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FROM THE EDITOR

CONSTRUCT VALIDITY RESEARCH IN *AMD*

Academy of Management Discoveries (*AMD*) was established by the Academy of Management with a mandate to surface phenomena that are poorly captured and explained by existing concepts and theories. As construct validation research falls squarely within this domain, the purpose of this FTE is to communicate the centrality of construct validity research within the broader mission of *AMD*, as well as to detail the type of construct validity research that *Discoveries* is keen to publish, and the criteria that our editors and reviewers typically use when evaluating such manuscripts for potential publication.

SOME BACKGROUND

Certainly no phenomenon can be fully understood until it can be measured, and an understanding of the relationship between it and other constructs is contingent on an understanding of how such latent or unobservable factors are indicated by observable and measurable factors (Edwards, 2003; Schwab, 1980). Research examining the psychometric properties of a measure and the degree to which it represents the construct of interest is typically referred to as construct validity research. However, most so-called construct validity studies in fact incorporate a variety of validity assessments beyond construct validity such as convergent, discriminant, nomological, and (concurrent or predictive) criterion validity.

Like replication research (discussed in an earlier editorial), construct validity research, although touted as critical to our science (Schwab, 1980), also tends to be undervalued and difficult to publish. Indeed, as noted by Edwards (2003: 327), organizational/managerial research "emphasizes relationships among constructs but devotes relatively little attention to relationships between constructs and measures." One explanation for this is that, as some scholars believe, we already have a sufficient number of variables in our collective repertoire to capture most of the key constructs in our theoretical playing field and that our field is already overloaded by overlapping constructs (e.g., between employee engagement, job satisfaction and psychological alienation) (Nimon, Shuck, & Zigarmi, 2016; Lefkowitz & Brigando, 1980). But another explanation may be that straightforward construct validity analyses are viewed as anything but "interesting." Paraphrasing Murray Davis (1971), they are rarely counterintuitive, surprising, and "denying of 'old' truths." Instead, they tend to affirm assumptions and tell us the obvious or what we already think we know—things that Davis suggests are not very interesting.

CONSTRUCT VALIDITY RESEARCH IN *AMD*

So how does *AMD* strike a balance between publishing research on new and/or poorly understood phenomenon and publishing research that is "interesting"? The answer is that with shifts in the nature of work, human relationships, technology, organizations, and organizational environments, there seems to be a never ending flow of new phenomena that we as scholars need to account for and explain and thus need to be able to characterize and measure. The fact that a phenomenon is new and poorly understood is already interesting in that everything we can empirically uncover about it is a "discovery". But even construct validity studies of long-standing phenomena can be interesting according to Davis (1971) if it meets any one of a number of criteria. First, it can be interesting if "(a) what seem to be assorted heterogeneous phenomena are in reality composed of a single element" and (b) "what seems to be a single phenomenon is in reality composed of assorted heterogeneous elements." In addition, it can be interesting when, for example, what is thought to be universalistic/particular with respect to space or time is in fact the opposite. For example, construct validity research is interesting when a phenomenon thought to be stable (changing) is demonstrated to in fact be changing (stable). Accordingly, as in the case of replication research, although *AMD* is open to and seeks to publish construct validity research, such research is more likely to meet the bar for publication in *AMD* when criteria related to the same "three Ms" noted in our earlier FTE on replication, meta-analysis and null findings, namely, *motivation*, *method*, and *meaning*, are met.

MOTIVATION-RELATED CRITERIA

Construct validity research in management can be driven by a variety of forces such as the emergence of some new phenomenon or the emergence of some

new framework for conceptualizing or capturing existing phenomenon. In the case of the former, a new phenomenon can emerge as a function of, among other things, shifts in technology, social norms, or the broader environment within which people and organizations operate. Construct validity research motivated by the emergence of new phenomena should therefore be framed around an explication of these forces, with authors making a compelling argument as to how these forces are driving the phenomena under investigation to be increasingly ubiquitous and/or relevant to a broad set of management scholars and/or practitioners. For example, Edmondson (1999) motivates her study on psychological safety by grounding the concept on (at the time) new, qualitative findings regarding the role of cognition and interpersonal context in organizational and group-level learning, and the tendency of group members to refrain from sharing information, admitting errors, or seeking assistance from their peers. Edmondson argued that although qualitative studies made a strong case that groups vary in interpersonal context and that this variance plays a potentially vital role in shaping group effectiveness, quantitative research was needed to capture the nature of beliefs about interpersonal risk-taking in groups. Similarly, Shipp, Edwards, and Lambert (2009: 1) motivate their conceptualization and analysis of temporal focus by arguing that "the pervasive and universal influence of time is gaining prominence in research on temporal issues pertaining to individuals, groups, and organizations."

In the case of better capturing an existing phenomenon, authors should highlight the conceptual and/or analytical/technical justification for their research. For example, in their award-winning construct validity study published in the inaugural issue of *AMD*, Lee, Koopman, Hollenbeck, Wang, and Lanaj (2015) developed a team description index. Although work teams are not new or emergent phenomena, the lack of consensus in "how to describe and differentiate teams in any standard way," combined with an explanation of how a novel analytical approach (multidimensional scaling) might be leveraged to generate simple, standardized measures provided a strong motivation for the development of the team descriptive index (Lee et al., 2015).

Simply put, the less that is known about the phenomena (i.e., the less consensus regarding its conceptual structure, empirical stability, and overall nature) and the greater its current or potential relevance to management research or practice, the more consistent any construct validity research on that phenomenon is likely to be with the mission of *AMD*. Appropriateness for *AMD* is likely to be heightened not only to the extent that a compelling argument is made regarding the current state of knowledge and relevance but also to the extent that an argument can be made as to (a) its distinctiveness from other related constructs for which measures already exist, (b) why the phenomena has not been noticed until now or, alternatively, why extant conceptual frameworks and measures are lacking, and/or (c) how empirically demonstrated aspects of this construct (e.g., structure and nomological net) are unique or surprising.

METHODOLOGICAL CRITERIA

At its core, construct validity aims to demonstrate that a measure accurately and thoroughly captures its intended construct or phenomena (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). However, as noted by Edwards (2003: 327), "although the notion of construct validity is straightforward, procedures used to assess construct validity are complex and have evolved considerably during the past several decades." As these procedures have been detailed in a number of widely recognized articles and chapters, including those by Schwab (1980), Edwards and Bagozzi (2000), Edwards (2003), and Hinkin (2005), we will not repeat them here. Nevertheless, authors of construct validity research studies submitted to AMD should pay close attention to these procedures and offer the most compelling and comprehensive evidence of validity with respect to each of these recommended procedures. At the very least, this means demonstrating the measure's reliability, stability, and domain coverage (accuracy and consistency in capturing all of the conceptual domain of the target construct), as well as its trait validity (i.e., convergence with other measures ostensibly representing the same or similar constructs, and divergence with other measures capturing different constructs), and nomological validity (associations with measures of other constructs that, according to theory, should be related to it; Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Moreover, authors are encouraged to offer evidence of external validity by demonstrating that they can replicate the dimensional nature of the construct and its nomological net across multiple, theory-relevant samples and contexts using a variety of alternative covariate measures. For example, Lee et al. (2015) validated the Team Descriptive Index across five separate samples including undergraduate students in the USA, MBA students in the USA, employees in a Chinese high tech company, employees in a Chinese transport company, and US executives.

MEANING-RELATED CRITERIA

Construct validity research submitted to AMD is unlikely to be assessed as offering a meaningful contribution if the findings indicate that the target construct is only incrementally distinct from related constructs. Accordingly, authors are encouraged to undertake a thorough review of the literature and offer a compelling argument that discriminant validity has been established from all other measures tapping constructs that in theory are only remotely related. This does not mean that publication is contingent on findings confirming the anticipated structure of the construct or across-the-board distinctions between the proposed measure of the target construct and measures of related constructs. Indeed, *consistent* patterns of unexpected results, as long as they are insightfully explored by the investigator, can offer some of the most important clues into nature of the construct and, as suggested by Davis (1971), are precisely the "stuff" of interest. Moreover, they serve as the raw material for abductive reasoning and, in this case, the specification of criteria for future theorizing about the nature of a phenomena and its relationship with the observable elements around us that might be used to best capture it.

For example, in validating the Team Descriptive Index, Lee et al. (2015) identified a number of intriguing and even counterintuitive relationships. The authors undertook a number of cross-sample sensitivity tests to begin to shed light on why unexpected patterns of relations appeared in one sample but not in another. These analyses were not aimed at supporting any particular hypothesis. Rather, consistent with the abductive logic at the core of most articles that AMD publishes, these analyses were conducted to shed light on *plausible* explanations that might be further developed and then tested in subsequent research. As these authors aptly note, "theoretically driven extensions that further our understanding of these relationships are needed, and we hope that this work will lead to more top-down, formal theoretical work."

Furthermore, from a "discovery" perspective, *impactful* construct validity research also demands that authors infer from the findings other likely construct-related attributes for which we need further research, and/or other related phenomena of which we know little, and how these related constructs might be approached and explored. Whereas other journals might look at such inferences as the overinterpretation of one's findings, for *AMD*, empirically grounded insights—be they theoretical or conceptual—are a core element of our commitment to abduction-based theorizing. The more that authors iterate between previous conceptual and empirical (particularly qualitative) research on the phenomena of interest, and the pattern of results resulting from their investigations in an effort to shed light on the broader conceptual and theoretical implications of their findings, the more likely their article is to meet the meaning-related criterion AMD reviewers are likely to use in evaluating such research.

CONCLUSION

As a journal dedicated to publishing research on new and poorly understood phenomenon, construct validity research plays an important role in the AMD mission, and AMD welcomes and values such research. After all, no matter how interesting a phenomenon may be, until it can be accurately and reliably measured, our ability as scholars to understand such phenomena, explain their origins and demonstrate their implications for management is extremely limited. Although our field has no shortage of overlapping constructs, as new phenomena in management and organizations are constantly emerging, it is our obligation as management scholars to account for them and incorporate them into our knowledgebase. And when it comes time to publishing such research, management scholars should know that the editors of *AMD* view the publication of such research as a core element of our journal's mission.

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