

1 Running head: GOAL MOTIVATION AND MULTIPLE GOAL STRIVING

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4 Goal Motives and Multiple-Goal Striving in Sport and Academia: A Person-Centered Investigation of
5 Goal Motives and Inter-Goal Relations

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12 **Healy, L. and Ntoumanis, N. and Duda, J. 2015. Goal motives and multiple-goal striving in sport**
13 **and academia: A person-centered investigation of goal motives and inter-goal relations.**
14 **Journal for Science and Medicine in Sport. [In Press]**

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24 Word count: Main body = 2987, Abstract = 133, No. tables = 2 No. figures = 1

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Abstract

8 Objectives: This investigation extended the goal striving literature by examining motives for two

9 goals being pursued simultaneously. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, we examined how

10 student-athletes' motives for their sporting and academic goals were associated with inter-goal

11 facilitation and interference.

12 Design: Cross-sectional survey.

13 Methods: UK university student-athletes (n = 204) identified their most important sporting and

14 academic goals. They then rated their extrinsic, introjected, identified and intrinsic motives for these

15 goals and completed questionnaires assessing inter-goal facilitation and interference.

16 Results: Using a person-centered approach via latent profile analysis, we identified three distinct

17 profiles of goal motives. Auxiliary analyses showed that the profile with high identified motives for

18 both goals reported greater inter-goal facilitation.

19 Conclusions: Extending the previous literature, the findings demonstrate the benefits of autonomous

20 motives when simultaneously pursuing goals in sport and academia.

21

Key words

23 Goals, motivation, inter-goal facilitation, inter-goal interference, latent profile analysis, self-

24 determination theory

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1 Introduction

2 Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT)¹, a major principle of the Self-Concordance
3 (SC) model² is that goal motivation can vary in both quality and quantity. Autonomous motivation,
4 reflecting intrinsic and identified motivation regulations, is underpinned by personal interest,
5 importance or enjoyment in goal pursuit. Controlled motivation is underpinned by internal or external
6 pressures, aligned with introjected and extrinsic motivation. SC model-based research has generally
7 examined one goal in a single domain, such as education³, health⁴, and sport^{5,6,7}. In reality, individuals
8 often simultaneously pursue multiple goals across contexts⁸. Only one study has explored motivation
9 in multiple-goal pursuit. Gorges, Esdar and Wild⁹ linked goal self-concordance (autonomous minus
10 controlled motives) to the affective responses associated with multiple goal conflict. To generate
11 feelings of goal conflict, junior scientists considered an instance where they had recently “felt torn”
12 between two activities in their research and teaching. Participants identified a goal and rated their
13 motives for each of these activities. Gorges et al.⁹ found that high goal self-concordance can protect
14 individuals from negative affect when experiencing goal conflict. Further, for self-concordant goals,
15 conflict was viewed as challenging rather than frustrating.

16 Gorges et al.’s⁹ findings show the importance of identifying the motives underpinning
17 concurrent goal pursuits. However, goal conflict was investigated in one domain only. Furthermore,
18 the relations between goals were not examined. When pursuing multiple goals, individuals may
19 experience inter-goal facilitation or interference¹⁰. Inter-goal facilitation – the pursuit of one goal
20 increasing the chance of success in the other goal - occurs through instrumental relations (progress in
21 one goal resulting in progress towards the other goal) and overlapping goal strategies (actions having
22 positive effects on both goals). Inter-goal interference, whereby pursuing one goal reduces the
23 likelihood of attaining another, operates through resources constraints (striving for one goal detracts
24 time, effort or resources from another goal) or incompatible goal strategies (strategies for one goal
25 conflict with completing another goal). Facilitation is linked with higher levels of goal pursuit,
26 whereas interference is negatively associated with well-being¹⁰. The present study extends the
27 literature by examining the association between goal motivation and inter-goal relations.

1 A central tenet of SDT¹ is that autonomous motivation is more adaptive because it reflects
2 greater integration with the self. As such, autonomous motivation can lead to a range of positive
3 outcomes, and buffer negative outcomes. Conversely, controlled motivation is predicted to lead to
4 negative outcomes, with no buffering effect. Goal motives research has generally supported these
5 propositions^{11,12,13}. Healy et al.⁷ found autonomous goal motives to be positively and negatively
6 related to well- and ill-being, respectively. Furthermore, autonomous motives have been shown to
7 lead to enhanced persistence towards an increasing difficult goal¹¹ and greater flexibility when goals
8 have become unattainable¹⁴. Therefore, it may be that when goals are pursued for reasons of personal
9 importance or enjoyment, individuals can be flexible in their allocation of resources. In a multiple
10 goal context, autonomous motives may allow for greater facilitation between goals. In the present
11 study we expected that autonomous motives would be positively related to inter-goal facilitation and
12 negatively associated with interference. Controlled motivation has generally been found to be
13 unrelated to goal attainment^{12,13}. In a multiple goal context, this might be due to greater interference
14 between goals. Hence, we hypothesized that controlled motives would be positively associated with
15 inter-goal interference, and unrelated to facilitation. We explored these hypotheses in university
16 student-athletes striving for both sporting and academic goals, as while some student -athletes
17 struggle to balance their sporting and academic goals, others are more successful at managing
18 multiple goal pursuits¹⁵. Motivation can vary across different situations and contexts¹⁶, with
19 individuals feeling more autonomous in one context and less so in another. Thus, variations in goal
20 motivation across contexts might be associated with differences in student-athletes' inter-goal
21 relations.

22 In the original SC model, Sheldon and Elliott² combined autonomous and controlled motives
23 to assess self-concordance. Research has also examined autonomous and controlled motives
24 separately to explore their unique contribution to goal-related outcomes^{7,11,12}. However, combinations
25 of goal motives have not been examined in the literature. In the wider SDT literature¹⁷, examining
26 general motivation rather than specific goal motivation, it has been shown that people can experience

1 varied combinations of motivation regulations. In this study we used a person-centered approach,
2 whereby we created goal motives profiles for both academic and sporting goals.

3 Within the SDT literature, person-centered research has demonstrated that more optimal
4 motivation profiles (i.e. high autonomous, low controlled motivation) are associated with better
5 outcomes (e.g. performance, effort) than those with less optimal profiles (i.e. low autonomous, high
6 controlled motivation or moderate autonomous, moderate controlled motivation)^{17,18}. However, other
7 research has suggested that high levels of controlled motivation may not be detrimental, as long as
8 autonomous motivation regulations are also high^{19,20,21}. Within our research, it was also plausible that
9 individuals would report different combinations of goal motives across their academic and sporting
10 goals. For example, student-athletes might enjoy their sporting goal, and therefore report higher levels
11 of autonomous and lower levels of controlled motives in pursuit of this goal, whereas they might be
12 pursuing their academic goal with different levels of autonomous and controlled motives. We
13 expected that profiles in which intrinsic and identified goal regulations (i.e., autonomous motives) for
14 both goals were high, would experience greater inter-goal facilitation and lower interference,
15 regardless of the level of extrinsic and introjected (i.e., controlled) motivation. Additionally, we
16 hypothesized that profiles with lower levels of autonomous goal motives, or with mixed motives for
17 sporting and academic goals, would experience less inter-goal facilitation and more interference.

18 **Methods**

19 Following ethical approval from two UK universities, we recruited 204 university students
20 (103 male, 101 female, *M*_{age} = 21.00 years, *SD*_{age} = 2.09) who had been participating in their sport
21 for 7.69 ± 5.29 years. A questionnaire pack was completed either online or on paper. Data collection
22 occurred around 4-6 weeks into an academic semester, as we felt that students would have
23 commenced goal striving for both goals by this point.

24 Participants identified their most important sporting and academic goal for the remaining
25 academic year, and rated their motivation for each goal. Four items (one for each goal motivation
26 regulation) that have been used extensively in previous goal striving research^{2,7,12}, tapped extrinsic
27 (“Because someone else wants you to”), introjected (“Because you would feel ashamed, guilty, or

1 anxious if you didn't"), identified ("Because you personally believe it's an important goal to have")
2 and intrinsic ("Because of the fun and enjoyment the goal provides you") goal motives on a 1 (*not at*
3 *all*) to 7 (*very much so*) scale. .

4 The Inter-goal Relations Questionnaire¹⁰ was completed to assess facilitation and
5 interference. The facilitation scale had one item each for instrumental goal relations ("The pursuit of
6 my sporting goal sets the stage for the realization of my academia goal") and overlapping goal
7 attainment strategies ("How often has it happened that you did something in the pursuit of your
8 sporting goal that was simultaneously beneficial for your academic goal?"). For the interference scale,
9 three items assessed resource constraints (e.g., "How often has it happened that because of the pursuit
10 of your sporting goal, you could not invest as much energy into your sporting goal as you would have
11 liked to?"), and a fourth measured incompatible goal attainment strategies ("How often has it
12 happened that you did something in the pursuit of your academic goal that was incompatible with
13 your sporting goal?"). Participants rated the impact of the sporting goal on their academic goal, and
14 vice versa, in reference to the last month on a 1 (*Never or rarely*) to 5 (*Very often*) scale. For each
15 goal, mean facilitation and interference scores were created from the respective items.

16 To create goal motives profiles, latent profile analysis (LPA) was performed using MPlus
17 7.1²² with MLR estimation. We included in the analysis the four motivation regulations for each goal;
18 eight variables were used in total. This approach is different to previous SC model research^{7,11,12},
19 where the extrinsic and introjected, and identified and intrinsic scores have been aggregated to form
20 controlled and autonomous goal motives respectively. Our approach was based on two reasons. First,
21 the four items represent separate (albeit related) motivation regulations. Additionally, research has
22 often found these goal motives aggregates have poor internal reliability^{7,11}.

23 While there is no "gold standard" for determining the optimum number of profiles in LPA, it
24 is worthwhile to explore a range of solutions and select the number of profiles based on the goodness-
25 of-fit indices, the nature of the profiles, and theoretical considerations^{23,24}. It is also possible to test if a
26 more complex model offers a better fit to the data than a more parsimonious one. We examined the
27 model fit criteria from 1-5 profile solutions. We primarily used the bootstrapped log-likelihood ratio

1 test (BLRT) as this is recommended for sample sizes of $n < 200$ ²⁵. We also inspected the entropy
2 criterion values; higher values indicate a better model fit²⁶. Furthermore, the goal motives means for
3 each profile were examined in terms of relevance to theory. To examine between profile differences
4 in inter-goal interference and facilitation, we utilized the AUXILIARY command in MPlus. This
5 allows for the equality of outcome means hypothesis to be tested across profiles via a Wald chi-square
6 test²⁷.

7 **Results**

8 The data were screened for multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis distance. Consequently,
9 we removed 9 participants, leaving a final sample of 195 participants. The internal reliabilities for
10 both facilitation variables were slightly lower than those for the interference variables (Table 1). This
11 may be explained by the facilitation subscale containing two items only whereas the interference
12 subscale contained four items²⁸.

13 We conducted preliminary analyses to ensure the LPA would not be impacted by confounding
14 variables. None of the goal motive regulations were correlated with the participants' age or years of
15 experience in their sport (Table 1). There was a small, negative correlation between age and
16 facilitation from the sporting goal to the academic goal; however, no other variables were related to
17 age or years of experience. A MANOVA revealed no multivariate (Pillai's $V = .06$, $F(12,182) = .99$,
18 $p = 0.46$, $\eta^2 = .06$) or univariate between gender differences in sport goal motives (all $F(1,195) <$
19 2.23 , $p > 0.05$, $\eta^2 < .02$), academic goal motives (all $F(1,195) < 1.82$, $p > 0.05$, $\eta^2 < .01$) or inter-goal
20 relations (all $F(1,195) < 2.60$, $p > 0.05$, $\eta^2 < .02$).

21 Table 2 displays the fit indices for the LPA. Using the BLRT, entropy values and theoretical
22 considerations, we accepted the 3-profile solution (Figure 1A). In all three profiles, participants
23 reported relatively adaptive motives for their sporting goal (i.e. lower extrinsic and introjected, and
24 higher identified and intrinsic motives). The academic goal motives across the profiles were more
25 diverse. In Profile 1 (10.3% of the sample), individuals reported low extrinsic, moderate introjected
26 and high identified and intrinsic motives for the sport goal. For the academic goal, they reported
27 moderate levels of all goal motive regulations. Therefore, this profile was labeled as "Mixed-Motive

1 Strivers". In Profile 2 (25.1%) individuals reported low extrinsic and introjected, moderate identified
2 and high intrinsic motives for their sporting goal. For their academic goal, they reported high
3 identified, and moderate extrinsic, introjected and intrinsic motives. This profile was labeled
4 "Intrinsic-Identified Motive Strivers". The final profile was the largest (64.6%). Individuals within
5 this group pursued their sporting goal with low extrinsic and introjected, and high identified and
6 intrinsic motives. They also reported high identified motives for their academic goal, along with
7 moderate levels of extrinsic, introjected and intrinsic motives. Given their high level of identified
8 motivation for both goals, we labeled this class as "Dual-Identified Motive Strivers".

9 The results of the AUXILIARY analyses (Figure 1B) showed that all profiles reported similar levels
10 of academic to sporting (Global Wald $\chi^2 = 1.68$, $p = 0.43$) and sporting to academic (Global Wald $\chi^2 =$
11 2.60 , $p = 0.21$) goal interference. Different levels of facilitation were reported between the profiles.
12 From the academic to the sporting goal, the "Mixed-Motive Strivers" reported lower levels of
13 facilitation than both the "Intrinsic-Identified Motives Strivers" (Wald $\chi^2 = 11.0$, $p = 0.001$, Cohen's d
14 $= .75$) and the "Dual-Identified Motive Strivers" (Wald $\chi^2 = 23.68$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = .98$), with
15 no difference between the latter two profiles (Wald $\chi^2 = .70$, $p = 0.41$, Cohen's $d = .15$; Global Wald
16 $\chi^2 = 23.74$, $p < 0.001$). For facilitation from the sporting to the academic goal, the "Dual-Identified
17 Motive Strivers" reported higher facilitation than both the "Mixed-Motive Strivers" (Wald $\chi^2 = 4.38$, p
18 $= 0.04$, Cohen's $d = .50$) and the "Intrinsic-Identified Motive Strivers" (Wald $\chi^2 = 4.81$, $p = 0.03$,
19 Cohen's $d = .37$). There were no differences between the latter two profiles (Wald $\chi^2 = .29$, $p = 0.59$,
20 Cohen's $d = .14$; Global Wald $\chi^2 = 7.67$, $p = 0.02$). To summarize, we found partial support for our
21 hypotheses, as the profiles with higher levels of autonomous goal motives for their goals experienced
22 greater facilitation, but there were no differences in interference.

23

24

Discussion

This was the first study to explore combinations of motivation regulations for sporting and academic goals. Our results suggest that facilitation between goals occurs when identified goal motives are high. Within the “Dual-Identified Motive Strivers” and “Intrinsic-Identified Motive Strivers” profiles, individuals reported high identified motives for their academic goal. Furthermore, they experienced greater facilitation from their academic goal to their sporting goal than the “Mixed-Motives Strivers”, who reported moderate identified goal motives. Similarly, only the “Dual-Identified Motive Strivers” reported high identified sport goal motives. Individuals within this group experienced greater facilitation from their sporting goal to their academic goal than the “Mixed-Motive Strivers” and the “Intrinsic-Identified Motive Strivers”.

Research from the SDT literature has shown that identified and intrinsic motivation regulations can lead to different outcomes²⁹. It has also been suggested that identified motivation might be more beneficial than intrinsic motivation when tasks are not perceived to be inherently interesting¹⁶. It is plausible that for our participants, their sporting goal was more inherently enjoyable than their academic goal. As such, understanding the importance of achieving both goals may have resulted in facilitation between both the sporting and academic goal. Given that facilitation is positively linked with goal progress¹⁰, it could be expected that when individuals find personal importance in their goal pursuits, they experience benefits such as inter-goal facilitation, enabling them to successfully achieve multiple goals.

An interesting aspect of our findings is that the “Dual-Identified Motive Strivers” reported moderate levels of controlled (e.g. extrinsic and introjected) motives for their academic goal. Indeed, individuals within this group reported the highest level of introjected motives for the academic goal of the three profiles. Despite feeling internal pressures to pursue their academic goal, student-athletes within this profile reported the highest levels facilitation. These findings are aligned with the SDT literature. Studies in physical education have shown that students with higher autonomous motivation reported more adaptive experiences, regardless of their controlled motivation levels^{17,18}. In a sport setting, no differences were found in objectively-assessed performance between two profiles with

1 high autonomous motivation, which had varying levels of controlled motivation²⁰. Recent research in
2 sport which explored motivation profiles in relation to well-being has suggested that high controlled
3 motivation can lead to adaptive outcomes when coupled with high autonomous motivation²¹. In
4 multiple goal pursuit, it seems that introjected motives are not detrimental to facilitation, as long as
5 both goals are perceived to be personally important.

6 Contrary to our expectations, our findings suggest that differences in goal motivation profiles
7 are not associated with differential levels of inter-goal interference. Individuals in all profiles reported
8 moderate levels of interference between their academic and sporting goals. This suggests that, in
9 relation to the pursuit of multiple goals across domains, more adaptive forms of motivation cannot
10 protect individuals from interference, contrary to the tenets of SDT¹. It may be that in goal pursuit
11 across multiple domains, high autonomous motivation does not have the same buffering effect as
12 found in previous literature looking at motivation for pursuits within the same domain⁷. This
13 unexpected finding warrants investigation to fully understand the association between goal motivation
14 and inter-goal relations in multiple domains.

15 This study makes a novel contribution to the literature by examining goal motives in multiple-
16 goal situations. However, as the analyses used cross-sectional data, we were unable to determine if
17 goal motives can prospectively predict multiple goal attainment. Given that facilitation is positively
18 associated with goal progress¹⁰, we might infer from our findings that, over time, those with an
19 adaptive goal motive profile would have higher levels of attainment for both goals. It is important that
20 research examines the associations between goal motives, inter-goal relations, and goal attainment via
21 a longitudinal design. A further limitation is the use of single-item measures for each goal motivation
22 regulation. While this approach is consistent with the literature^{2,7,12}, it would be worthwhile to develop
23 multiple items for each goal motive and incorporate these into future research.

24 Research could also examine how an individual's goal motives can explain differences in
25 inter-goal relations when pursuing multiple goals in a single domain. In sport, goal setting may be
26 more effective when athletes set goals to work towards across different sport-related contexts (e.g.

1 training and competition) and over different time scales (e.g. short-, medium- and long-term)³⁰.

2 Pursuing these questions would extend the SC model research conducted to date.

3

4 **Conclusion**

5 Our findings extend the SC model literature by showing that adaptive goal motivation is also

6 important in multiple-goal pursuit, particularly in relation to facilitation of academic and sporting

7 goals. To find balance in pursuits across different settings, it is important for individuals to find

8 personal importance in their goals within each domain.

9

10 **Practical implications**

- 11 • Student-athletes strive for their sporting and academic goals for different reasons
- 12 • To experience optimum relations between sporting and academic goals, student-athletes should
13 try to find personal importance in both goals
- 14 • Striving for goals as a result of pressure or for the avoidance of unpleasant emotions may not
15 necessarily be detrimental for goal relations, as long as the goals are also important to the
16 individual.

17

18 **Acknowledgements**

19 The research in this manuscript was supported by a PhD studentship for the first author from

20 the Economic and Social Research council (Award No: ES/J50001X/1) while all authors were at the

21 University of Birmingham.

22

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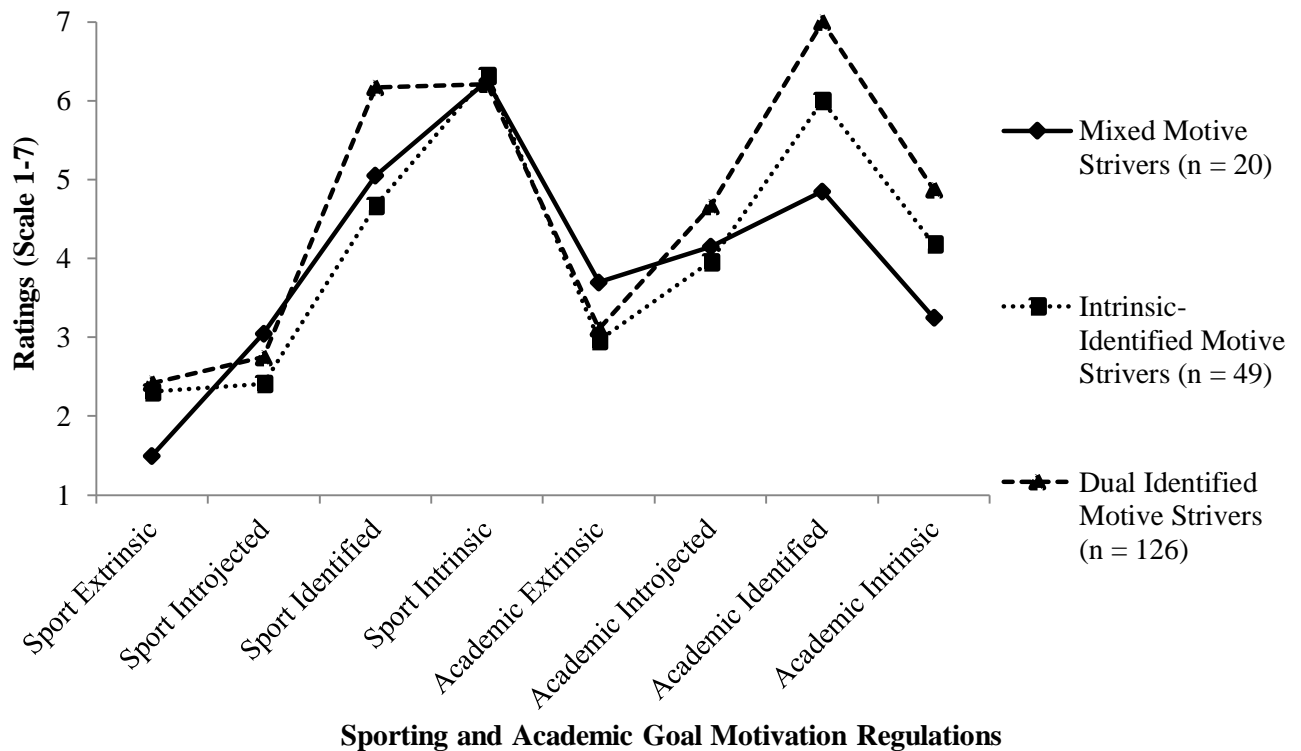
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1 Table 1.

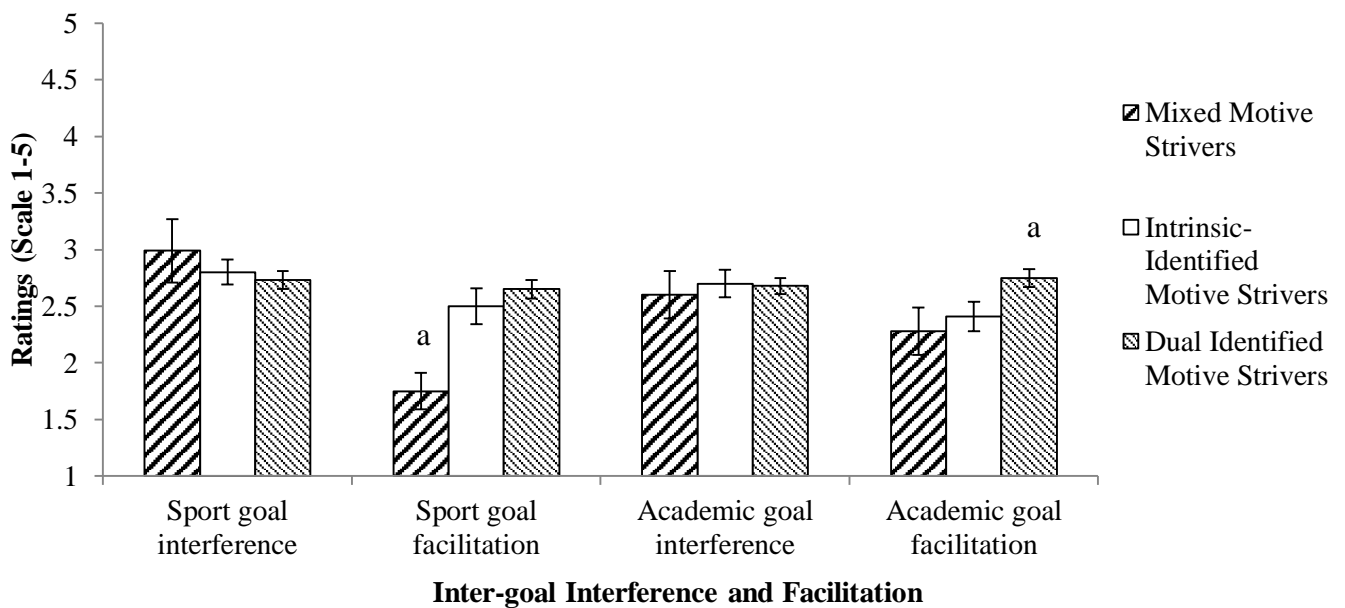
2 *Descriptive Statistics, Scale Reliabilities and Bivariate Correlations of Study Variables.*

	α	M (SEM)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age (years)	-	21.02 (.15)	-												
2. Years of experience in main sport	-	7.69 (.38)	.20 ^b	-											
3. Sport extrinsic goal motives	-	2.30 (.11)	-.08	-.09	-										
4. Sport introjected goal motives	-	2.70 (.13)	-.05	-.09	.45 ^b	-									
5. Sport identified goal motives	-	5.93 (.09)	.01	.02	-.05	.14 ^a	-								
6. Sport intrinsic goal motives	-	6.24 (.07)	-.05	.09	-.21 ^b	-.22 ^b	.31 ^b	-							
7. Academic extrinsic goal motives	-	3.13 (.13)	-.03	-.002	.38 ^b	.16 ^a	.16 ^a	-.03	-						
8. Academic introjected goal motives	-	4.43 (.13)	-.01	-.06	.17 ^a	.35 ^b	-.01	-.12	.24 ^b	-					
9. Academic identified goal motives	-	6.53 (.05)	.03	-.06	.06	.17 ^b	.29 ^b	.04	.10	.26 ^a	-				
10. Academic intrinsic goal motives	-	4.53 (.12)	-.02	-.003	-.16 ^a	-.02	-.04	.27 ^b	-.17 ^a	-.15 ^a	.24 ^a	-			
11. Academic to sport goal interference	.76	2.80 (.07)	.05	.05	.04	.12	-.08	-.03	-.07	.02	-.15 ^a	-.07	-		
12. Academic to sport goal facilitation	.65	2.52 (.07)	-.04	-.01	-.16 ^a	-.07	.26 ^b	.24 ^b	-.03	.11	.12	.06	.05	-	
13. Sport to academic goal interference	.73	2.70 (.06)	-.06	-.11	.09	.10	.02	-.13	.11	.10	.08	-.02	.19 ^a	-.03	-
14. Sport to academic goal facilitation	.63	2.62 (.07)	-.16 ^a	.01	.08	.11	.20 ^b	.13	.06	.14	.05	.15 ^a	.11	.58 ^b	.24 ^b

3 *Note:* The goal motives variables were all assessed on a 1-7 scale. The inter-goal interference and facilitation were measured on a 1-5 scale. M = mean, SEM4 = standard error of the mean. ^a $p < 0.05$, ^b $p < 0.01$



1
2



3

4 Figure 1. Mean goal motivation regulations (1A) and mean (\pm SEM) inter-goal interference and
 5 facilitation (1B) across the different profiles. a = significantly different means to other profiles p <
 6 0.05