

## Why Learn Latin? Motivation for Learning a Classical Language<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Few studies have examined why people learn classical languages, and none have grounded learners' reasons within theories of motivation for language learning. We conducted interviews with 12 advanced Latin learners and teachers to investigate why they chose to learn this classical language. A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed nine themes. Some themes were consistent with Self-Determination Theory, including "intrinsic interest" (intrinsic motivation), "sense of prestige" (introjected regulation), and "program requirements" (external regulation), whereas other themes paralleled aspects of Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (SEM; e.g., "transferable language benefits" is consistent with the instrumental orientation). Some themes posited by extant motivational models were not evident in the transcripts, or necessitated a reinterpretation of extant constructs (e.g., the SEM's integrative orientation). Other themes that have not been addressed in modern language models pertain specifically to the learning of classical languages like Latin. For example, some participants suggested that learning Latin instills a disciplined or "methodical approach to learning," particularly for people with certain personality characteristics. The results of this study are discussed in terms of contemporary theories' capacity to describe motivation to learn classical languages and the implications of the findings for language pedagogy.

Learning new languages has been argued to be associated with a host of benefits, including cultural enrichment, cognitive development, social and educational advantages, and practical opportunities. Given these desirable outcomes, a significant concern of many language researchers and educators is how best to support learners to invest the time, energy, and dedication necessary to learn a new language. Despite significant research dedicated to the study of language learning motivation, few studies have been conducted concerning

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the motivation of people to learn classical languages. Seeing as there exists a perception that classical languages like Latin and Ancient Greek are no longer widely used, they differ significantly from modern languages and may not necessarily attract the same students that modern languages do. The purpose of this study is to form a classification of reasons why people elect to study one classical language (i.e., Latin) and to consider how this typology corresponds with some current theories concerning motivation to learn modern languages. Our ultimate aim is to extend the discussion of language learning motivation beyond modern languages to the classical languages as well.

### *The Socio-Educational Context of Latin Learning*

At one time, the Latin language was commonly taught in schools. During the 1923-24 school year, more American secondary students (30% of students in grade ten or higher) were enrolled in Latin than in all other foreign language courses combined (American Classical League 16). Today, many individuals view Latin as a “funny sounding, attention-getting, joke language,” and corresponding with this opinion, there has been a significant decrease in the number of Latin courses being offered and the number of students taking those courses, particularly in America (Ball and Ellsworth 77). In their 2011 survey of schools, Pufahl and Rhodes (265) found that, of those American secondary institutions that offered foreign language courses, the number that offered Latin decreased from 20% to 13% between 1997 and 2008. According to a recent report released by the American Councils for International Research (11), this number is now at 8.51%. At the university level, Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin (3) found that in the U.S., 16.2% fewer students took Latin in 2013 than in 2009.

The situation does not differ much outside of the United States. In Europe, an increasing number of countries are seeing fewer schools offering the subject. In Wales, for example, only 11% of secondary schools offered Latin as of 2015, while “teachers [reported] a variety of threats to the sustainable provision of Latin,” primarily cuts to Latin courses in schools (Bracke, Learning Latin 3). Belgium, France, and Malta, too, are witnessing declines in the amount of Latin being offered (Bracke, Bringing Ancient 35). According to Evelien Bracke, the only location where Latin education is not in serious jeopardy is in England, where 25% of secondary schools and 2% of primary schools offer courses and/or programs in this language (Bracke, The Role 2).

With few exceptions, it would thus appear that people are less interested in learning Latin than they used to be.<sup>2</sup> A number of reasons may partially explain this trend; however, the most discernible appears to be perceptions of the overall utility of the language. Students are more likely to pursue activities that produce immediate practical benefits to the exclusion of those that do not (Ordine 94). Unfortunately, courses like Latin, which do not possess readily appreciable positive outcomes, are deemed to be “without practical application” and incur diminished enrollment rates (Bracke and Bradshaw 1).<sup>3</sup> In line with the idea that Latin is of little practical value, even famed classicist Mary Beard (7) expressed how the only reason to learn Latin is to be able to read period texts. Adding to the problem, language and classics programs are being eliminated across North America as universities struggle to obtain funding to support more popular programs, meaning that it is harder now, more than ever, for people who might want to learn the language to enroll in Latin classes (Foderaro; Bradshaw).

### *Studies of Motivation to Learn Latin*

Unfortunately, few studies have explored Latin learners’ rationales for studying the language. A pair of studies from the 1920s conducted by Grise and Swan examined motivation to learn Latin among fourth-year Latin learners at the high school level and fifth-year learners in university (as cited in the American Classical League [ACL] 73-75). Some of the more common answers reported by respondents included Latin being a requirement for college admission, perceived benefits of transferring linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge to English and other modern languages, genuine enjoyment of the language, and perceived cognitive benefits associated with learning Latin. More recently, a large-scale investigation named the National Latin Survey (NLS; Goodman), was conducted with the goal of discerning what motivates middle and high school students and teachers to learn and/or teach Latin. The results from over 10,000 students revealed that the most frequently held reasons included, “learn vocab for SATs” (29.90% agree; 47.33% strongly

2 This downward trend is not specific to Latin, though. According to the Modern Language Association, over 650 foreign language courses were cut between 2013 and 2016 (Johnson).

3Although not evident in the themes for motivation, which will be described below, many of our participants claimed that Latin was “useless” as well. Take participant I, for example, who said, “If I’d first gone in and I only wanted to learn things if [they] had a practical implication, I probably wouldn’t have done Latin.”

agree,) “learn how to translate well” (40.31% agree; 36.24% strongly agree), and “improve my English skills” (34.49% agree; 41.64% strongly agree). Taken together, the results from these studies are similar in that they identify a desire to improve language skills, but differ in other respects (e.g., the NLS did not include an item for cognitive benefits, which was one of the more commonly cited responses in the Swan and Grise studies; ACL 73-75). While these studies are insightful, they do, however, have several limitations.

An essential methodological limitation of the previous investigations of Latin motivation is that these studies have provided minimal opportunities for respondents to freely express their reasons for learning Latin; such open-ended questions are important for avoiding assumptions about respondents’ observations and experiences and thereby tapping information that could otherwise go missing (O’Cathain and Thomas 2). Seeing as little is known thus far about Latin motivation, an important first step before creating closed-ended questionnaire items is to ask open-ended questions that can offer a broad picture of diverse perspectives. Unfortunately, the previously mentioned studies only included a small number of open-ended questions. For example, the NLS was primarily built around questions with rating-scale response options; although it did possess a short space for participants to report additional, not-otherwise mentioned motivations, the results of this question have not been released. In addition, the studies cited in the American Classical League (73-75) report are merely referred to as being based on “questionnaires.” One study did use an open-ended question to explore motivation to learn Latin, though. Hahn (34) interviewed the parents of home-schooled children enrolled in Latin and included an item on motivation. Parents were asked, “Why did you include Latin in your homeschool?” Commonly provided answers included: “English grammar” (146 mentions by participants), “vocabulary” (145 mentions), and “logic/critical thinking” (110 mentions). Although these parent-teacher insights are relevant, this study did not directly ask the learners their motives.

The other important limitation of these studies is that they have primarily focused on lower to intermediate-level learners, excluding those advanced-level learners like Latin instructors who engage with Latin regularly. The NLS, for example, only focused on Latin learners in grade school (Goodman). Although the Grise (ACL 73-74) and Swan (ACL 74-75) studies did focus on intermediate-level Latin learners (i.e., those who had been learning the language for four and five years, respectively), no study has explored the motivations

of advanced-level Latin learners.<sup>4</sup> This limited focus on lower-level learners is unfortunate because advanced, or “good language learners,” including those who become teachers, can provide insights into particular personal and social dynamics that contribute to successful language learning. According to Naiman et al., “the good language learner is someone who actively involves himself [sic] in the language learning process, either right from the beginning or later; he also finds ways to overcome obstacles, whether linguistic, affective or environmental; he monitors his performance; he studies, practices, and involves himself in communication” (39). We might also expect that advanced learners are more likely to be vested in Latin and, therefore, will possibly exhibit different and/or more diverse reason(s) to learn Latin than lower-level students. Given that the advanced Latin learners in this study are successful, they can be described as “good language learners.” Thus, the present study aims to fill a gap in the research literature on Latin learning motivation by attending to the motivation of advanced learners.

In sum, little is known about what motivates people to learn Latin; few studies have delved into this issue. Given the limitations of previous research, the first purpose of this study is to formulate a typology of some of the reasons why people, particularly advanced learners of Latin, enroll in Latin courses. The method consists of open-ended questions, the answers to which provide qualitative data (i.e., textual, rather than numeric). The second goal of this study is to contextualize Latin motivation within the theoretical frameworks of language learning motivation. Thus, it is necessary to describe some of the more popular theories of language learning motivation that could be applied in the Latin context.

### *Contemporary Theories of Language Learning Motivation*

Although little research exists on motivation to learn Latin, a sizeable literature does exist concerning learning modern languages. Much of this research is informed by one of four theoretical frameworks (McEwon et al. 20). The longest established framework, Gardner’s Socio-Educational Model (SEM) of language learning, maintains that motivation is a complex construct, including the intensity of desire and effort one puts into learning the language and an orientation, which is the reason one desires to learn the language (Gardner). Although Gardner points out that there can be many orientations (see Clément and Kruidenier), two orientations have been the focus of much research. The

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<sup>4</sup> Although the NLS did survey teachers, these results have yet to be released.

instrumental orientation refers to reasons that pertain to pragmatic ends, such as obtaining a course grade or facilitating travel. The integrative orientation refers to an “openness to other cultural groups in general and a willingness or ability to adopt features of the other language group” (Gardner 85); an individual who exhibits an integrative orientation is one who wishes to learn a language in order to interact and possibly identify with the target language group (Masgoret and Gardner 126-127). According to the SEM, the orientation(s) of the learner, alongside attitudes towards the learning situation, is an essential predictor of the intensity of effort the learner will invest in learning, and ultimately linguistic outcomes (MacIntyre et al. 132).

Other theories, particularly Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan and Deci), classify orientations as forms of regulation that vary in the extent to which the reason for engaging in the activity originates from the person’s interests and/or value system or originates from the circumstances or other people who impose the activity on the learner. This broad distinction is referred to as intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation. A person who is intrinsically motivated finds the activity inherently interesting and satisfying, whereas an extrinsically motivated person carries out an activity to get some benefit or avoid a “punishment” from it (Ryan and Deci 55). Furthermore, extrinsic motivation is described on a continuum from regulation by other people or the circumstances (“external”), to self-imposed demands to meet internalized and/or socio-normative obligations (“introjected”), to voluntarily choosing to learn the language to achieve valued ends (“identified”), to an “integrated” orientation, in which the activity is interwoven in the person’s values and sense of self. Over the last 20 years, Noels and her colleagues have demonstrated how these forms of motivation pertain to effort and persistence in learning a new language (Noels et al., *Why Are You* 57-58).

SDT maintains that there are three fundamental psychological needs that must be met to sustain intrinsic motivation and support self-determined extrinsic motivation (i.e., identified and integrated regulations; Ryan and Deci 57). These needs include: autonomy, the perceived ability to determine one’s activities and behaviors; relatedness, a perceived social connection to others; and competence, the perceived ability to master challenges in a given domain. Based on the degree to which these needs are satisfied, the quality and intensity of motivation for an activity may differ. For example, Ryan and Deci (58) claim that the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are vital for people to feel

intrinsic motivation towards an activity (i.e., activities that people engage in because they are genuinely interested in them and find them rewarding), or to integrate extrinsically motivated behaviors into the self-concept.

Other theories, particularly those developed in the context of learning of English as a second or foreign language, have focused on the importance of imagined selves and communities. The L2 (second language) motivational self-system model, as proposed by Dörnyei, differentiates between the ideal- and ought-L2 selves (Dörnyei 13). The former refers to the language capabilities that an individual would like to have in an ideal world, whereas the latter refers to what language traits an individual feels he/she ought to have as specified by general expectancies. According to Dörnyei (13-14), “the ideal sense has usually been interpreted in the literature as the individual’s own vision for him/herself, while the ought self [describes] someone else’s vision for the individual.” By imagining a future ideal self that includes knowing and using a second language, an individual may be motivated to engage in second language learning. Coming from a different theoretical background, Norton (8) emphasizes the importance of an imagined community to which the language learner can belong, one that merits the learners’ investment of time and energy. Pavlenko and Norton (669) assert that “language learners’ actual and desired memberships in imagined communities affect their learning trajectories, influencing their agency, motivation, investment, and resistance in the learning of English.”

These four theories have usefully guided a good deal of research on language learning motivation. However, their utility in the Latin context may not be readily evident. For instance, the notion of an integrative orientation, in which one desires contact with the target language community, may not be relevant in the case of classical languages, where the target language community ceased to exist hundreds of years ago (except in some religious, academic, or aficionado circles). It may be more appropriate to frame orientations for learning a classical language in terms of the extent to which the reason is controlled by other people or determined voluntarily by the learner, as in SDT. Learners might envision themselves as fluent users of Latin; however, it is unclear what such an ideal-self means in the context of a language that has no living community. With this being said, it is also possible that a community of Latin learners, comprised of those who strongly identify with the Latin language, does exist. It is also possible that none of these frameworks can adequately describe Latin learners’ experiences, and a new framework,

or at least a modified framework, specific to classical languages is necessary. Importantly, these four theories are each quite complex, incorporating aspects of the social context, the learning situation, intergroup dynamics, and developmental processes. In contrast, the focus of this study concerns one aspect of motivation, namely the reasons, or orientations, for why students learn Latin.

### *Purpose*

The primary purpose of this study is to extend the understanding of the diverse reasons that people choose to learn Latin. Accordingly, we employed a semi-structured interview so that participants would have the opportunity to express their reasons and not feel compelled to answer in line with predetermined options. In order to extend findings from previous studies, this study also focused on high-level Latin learners. This study was conducted in a Canadian context.

### *Method Approach*

Due to the limited information on the issue at hand, a thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes or categories of responses, based on dialogue with participants. This analysis was conducted in accordance with the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (see Table 1; Braun and Clarke 87), although an extra step was added at the end, during which participants were asked to review the transcripts of their interviews and the manuscript to ensure that their responses were satisfactorily coded and discussed.



*Table 1: Adaptation of Braun and Clarke's Guide to Thematic Analysis*

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarize oneself with the data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generate initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Search for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Review themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Define and name themes	On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Produce the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.
7. Review with respondents	Checking with participants to ensure that they feel their responses have been accurately represented.

### *Participants and Procedure*

Twelve participants were recruited via snowball sampling<sup>5</sup> (66.7% male,  $M_{age} = 39.58$ ,  $SD_{age} = 4.11$ ; nine of the participants were Caucasian). In order to ensure that as many relevant themes as possible were elicited, participants were recruited until saturation, which is defined as “the point at which the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data” (Dworkin 1319). Previous research has found that if the group is fairly homogeneous, data saturation is usually obtainable within the first 12 participants (Guest et al. 79).

All of the participants had graduated with or were currently enrolled in postsecondary degree programs. As the focus of this study was on more advanced Latin learners, only people who had at least two years of experience studying Latin in a formal language course were invited to participate. The mean age at which the participants started learning Latin was 15.08 years ( $SD = 3.23$ ). Most started to learn Latin when they enrolled in a formal course, but two of the participants initially taught themselves the language before enrolling in courses. A majority of participants learned Latin at a public institution (six of the ten participants who responded to this question), and of those who were instructors, most taught at public institutions (all but two, who taught at private schools). All of the participants had at least two full academic years of experience learning/using Latin, and the average number of Latin courses taken was 13.27 ( $SD = 10.49$ , min = 2, max = 30,  $N = 11$ ; one participant did not respond to this question and simply wrote “countless” where space was provided). Accordingly, the sample can be said to consist of advanced Latin learners.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A classics professor who was an acquaintance of one of the authors was contacted and provided contact information for other potential participants. All other participants were recruited through acquaintances of the research team. Only participants who were considered advanced-level Latin learners were selected. As a minimum, this meant that the participant had taken at least two full-year Latin courses in total.

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this study, a Latin learner is defined as someone who has undertaken formal Latin education, primarily through formal courses in school. There is considerable debate over whether and where to draw the line between a language “learner” and “user”; for the present purposes we have used only the term “learner,” because virtually everyone learns Latin after their native language.

The majority reported that, as students, they were exposed to the grammar-translation method of teaching Latin, although some also learned using a combination of grammar-translation and other methods like the Cambridge and living Latin methods. Of those who were Latin instructors, most also taught using the grammar-translation method, although some tried to incorporate elements of the living Latin approach. To some extent, this emphasis on grammar-translation approaches might be due to the fact that these advanced-level learners had been learning Latin for a relatively long period of time; they were more likely to be products of the traditional grammar-translation approach rather than contemporary methods such as the living Latin approach.

At the time of the interviews, seven of the participants were currently engaged with the Latin language in some capacity. The sample consisted of three former Latin students at the high school level who were no longer taking Latin, four current university Latin instructors, two university professors who did not teach Latin but who used it for their own research (i.e., a history and a philosophy professor), and three high school Latin teachers, of which only one was still working at a school that offered Latin at the time of the study.

### *Materials and Procedure*

Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted in a quiet public locale convenient for the respondent. General topics of inquiry and potential follow-up questions were prepared and introduced by the first author, but otherwise the conversation was directed by the participant, with the exception that the interviewer tried to keep the conversation in line with the research interests (see Appendix A for a list of the main guiding questions). General topics of inquiry were based on previous research (i.e., past studies on Latin motivation such as the NLS), pilot testing questions,<sup>7</sup> and discussion among the researchers. The interview script included questions concerning initial motivation for and expectations about learning Latin, experiences learning Latin, perceptions of Latin, continued motivation for learning Latin, and (in the case of Latin instructors) experiences teaching Latin. While there is a breadth of potential questions that the researchers could have asked, the primary purpose of this study was to get a sense of participants' reasons for learning the language, and questions were selected with this goal in mind. The main focus of the interview was on participants' personal experiences learning Latin, but was

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<sup>7</sup> Pilot testing consisted of close-ended questionnaires given to 33 university-level Latin learners.

not limited to just this perspective; participants were also asked why anyone else they knew was studying Latin and, in the case of teachers, why their students were studying the language. Upon arriving at the designated meeting location, participants were reminded of the purpose of the study and asked for permission to record the contents of the interview for later transcription. At this point, participants filled out the demographic questionnaire. The interview itself took an hour to complete. Upon completion of the interviews, participants were debriefed, thanked for their time, and given an honorarium.

### *Data Analysis*

During the interview process, notes were made by the first author after each interview in order to both direct future interviews and to track any noticeable initial trends in the interview. Upon completion of the interviews, the researchers transcribed the recordings for easier analysis. The researchers then closely read over all of the transcriptions and referred to the interview notes, thereby ensuring full immersion in the data (Braun and Clarke 87). Transcriptions were returned to participants later to ensure that participants felt that the transcriptions were accurate representations of themselves; the same was done with the manuscript itself. Ten participants agreed to review the documents; no one suggested substantive revisions.

Because the main goal of this study was to identify a diversity of reasons for learning Latin, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The goal of this analysis was to identify key themes (i.e., general overarching categories that are representative of the differing responses to a research question) pertaining to the participants' rationales for studying Latin, as well as other people's reasons, if known, in the transcriptions. Themes were not determined by the frequency with which a particular response occurred (i.e., a response that is seldom found may be nonetheless considered a theme; a frequently occurring response need not be considered a theme), but rather by the distinctiveness of the response (Joffe and Yardley 67). It is also important to note that themes do not simply emerge from the data; instead, they "must be actively sought out" (Taylor and Ussher 310). That is to say, in thematic analysis, the researchers create the themes. Here, thematic analysis was conducted following an adaptation of the aforementioned outline provided by Braun and Clarke (87).

After the researchers had fully immersed themselves in the data, initial codes were generated from the transcriptions using NVivo. Codes, in essence, are what make themes and can best be described as labels (Tuckett 81). Here, each code provided a specific snapshot of a reason why participants chose to learn Latin (e.g., “interest in stories and myth,” “good at languages,” and “unique as language”). On their own, each code does tell somewhat of a story, but it is not until they are combined with similar codes into larger themes that a true underlying rationale emerges. Thus, upon creating codes, they were combined to establish themes indicative of more all-encompassing motives for learning Latin. These themes were then assessed and reworked until a definitive picture emerged, at which point themes were given names. All of the researchers were involved in the aforementioned process of generating codes and themes; this predominantly involved individual readings of the transcriptions and larger group discussions.

### ***Findings***

The thematic analysis yielded nine different themes that we feel encompass the different motives reported by participants: “intrinsic interest,” “transferable language benefits,” “mastery and achievement,” “methodical approach to learning,” “interest in languages,” “program requirements,” “unique aspects of Latin,” “learning things for own sake,” and “sense of prestige.” Again, it is important to note that these themes were not formulated with the frequency of occurrence in mind; rather, themes were dictated depending on whether or not they offered a rationale for why participants studied Latin that differed from the other themes (see Table 2 for a summary of which participants referenced which themes). The following categories are ordered such that themes that were referenced by more participants come before those that were referenced by fewer participants (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Themes cited across participants. The number in parentheses indicates the number of participants who cited that particular theme.**

Theme (Total Number of Participants who Referenced a Given Theme)	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
Intrinsic Interest (12)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Transferable Language Benefits (12)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mastery and Achievement (11)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Methodical Approach to Learning (11)	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Interest in Languages (10)	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Program Requirement (9)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X
Unique Aspects of Language (9)	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X
Learning Things for Own Sake (8)	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		
Sense of Prestige (7)		X	X	X			X	X		X	X	

### *Intrinsic Interest*

The first theme, expressed by all participants, entailed a genuine interest in the content covered in the Latin course. For some participants, interest in the content took the form of an interest in the Latin language itself.

*Everyone in the class, myself included, was there because [they] wanted to be. Because we actually wanted to study Latin. (IX)*

*Overall, just hearing the word Latin releases endorphins for me....  
So Latin in a way is like a drug. (XI)*

Other responses did not so much indicate an interest in Latin; rather, they communicated an interest in various aspects of the closely associated Roman culture from which the language originates (e.g., mythology and stories, history, etc.).

*So what was I interested in?... Ancient mythology in general. (VII)*

*In studying it, I could also learn a lot more about ancient Rome.  
(IX)*

*Usually there would be some aspect of ancient culture that had really kind of gotten them hooked. (VII)*

According to some of the participants, interest in Roman culture was such a profoundly motivating reason that they were willing to continue learning Latin despite poor performance in previous courses.

*Some who weren't that proficient in language or Latin and... didn't really get a high mark... [enjoyed] the class because the class does not only focus on Latin... but also focuses on the Roman culture, Roman mythology, and Roman history. (XI)*

Expanding upon the notion of interest in Latin, a handful of participants reported that learning Latin served as a vehicle through which they could feel a closer connection with the people of ancient Rome. At its basis, this desire seemed to stem from the same underlying interest in the subject matter that motivated other participants (i.e., interest in ancient Rome), albeit expressed differently.

*I thought... as I was studying the language, I was getting more at the air these people breathed. It's like digging my fingers in the soil that they were walking on, or breathing the same air they were breathing.... It was as close as I could get to touching them without touching buildings they'd erected. And I didn't know how to get any closer. (II)*

*In a way, by learning Latin, [it] transported me.... In a strange way learning Latin allowed me to time travel. (XI)*

### **Transferable Language Benefits**

All participants discussed, to some extent, how studying Latin produces transferable benefits in terms of using other languages. That is to say, by learning Latin, one can improve one's ability in a different language without focusing one's efforts on that second language. This propensity should not come as a surprise given Latin's position as a parent tongue for many contemporary languages. It is important to note, however, that not all participants expressed language benefits as an initial motivator to learn the language; whereas some interviewees anticipated language-related outcomes, others discovered (or rationalized) this potential after already beginning to learn Latin.

The first specific area where participants reported experiencing transferable benefits was in terms of the Romance languages, which are the direct offspring of Latin.

*Latin's perceived as a foundational language and is a foundational language for a lot of Romance languages. (I)*

*It does also help you learn French, Spanish, and Italian. (VII)  
I've never studied Italian, but I can read an Italian newspaper*



*without too much trouble. It's just because, you know, it's so similar to Latin. (IX)*

Although not as directly related to Latin as the Romance languages, some interviewees also expressed how Latin shares a noteworthy connection with German that makes the language easier to learn should one have a background in Latin. Specifically, both languages use case endings to specify the different usages of nouns (i.e., nominative, vocative, accusative, genitive, dative, and ablative).

*When I took a semester of German, it didn't scare me because I was like, oh it declines just like Latin. Aha. (X)*

*When we got to the part about case endings in German... we didn't spend any time getting hung up... because we dealt with it thousands of times in Latin before. (II)*

Yet another transferable language benefit reported by participants pertains to English, which derives a majority of its vocabulary from Latin (Holmes and Keffer 47). Most of the participants who focused on transfer effects to English emphasized improved vocabulary and a better understanding of grammar rules.

*Latin itself helps improve your grammar because you need a very strong grammar base for Latin. (XI)*

*I tell my students when you learn Latin you acquire a superpower because you come across words you've never seen before, but because you know the prefixes and the different roots and stems... you can figure out the meaning of many words in English. (XI)*

*It makes you understand grammar in the abstract. It's good for English vocabulary building. (VI)*

*With the lower emphasis on fundamentals of grammar in a lot of English teaching these days... we end up just teaching students what's the subject of the sentence, what's the object of the sentence... how do parts of speech work. (VII)*

Finally, a handful of interviewees discussed how their decision to enroll in Latin was motivated by their desire to enter the medical field; although, not necessarily the case with new vocabulary today, a substantial quantity of words utilized in medicine were coined with Latin in mind (e.g., the 1886 English word neologism “contraception” derives its origin from the Latin verb “contra,” to be against or opposed to; Banay 20; Wulff 187). Unlike the other transferable benefits within this theme, which did not always serve to initially motivate people to learn the language, participants who mentioned improved medical vocabulary cited it as a primary reason why they studied Latin in the first place.

*When I'm reading anatomy or more medical textbooks... I can understand where the English word comes from. I can understand the Latin names or the classifications. (V)*

*It will help you... when you're studying sciences, when you study medicine, when you study law. All these have words and expressions directly from Latin. (XI)*

*You know your parents want you to be doctors. You know what doctors can use? Latin. (X)*

### ***Mastery and Achievement***

Most participants reported scoring among the top students in their Latin classes; this academic success in Latin encouraged them to pursue further study.

*By... the first year I was in university, I could outtalk my instructors in Latin grammar. (VI)*

*I was very good. I was one of the best Latin students in that course.... That's who ends up your Latin teacher, right. (VII)*

A number of the instructor-participants took this a step further by explaining how in their experience as teachers, the students who are more likely to continue taking Latin beyond the introductory course(s), tend to be those who obtain higher grades.

*It tends to be the ones who are really good at it and enjoy it [who continue taking Latin]. (XII)*

*Generally, if they have time in their program and, especially, if they get really good grades in Latin 101, they want more. Those A's are a mighty carrot. (III)*

One interviewee also noted how he was inspired to learn Latin, in part, because of a previously discovered aptitude for language learning, which differs from the above instance of achievement in that, here, competence in a specific domain made one want to expand their engagement to a different, but related activity.

*I had done quite well in [Ancient] Greek, so I expected similar in Latin. (XII)*

More generally, participants expressed how overall language competence can lead to higher levels of achievement in Latin, or to a greater liking for the language.

*I think... people... [who] were good at French liked it. (II)*

*You need to have the combination of intrinsic interest in the subject matter with a certain amount of language ability. (VII)*

*It's pretty easy to tell the kind of people who have a real knack for it.... Some people just are good at this kind of thing and some people aren't. (VI)*

While many participants claimed that achievement served as a motivating factor to learn Latin, one participant demonstrated how success may not necessarily be the most important factor based on their persistence in Latin study after initial failure.

*I took Latin in my first year and failed it miserably.... But I was stubborn and so I took it again the next year. So I retook first year Latin as a night class and did very well. Got an A. (X)*

### ***Methodical Approach to Learning***

Traditionally, Latin study does not include much of an oral component; instead, language learners focus more on reading and translation. Regardless of whether this practice is true of contemporary pedagogy, it makes sense that individuals who believed that they would exhibit aptness for Latin might demonstrate a greater interest in and the ability for the language. In line with this reasoning, multiple participants referenced how Latin favors those who have aptness for memorization.

*I think it's a fairly structured method with a lot of memorization of grammar. (IV)*

*People who could memorize liked it. (II)*

A number of participants also referenced how people with a mathematical or scientific approach to learning tended to excel in the language. What exactly defines a “mathematical thinker” is unclear, but participants commonly described such people, quite literally, as those who are strong in the math and sciences. In part, the notion that mathematical thinkers tend to do well in Latin seemed to come about because participants learned Latin through the grammar-translation approach; whether active Latin learners would make similar assertions remains unclear.

*I'm in mathematics, so that's just kind of the way I like to think about things. Start from the foundation and build up.... It's an expression. (I)*

*The ones that did very well and the ones that continued [learning the language] tended to be really mathematical thinkers.... If someone was finding the beauty and art in math, they were finding the beauty and art in playing with Latin. (X)*

Further evidence for specific processes that are involved in the study of Latin comes from participant responses in which they likened reading the language to solving a puzzle. In the context provided by these participants, Latin is considered a challenge that one engages in—this notion, in itself, might be reason enough to learn the language.

*It's like putting together a puzzle. (VIII)*

*It's almost like doing a jigsaw puzzle where things fall into place in a very organized sort of way. (III)*

*It's more of a... puzzle to be solved or a challenge to be met. (IV)*

Extending the idea of Latin as a challenge, a small number of participants also mentioned how studying the language is beneficial for the mind, primarily because it is so difficult.

*I didn't have any clear goals for it aside from just sort of a general kind of mental calisthenics. Exercising the brain. I think learning any language is really good for that, but particularly when it's something [where] the structure's quite different. (X)*

*It helps create a sense of discipline when it comes to studying because you need to be disciplined in order to study Latin. (XI)*

### **Interest in Languages**

A number of participants discussed how a general interest in languages spurred on their decision to learn Latin—all participants reported having studied at least two other

languages other than English (LOEs; including other “dead languages;” i.e., Ancient Greek;  $M=3.25$ ,  $SD=.97$ ). While this theme, like the aforementioned category, “intrinsic interest”, does involve interest, the two were deemed to be separate motivational orientations; the first focused on Latin-specific interest, whereas participants who expressed this theme cited a more general fascination that encompassed Latin.

*I learn languages as a hobby. So I've taught myself any number of languages that I can read. (VI)*

*I've always loved languages. I've loved etymology since I was a kid. And I like seeing the patterns in the language. (II)*

*I think it was just a fascination I've always had with words and with language in English. (IX)*

### **Program Requirements**

This theme highlights the fact that people learn Latin on account of school requirements, which was the case for many of the interviewees, albeit participants' experiences differed in the degree to which the language, itself, was mandatory. At one extreme, as expressed by both students and teachers, Latin is a required course at some junior high schools and high schools.

*All students... have to take an introductory course at least and are very much encouraged to take Latin 20. (V)*

*I was actually made to take it because it was part of our curriculum. So I didn't really have much choice in the matter. (VIII)*

Transitioning to a university setting, participants no longer stated that Latin was a requirement for all students. Rather, the language may be compulsory depending on what major, minor, etc. a student has declared (e.g., classics).

*In the second year of my university career I declared a major in classics and Latin was one of the requirements for the completion of that degree. (XII)*

*I had a Master of Arts in classics.... So I needed... three or four years of Latin and [Ancient] Greek. (II)*

Additionally, for students in select programs that use Latin in some capacity (e.g., theology), taking a course(s) in the language may not necessarily be required, but may still be considered advantageous.

*I get a fair number of theology students.... Latin is a pretty standard thing to do if you're a Catholic seminary student. (III)*

Furthermore, according to some of the university-level instructor-participants, students also enrolled in post-secondary Latin courses in order to fulfill their various program distribution requirements. For instance, certain students are/were required to take an LOE from a list of languages, including Latin. While program requirements certainly play a significant role in terms of motivating students to take a language, it is also evident that additional motivating factors must come into play in order for a student to choose Latin from a predetermined list of potential courses. To this extent, perhaps “program requirements” does not serve as a standalone motivation for learning Latin. As a note, “program requirements” are composed of both Latin language requirements and LOE requirements on account of their similarity.

*I was just registered as a BA, so [I] needed six [language] credits. (X)*

*There is the language other than English component.... Perhaps they needed an LOE. (III)*

### **Unique Aspects of Latin**

Interviewees discussed how Latin has an appeal in that it is unique compared to other modern LOEs. It is this uniqueness, in its various forms, that compels some people to

study the language. One such distinctive aspect, which several participants referenced, was the flexibility associated with word order in Latin. For example, the phrase, “the teacher teaches the students” can be written many ways that are functionally equivalent: “magistra docet discipulos,” or “discipulos magistra docet.”

*It's a passage... around the fall of Troy when snakes are coming out of the water and Virgil describes the snakes using... more 'S' sounds. And [it's] like serpentine in the passage.... Independent word order is something that English doesn't have. (I)*

*I like the fact that it's an inflected language and you can move words around in a sentence for rhetorical emphasis.... In English, you know, we have a certain fairly fixed word order and so on, but you actually do neat things in Latin. (IX)*

At the same time, Latin is a language that adheres to a relatively strict set of rules, with few exceptions (e.g., there are few irregular verbs that do not follow one of the main conjugation patterns). Some participants found this regularity to be an appealing facet of the language.

*I like the fact that it's really structured. That's how I like thinking about things. To me, the language makes sense. (I)*

*I like the fact that the pronunciation is uniform. In English we have so many kinds of irregular pronunciations and rules. You couldn't expect to know [them] as a new learner. (II)*

For all of the language's differences, though, there is one idiosyncrasy that stands out among the rest: Latin is commonly perceived as being a “dead language” and, as such, there is a belief that there is typically no spoken component associated with it (see Coffee; Gascoyne; Hunt; Rasmussen for a discussion of oral Latin instruction). For students, especially those who do not enjoy speaking in class, this can be particularly attractive.

*Latin is great because, in general, you don't do little dialogues, and skits, and play acting. How do I go to the drugstore and buy head medication? (III)*



*The thought is amongst classicists that Latin is appealing precisely because [the students] don't have to speak it.... Some students hate that kind of thing... and don't want to be involved in that kind of stuff. (VI)*

*There are a number... who look at Latin who realize it's a dead language. I won't have to talk in class. (XII)*

### **Learning Things for Their Own Sake**

Participants who expressed this theme were similar in that they placed significant value on learning and education itself. In other words, a topic that one studies does not need to serve a greater purpose; studying Latin for the sake of studying Latin is a legitimate motivation.

*I think studying for its own sake is the most valid thing. Anything for its own sake is the most valid thing a person can do.... There's a satisfying feeling in knowing what something means and not being ignorant about it. (II)*

*I consider learning things in general to be important for me. Like as an important part of my identity. And I consider Latin to be a subset of that. An important aspect of a good education. (I)*

*The value in learning Latin is learning Latin. (X)*

In some instances, participants attributed the idea of learning something for the sake of learning to those of a more intellectual background. Included under this category are those who become Latin/classics professors in order to continue working with that which they enjoy (i.e., Latin and/or the Roman culture).

*You have an intellectual background that puts Latin and education above some, say, sports options.... People that know Latin are gonna be of a more intellectual scholarly disposition than people that don't. (V)*

*It's the kind of thing that you do if you are a typical academic aspiring type.... There aren't a whole lot of obvious practical things that you do with Latin, so I think you get a lot more people who are in it for the life of the mind.... Most of the people in my Latin and Greek classes wanted to be academics.... If you really love it, you want to do more. And that means grad school. (III)*

### ***Sense of Prestige***

The final theme that was created from the transcripts explains how people learn Latin because of the sense of prestige associated with it.

*They also saw it in a way as being a little bit prestigious.... 'I know Latin, oh.' (X)*

While seven of the participants referred to this notion, few (three) identified it as a motivator for themselves, personally; for the rest of the interviewees who addressed this issue, the prestige associated with Latin was attributed to other individuals, either generally or in specific. Regardless of who the speaker was, he/she expressed similar ideas in terms of where this prestige stems. Firstly, participants referenced the small number of Latin learners in contemporary society and the relative difficulty of actually finding a place to learn the language.

*The seeds are there for that kind of idea that if fewer people than before do it, then maybe it makes someone a better person. (II)*

*It's a language that very few people speak. And it creates a sense of wonder—the fact that I'm one of the chosen ones... to speak a language that nobody else [speaks]. You become a member of the private club when you learn Latin. (XI)*

*I would say [the people who know Latin would] be high status in the sense that it's not really offered everywhere. (VIII)*

Secondly, interviewees expressed how Latin is associated with higher levels of education, and that being more educated is associated with belonging to a higher social class.

*They were all people who had money and who were... cultivated in various ways.... They all knew some [Latin].... I think it was just considered a good idea to study Latin because it was part of what educated people were supposed to know. (IV)*

Thirdly, participants associated knowing Latin with belonging to a high-status group (i.e., someone who studies Latin either wants to associate him/herself with high-status people, or he/she already belongs to a perceived “upper class” and feels compelled to learn the language). Several individuals further extended this notion by identifying racial trends in the enrollment rates of Latin classes.

*We had a lot of prominent people in the class. Or children of prominent people, rather. (IV)*

*No, I wouldn't say it was terribly diverse.... It is still an upper middle-class Anglo-Saxony kind of pursuit. (III)*

*It's got that... Cambridge, Oxford kind of flair to it.... You do see it as kind of like an old White dude... thing, in a way where it's sorta tapping into that old school social hierarchy nobility kinda stuff. (X)*

Also worth noting, some participants (one of whom studied Latin in the United Kingdom) expressed how the language is connected with a higher level of education and the upper class more so in Britain and Europe than elsewhere.

*It is, furthermore, a language that was used—and continues, to some extent, to be used—as a marker [of] class privilege and... in general, a hierarchical society all over Europe. (VII)*

*The Brit education, for a long time, emphasized Latin and Greek, for partly arbitrary cultural reasons, to a huge degree.... If you wanted to get into good secondary schools, knowing Latin and [Ancient] Greek was important.... There certainly is a perception in Britain that knowing Latin is a part of class and privilege. (VII)*

Directly contrasting the idea that Latin is a language studied for the purpose of prestige, some participants claimed that through learning Latin, they sought to enter/remain in groups of like-minded “cool” people.

*I thought, ‘this is fun. This is what cool nerdy people do....’ Somebody who likes obscure things. Somebody who has interests about topics that are not what everybody on every street corner is fond of. (III)*

*I felt a kind of kinship with them I guess because it seems like a very rare thing now for anyone to be interested in. (II)*

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore advanced-level learners’ motivations to learn Latin. A qualitative method involving extensive, open-ended interview questions was employed in order to elicit in-depth responses about participants’ experiences and rationales for learning Latin. Thematic analysis of the interviews revealed nine themes or categories that represent different reasons for learning the language. The themes included motifs that have already been identified in previous research on motivation for learning classical and modern languages. They also included themes that have not been identified in previous research, pointing to ways in which classical language learning can inform modern language learning. This discussion begins with an overview of these themes, followed by a consideration of the study’s limitations and future research directions, and ends with some implications for teaching classical and modern languages.

Studies on motivation to learn Latin have identified numerous reasons why people choose to learn the language, and the respondents in the investigation at hand also articulated

some of these reasons. The most commonly cited theme in this study, and one that has been found in every study of Latin motivation thus far, is the theme called “intrinsic interest.” This theme is indicative of one who has an interest in Latin itself or in the history and culture associated with learning Latin. The process of learning the language (and/or about the culture) is invigorating and satisfying, in and of itself. Previous investigations have yielded similar results. For instance, both Grise and Swan found that one of the most common reasons for learning Latin was because students liked the language, especially specific authors, while the NLS found some rationales for enrolling in Latin that also expressed enjoyment in learning the language, including “Latin is just awesome” and “I like ancient mythology” (ACL 73-75; Goodman). In investigations of modern languages, this theme is also commonly described as intrinsic motivation (Noels et al., *The Development*) or as positive attitudes towards learning the language (Noels et al., *Perceptions of Teachers’ 31*). Similar to this theme, we also created a theme called “interest in languages.”

Another theme identified in previous research is “transferable language benefits”, reflecting the notion that knowledge of Latin can facilitate the acquisition of modern languages that are derived from Latin, including specialized vocabulary in English. This theme corresponds with the potential pragmatic gains characterized by the instrumental orientation in the SEM (Gardner 12). It also corresponds with identified regulation in SDT; that is, the form of regulation in which learning a language facilitates obtaining a personally valued goal. For instance, we found participants who expressed how, by learning Latin, they might more easily learn medical terminology, which might assist them in a valued career in that field. Whereas other studies usually differentiate between subtypes of this orientation (Rosenbaum 288-291), we have chosen to combine benefits to English, benefits to LOEs, and learning Latin to learn specialized terminology all under one umbrella term because they all speak to the common desire to attain a valued, personal goal (in this case, greater linguistic knowledge) through learning Latin.

In line with past research, participants also cited the theme of meeting “program requirements.” Many of our participants either studied or taught Latin at universities where there was a requirement to learn a language other than English and/or were enrolled in classics programs, which dictated that one take classical language courses. This theme parallels the SEM’s notion of an “instrumental orientation” (Gardner 12), in which one learns the language to achieve a utilitarian goal. It is also indicative of external regulation

as described by SDT, whereby one learns the language because of pressures or rewards imposed by other people or by outward circumstances (Ryan and Deci 61). It is noteworthy that this reason was not among the most cited responses in the NLS (Goodman); given that the participants in that study were in high school, where Latin might not have been a requirement; it might be that this orientation only becomes salient in contexts where the learners' autonomy is at issue.

Turning now to those themes that have only been glossed over in prior studies of Latin motivation, the theme "sense of prestige" was also evident in the interviews. While the NLS did report a related, lesser-cited response reflecting the desire to "be different from other kids" (Goodman), in the present study, prestige was linked to a sense of a belonging with a highly educated, high-status community, rather than just a desire to be unique. Similarly, one participant repeatedly referenced "cool nerdy people," referring to a group of like-minded individuals who study Latin and suggesting a sort of community associated with learning Latin. Thus, in contrast with modern languages, which are tied to speech communities of native speakers, the Latin community is more vaguely defined, or, perhaps even, self-defined. Although a speech community could emerge from "Living Latin" courses and immersion camps (Lloyd), the community is perhaps better described as one of affinity, comprised of members who share a common interest or goal. Another possibility is that Latin learners define the group to which they belong for themselves and do not depend on other outside criteria to define it for them. This theme perhaps best corresponds with Dörnyei's concept of a unique ideal L2 self, or with Norton's notion of an imagined community—that is, an idealization of a community to which the learner belongs and within which the learner is valued (Kanno and Norton 241). It also arguably reflects Gardner's (16) concept of the integrative orientation (i.e., people learn a language in order to interact with the language community). This theme could also be considered with reference to the need for relatedness, as articulated by SDT (i.e., participants want to continue to interact with those whom they feel a connection with; Ryan and Deci 64).

We also created a theme called "mastery and achievement". The closest any previous study has come to referencing this theme is to say that participants found Latin easier than their other subjects (ACL 74-75; Goodman). Here, we similarly found that participants continued to learn Latin because they found that they were capable of doing well in it. In terms of SDT, this theme is directly representative of the competence

component (Ryan and Deci 58); that is, when people feel they are competent at an activity, they engage more actively in the activity for more self-determined reasons (i.e., intrinsic motivation and/or identified or integrated regulation). It also reflects Clément's notion of linguistic self-confidence, which he suggested has motivational implications for language learning and willingness to communicate outside the language classroom (Sampasivam and Clément 25).

Some other themes were alluded to in past studies, but not to the same extent that they were touched upon here. For example, "methodical approach to learning" entailed various aspects that were not referenced in either of the studies from the 1920s or the NLS (ACL 73-75; Goodman). Grise found that 47% of participants "believed that the study [of Latin] furnished good mental training" (one of the codes within the larger category of "methodical approach to learning"), however, other aspects of this theme were not covered in his study (ACL 73). The same can be said for "unique aspects of Latin," where the only overlapping code within our study and another study is the lack of an oral component. Interestingly, these themes do not fit well within any of the theories of motivation described above; this is perhaps because they are unique to the Latin language. Moreover, these themes may be unique to the grammar-translation approach to teaching/learning Latin.

Lastly, we created one theme that has not been mentioned in previous research on Latin learning. Latin was not just important in terms of what many of our participants did professionally, but also in terms of their self-concepts. Take Participant I, for example, who said that "[he considers] learning things in general to be... an important part of [his] identity" (i.e., the integrated regulation component of SDT; Ryan and Deci 62). Here, we also have evidence of the volitional and autonomous action described by SDT; that is, people are deciding to enroll in Latin classes of their own accord. While there is evidence of this theme in the case of SDT (i.e., the theme is not completely novel), this theme has yet to be mentioned in terms of the previous literature of Latin motivation and is new in this context. We called this theme "learning things for own sake."

In sum, the themes or orientations articulated by the participants reflected the four motivational theories to different extents. Pragmatic reasons, including attaining course credit and facilitating understanding of other languages and jargons, correspond with Gardner's instrumental orientation, and the desire to belong to a group of Latin

users was arguably in line with Gardner's notion of an integrative orientation, although Norton's more general construct of desiring to join an "imagined community" seems to better capture the participants' sentiments given the more abstract nature of the group relative to specific speech communities. Dörnyei's "ought-self" (and SDT's introjected regulation) was most apparent in the theme "sense of prestige," but also present in the theme "transferable language benefits." Despite the mention of the ought-self, none of the participants elaborated on their ideal-self. That is not to say that it did not come up in the interviews, though. All of the participants were asked the following question: "In an ideal world where you can be an ideal version of yourself, to what extent would that incorporate Latin?" (see Appendix A). Every participant indicated that they would like to incorporate Latin into their ideal-self to some degree. While this lack of variability may be expected in these advanced Latin learners, it underscores that these participants value Latin. Finally, all of SDT's various forms of regulation (or "orientations"), with the exception of amotivation, were reflected in the above themes. The themes "unique aspects of Latin" and "methodical approach to learning" do not easily fit into one of the motivations described by SDT or the other theories.

In addition, it is worth noting that there were a number of potentially troubling perceptions about the Latin language. For instance, some participants believe that Latin is elite and prestigious. Such a belief might discourage some people from studying the language, however it is also possible that this identification as a distinctive, even "geeky," group might encourage a sense of community among people who value this relatively esoteric knowledge and practice. Further, multiple participants claimed that Latin attracts learners who believe that Latin courses do not require learners to speak up in class as is the case in foreign language courses. Although a teacher-fronted, grammar-translation pedagogy might appeal to a shy language learner, given the rise of active Latin, Latin classes might involve more face-to-face communication than this belief suggests. Whether or not these perceptions correspond with the actual practice in the classroom is beside the point; what is important is that these perceptions exist about the language. Accordingly, future endeavors to address these perceptions could provide potential learners with an accurate sense of what Latin courses are like; this might, in turn, attract more, or perhaps different, people to the study of this classical language.



### ***Limitations and Future Directions for Research***

There are several limitations to this study that point to directions for future research. Because the study at hand was focused on advanced-level Latin learners and qualitative in nature, the scope was necessarily small. Thus, more qualitative studies are needed to represent groups with other experiences learning Latin (e.g., introductory-level learners, people who dropped out, immersion camp participants, clergy, etc.). Future studies should also verify whether or not the themes identified in the present study, especially those that have not been identified elsewhere in the motivation literature, are generalizable to a larger group of learners. This replication can be done using larger-scale quantitative surveys, as was done in the case of the NLS study of lower-level students (Goodman).

Furthermore, given that most studies of Latin motivation have been centered in the United States (Bracke and Bradshaw 2), it would also be important to investigate motivation in other countries where Latin plays a role in educational, religious, and professional institutions and traditions. The present Canadian study is one step to broadening this perspective, but a systematic comparative study across several countries where Latin is taught, including Canada, USA, UK, Italy, and other nations, would provide greater insight into cross-national variations in the link between personal meaning and motivation for learning Latin, on the one hand, and the ideological positioning and practical utility of Latin, on the other hand.

Another limitation is that the information gathered in the present study was limited to self-reports of motivation. Self-reports of diverse motivational constructs have been shown to be important predictors of many educational and social outcomes related to modern language learning (see Lamb et al., for an overview). Nonetheless, it is essential to examine how motivational constructs, such as the self-reported motivational orientations, predict active and autonomous engagement in learning Latin (e.g., participation in class; homework completion; continuation and attrition) and Latin literacy and oral skills. As part of this endeavor, it would be important to adopt longitudinal and/or experimental (intervention) designs to determine whether, for example, motivation assessed earlier predicts Latin competence later in time, or vice versa. Longitudinal studies would also provide insights into motivational trajectories and how they are affected by contextual and personal dynamics (cf., Noels et al., *The Development*).

### ***Practical Applications***

Understanding the reasons why students study Latin and connecting these reasons to different theoretical frameworks can help teachers support their students' motivation and language learning success. For instance, some students will come to the Latin classroom with an intrinsic interest in the language and culture, and according to SDT an instructor can help maintain this interest by structuring the course and communicating with the student in a manner that fosters the learner's sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Kusurkar et al. 978). Autonomy is supported by providing opportunities to engage in personally meaningful activities; competence by providing structured feedback and challenges to develop mastery; and relatedness by establishing a classroom climate in which each member feels valued and cared for (Kusurkar et al. 979-981).

Undoubtedly, not all students share this intrinsic interest, and some are more concerned with completing a requirement or attaining another goal apart from enjoying the process of learning Latin. To promote a more self-determined (extrinsic) orientation, teachers might emphasize how knowing Latin offers benefits that the student might find important (thereby supporting autonomy inside and outside the Latin classroom). Given the sense of distinctiveness and connectedness that comes from engaging with others who share an interest in Latin, teachers could also help students to realize this sense of community and envision their ideal Latin-self.

### ***Conclusion***

The purpose of this study was to determine why people study Latin. By conducting a series of interviews with advanced-level Latin learners, we have corroborated some results of past studies of Latin motivation but have also identified new themes. Moreover, the themes that we found demonstrate how theories of language learning motivation can be used to explain motivation to learn Latin. It is our hope that this study will spark increased interest in motivation to learn classical languages from a social psychological vantage point.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Latin Interview Script**

Interview questions are as follows. Potential follow-up questions and probes are not included as those differed depending on the participant.

- How would you describe your experience learning Latin?
- Why did you initially decide to enroll in a Latin class?
- What did you expect learning Latin to be like?
- How did these expectations compare to your actual experiences?
- What motivated you to continue studying Latin?
- (In the case of teachers) What do you find motivates your students to learn Latin?
- To what extent is being a Latin language learner important to your overall sense of self?
- In an ideal world where you can be an ideal version of yourself, to what extent would that incorporate Latin?