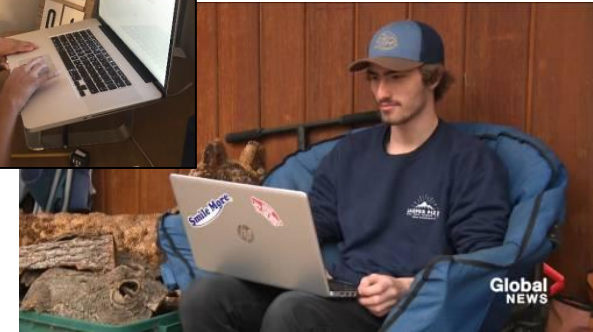
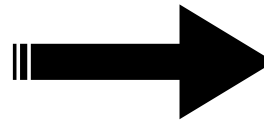
- Interest, desire to learn, wanting to know what will be on the exam, mandatory attendance, desire to connect, etc.



How do we (instructors) try to motivate students to engage with the course content?

- Use strategies to make our teaching more engaging, require participation, provide choices/options for students, connect course content with students' own lives, offer additional material, provide meaningful feedback, offer bonus marks, etc.

# Student Motivation for Online Learning



- The shift to online learning has changed how students engage with course content, with other students, and with their instructor
- Many students appreciate the flexibility of online learning
- Increased importance of having a home workspace and a good work routine (Kinman et al., 2020)
- Academic dishonesty may be more widespread (CBC News, 2020)
- Being organized and “self-motivated” is more important than ever (Zhu et al., 2020)

# Student Motivation for Online Learning

- Recent qualitative research on student experiences in online learning (Landrum et al., 2020)

*What I miss with the online class is kind of the personal aspect, with the other students and the teacher...the eye contact of physically being with someone, makes a difference for me.*

*In online classes no one's there to monitor your progress. There's no pressure to learn at all.*

*I give [my current online professor] kudos, because if you send him emails... and he responds... you know you can always go to him.*

*For me, it was like the self-discipline...because when I have that class at a set time that I have to attend, I'm like "so I'm going to that class." But then when it's like whenever you can do it, whenever you want to...I struggled with the self-discipline*

*When you have nobody to talk to, what do you do?  
I'm going to cheat.*

# Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)

- Prominent theory of human motivation, self-regulation, and well-being
- Focus on how person-environment interactions support or thwart individuals' needs and subsequently influence motivation
- Psychological Needs for:

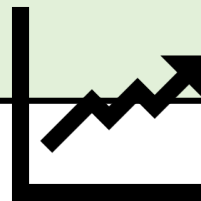
## Autonomy

The need to experience self-direction and personal endorsement in the initiation and regulation of one's behaviour.



## Competence

The need to feel effective in interactions with the environment.

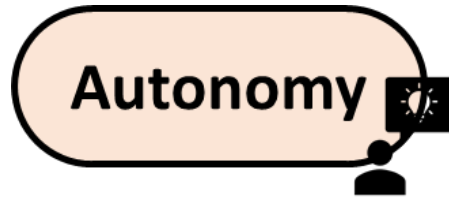


## Relatedness

The need to be emotionally connected to, interpersonally involved with, and respected by others.



# Autonomous and Controlled Motivation



- When an individual has experiences that satisfy their psychological needs, they develop more autonomous forms of motivation (vs. controlled motivation)

## **Controlled Motivation**

Regulation based on external incentives, or a sense of contingent self-worth.

(i.e., “have-to”, or “should” motivation)

## **Autonomous Motivation**

Regulation based on personal endorsement of the importance of a behaviour, or inherent interest/enjoyment.

(i.e., “want-to” motivation)



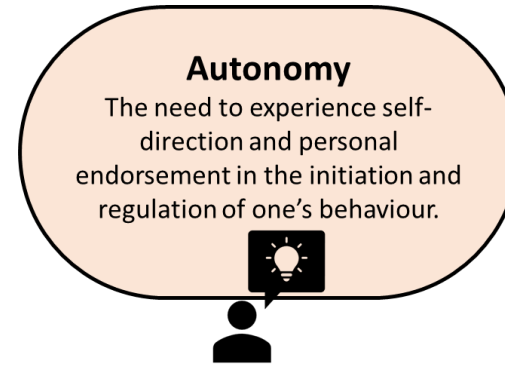
# Autonomous and Controlled Motivation

Compared to **Controlled Motivation**, **Autonomous Motivation** is associated with...

- ...more effective study strategies and greater effort (Kusurkar et al., 2013)
- ...greater interest and less anxiety (Black & Deci, 2000)
- ...higher student satisfaction (Griffin, 2016)
- ...increased engagement and conceptual learning (Jang et al., 2016)
- ...less student burnout (Ljubin-Golub et al., 2020)
- ...less procrastination and cheating (Mih & Mih, 2016)

# Fostering Autonomous Motivation for Online Learning

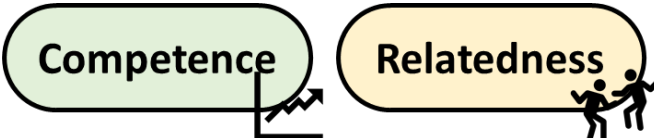
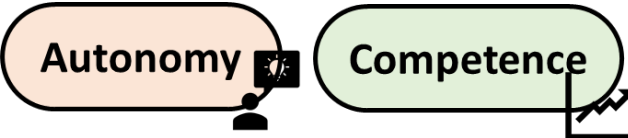
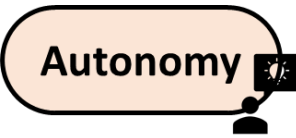
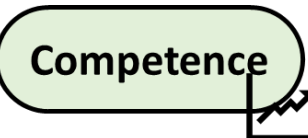

- Supporting students' autonomy
- Includes strategies such as:
  - Taking the student's perspective
  - Providing explanatory rationale for each aspect of a course
  - Using invitational, non-pressuring language
  - Acknowledging and accepting expressions of negative affect
  - Efforts to vitalize inner motivational resources (vs. external motivators)
- Is a learnable approach for fostering engagement, autonomous motivation for learning, curiosity (Reeve et al., 2004)



Vs.



# Fostering Autonomous Motivation for Online Learning

- Providing meaningful feedback 
- Focusing on learning, and not on grades 
- Being flexible and providing options 
- Provide structure (i.e., clear expectations and guidelines) 
- Being communicative and developing a sense of community 

# Some Thoughts and Concluding Remarks

- It can be difficult to foster autonomous motivation when faced with pressure from both students and the broader social context
- No strategy will work for all students or in all scenarios
- As instructors, there are considerations we can make to support more healthy, effective forms of motivation in our students, which can have a number of positive outcomes for their learning and overall experience

\*References and key articles available upon request

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