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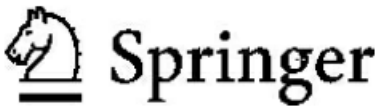
Development of Self-Determination Through the Life-Course



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Preface

The self-determination construct is one of the foundational constructs in the discipline of positive psychology. The millennial issue of American Psychologist , published in January of 2000, was dedicated to introducing the science of positive psychology and included articles on optimism, hope, creativity, and self-determination (Ryan and Deci 2000). In their landmark contribution, Ryan and Deci noted that the "fullest representation of humanity show people to be curious, vital, and self-motivated. At their best, they are agentic and inspired, striving to learn; extend themselves; master new skills; and apply their talents responsibly" (p. 68). The article's synthesis of how Self-Determination Theory (SDT) describes the impact of social contexts on self-motivation and the optimizing of a person's development, performance, and well-being firmly established the construct's importance to the new discipline of positive psychology. As SDT grew into an important motivational metatheory, another movement embraced the self-determination construct in configuring strength-based approaches. That movement was the disability rights movement, and research and theory development in that field examined the importance of self-determination to enable people with disabilities to achieve better quality lives. The applied disciplines of special education and rehabilitation, among others, developed interventions informed by theory and research on self-determination in motivation, including research on creating autonomy-supportive classrooms, but that provided interventions that were, in essence, autonomy supportive as well and intended to promote self-determination. This text provides a comprehensive examination of the development of self-determination in the context of two related theories of self-determination emerging from these two uses of the self-determination construct: SDT and (from the disability sphere) Causal Agency Theory. The intent is to provide a theoretical frame in which SDT and Causal Agency Theory are used to describe a lifespan approach to the development of self-determination. The text examines how organismic efforts to fulfill basic psychological needs to maintain autonomous motivation lead to causal action, which in turn leads to greater psychological need fulfillment, repeated experiences with causal action, and, ultimately, greater self-determination. The text is structured into parts with chapters that go into depth on themes and topics pertinent to motivation, causal action, and the development of self-determination. The first part (Overview of Self-Determination and Theories of Self-Determination) provides an overview of the self-determination construct itself (Chap. 1) and of human agentic theories (Chap. 2), within which both SDT and Causal Agency Theory situate the self-determination construct. Chapter 2 culminates with the description of a theoretical model of the development of self-determination (Fig. 2.1) that forms the basis for later chapters examining such development in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Chapter 3 provides a look at how the development of self-determination is situated in the context of overall adolescent development and other theories pertinent to adolescent development. Chapters 4 and 5 provide detail about the two major theories covered in the text, SDT needs to maintain autonomous motivation lead to causal action, which in turn leads to greater psychological need fulfillment, repeated experiences with causal action, and, ultimately, greater self-determination. The text is structured into parts with chapters that go into depth on themes and topics pertinent to motivation, causal action, and the development of self-determination. The first part (Overview of Self-Determination and Theories of Self-Determination) provides an overview of the self-determination construct itself (Chap. 1) and of human agentic theories (Chap. 2), within which both SDT and Causal Agency Theory situate the self-determination construct. Chapter 2 culminates with the description of a theoretical model of the development of self-determination (Fig. 2.1) that forms the basis for later chapters examining such development in

childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Chapter 3 provides a look at how the development of self-determination is situated in the context of overall adolescent development and other theories pertinent to adolescent development. Chapters 4 and 5 provide detail about the two major theories covered in the text, SDT (Chap. 4) and Causal Agency Theory (Chap. 5). The second part (Developmental Origins and Life-Course Trajectory of Self-Determination) examines issues pertaining to the development of self-determination across the lifespan utilizing the theoretical frame described in Chap. 2 . Chapter 6 examines the development of self-determination during childhood, describing the development of foundational skills leading to later self-determination across childhood and, specifically, overviewing the development of foundational skills that enable children to make choices and express preferences, solve problems, engage in making decisions, set and attain goals, self-manage and self-regulate action, self-advocate, and acquire self-awareness and self-knowledge. Chapter 7 examines developmental milestones in knowledge, skills, and beliefs that emerge during adolescence and lead to enhanced self-determination, including choice making, self-initiation and planning, problem solving, decision making, goal setting and attainment, and self-regulation. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of issues in adolescent development as it pertains to motivational aspects of self-determination. In Chap. 8 , attention is turned to the educational context to examine autonomy-supportive practices that lead to the development of autonomous motivation and greater self-determination. Chapter 9 examines what is known about self-determination in the disability context, while Chaps. 10 and 11 focus on self-determination in adulthood and aging life stages. This part is concluded with a chapter examining issues of culture and self-determination. Chapters in the third part (Self-Determination Theory and Healthy Psychological and Physical Development) explore the role of self-determination in healthy psychological development, with chapters focused on the role of parenting in promoting children's psychological health (Chap. 13) and on identity development in adolescence (Chap. 14). Chapters in the final three parts address development of causal action, beginning with the fourth part (The Development of Volitional Action), which includes chapters that focus on the development of preference and choice expression (Chap. 15) and self-initiation and planning (Chap. 16). The fifth part (The Development of Agentic Action) includes chapters on the development of self-regulation (Chap. 17), goal setting and attainment (Chap. 18), problem solving (Chap. 19), decision making (Chap. 20), and pathways and agentic thinking in the development of hope (Chap. 21). The final part (Action-Control Beliefs) has a single chapter (Chap. 22) focused on the role of action-control beliefs in causal action. Reference Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. American Psychologist, 55 , 68–78.

Part I
Overview of Self-Determination and Theories of Self-Determination

Synopsis The chapters in this part provide a comprehensive overview of the self-determination construct. Chapter 1 overviews the historical meanings and uses of the self-determination construct in philosophy, psychology, social welfare, education, and disability rights. Self-determination is framed, in this chapter, within the context of overarching theories of human agentic behavior. Human agency refers to the sense of personal empowerment involving both knowing and having what it takes to achieve goals. Human agentic theories share the meta-theoretical view that organismic aspirations drive human behaviors. An organismic perspective of self-determination portrays people as active contributors to, or "authors" of their behavior, where behavior is defined in terms of self-regulated and goal-directed actions. Chapter 2 reviews the major theories of human agentic behavior and examines the role of self-determination in each. This chapter culminates with the description of a theoretical model of the development of self-determination (Fig. 2.1) that forms the basis for later chapters examining such development in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Chapter 3 discusses adolescent developmental theories, first reviewing neurological growth and restructuring that occurs in the brain during adolescence. Next, cognitive and affective processes, including metacognition, self-regulation, and self-determination are described. Finally, identity development and agency and their role in adolescent development are described, followed by discussion of the role of culture and context in adolescent development. Chapters 4 and 5 provide detail about the two major theories covered in the text, SDT (Chap. 4) and Causal Agency Theory (Chap. 5).

1. Introduction to the Self-Determination Construct

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Abstract Self-determination is a construct with a rich history in philosophy, social welfare, psychology, and education. This chapter overviews the origins of the self-determination construct, beginning with its application in philosophy, it's linkages to discussions of free will and volitional action, and continuing through to its implementation in motivation and personality psychology. The chapter introduces and overviews the origins of Self-Determination Theory and briefly introduces Causal Agency Theory.

KeywordsSelf-determination – Determinism – Autonomy – Agency – Choice, volition – Intrinsic motivation – Corporate or national self-determination

This text provides a comprehensive examination of the development of self-determination in the context of two related theories of self-determination. We begin with an introduction to the self-determination construct and its historical uses in philosophy and psychology and other disciplines related to human development and behavior (education, social welfare, etc.). At the onset, it is important to understand that we position self-determination as a general psychological construct within the organizing structure of theories of human agentic behavior. Human agentic theories are discussed in Chap. 2, but at a general level, self-determination, as a psychological construct, refers to self- (vs. other-) caused action—to people acting volitionally, based on their own will. Individual chapters in this first section discuss how self-determination is defined in specific theoretical models, so the intent of this

chapter is to trace the development of the construct over time, and to provide a general understanding of the construct.

Self-Determination in Philosophy

The Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson and Weiner 1989) identified the earliest use of the term self-determination as occurring in the year 1683 and defined the term as referring to the "determination of one's mind or will by itself toward an object" (p. 919). A second meaning of the term identified by the Oxford English Dictionary is "the action of a people in deciding its own form of government" (p. 919), with the first use of that meaning of the construct occurring in 1911. It is the first sense of the term (e.g., the personal sense) that we explore in depth in this text. As the Oxford English Dictionary definition shows, this personal sense of the term pertains, at its fundamental level, to issues of human action as a function of mind, will, and/or volition. Other definitions illustrate this basic emphasis. Webster's Third New International Unabridged Dictionary (Gove 1967) defined self-determination as the "determination of one's acts or states by oneself without external compulsion" (p. 2059). Similarly, the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1992) defined self-determination as the "determination of one's own fate or course of action without compulsion; free will " (p. 814). Self-determination, in essence, refers to acting based on one's own mind or free will, without external compulsion. Finally, the American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology (VandenBos 2007) defines self-determination as "the control of one's behavior by internal convictions and decisions rather than by external demands" (p. 829).

These definitions provide an indication of the basic intent of the construct called 'self-determination' and reflect the sense of its historical antecedent, the philosophical doctrine of determinism . The self-determination construct emerged from centuries-old debates about free will and determinism and to understand the intent of the self-determination construct as used today one must begin with an examination of issues pertaining to determinism.

Determinism posits that events, in this context human behavior and actions, are effects of preceding causes. There are generally two forms of the philosophical doctrine, hard and soft determinism. Hard determinism is the doctrine that every event and every action is caused in accordance with causal laws that account completely for the event's or action's occurrence. Hard determinists believe that even when human actions are posited to result from mediating determinants or causes, such as wants, wishes, desires, motivations, or feelings, those same wants, wishes, desires, motivations, and feelings are, themselves, caused by specific antecedent conditions that ensure their occurrence. Alternatively, the soft determinism position argues that an act can be both caused and free. This is because, according to the soft determinist, the hard determinist mistakenly equates "caused" with "forced" or "compelled." The soft determinist believes that every action is caused somehow; but not every action is compelled. The indeterminist's or anti-determinist's position differs from both hard and soft deterministic positions by positing that there are no causes for events or actions, and that humans act completely from free will.

This question of free will verses determinism is generally identified by philosophers to be one of the most enduring philosophical problems of all time, bound inextricably with religious theologies about the

free will of man versus the control and authority (determinism) of God. The Catholic Encyclopedia (Herbermann et al. 1914) stated the dichotomy as such:

> On the one hand, does man possess genuine moral freedom, power of real choice, true ability to determine the course of his thoughts and volitions, to decide which motives shall prevail within his mind, to modify and mold his own character? Or, on the other, are man's thoughts and volitions, his character and external actions, all merely the inevitable outcome of his circumstances? Are they all inexorably predetermined in every detail along rigid lines by events of the past, over which he himself has had no sort of control? This is the real import of the free-will problem.

In his important work, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, published in 1690, John Locke provided a synopsis of the "free will problem ." Trying to illustrate the importance of connections in human thought to understanding, Locke wrote:

> this proposition "men can determine themselves" is drawn in or inferred from this, "that they shall be punished in the other world." For here the mind, seeing the connexion there is between the idea of men's punishment in the other world and the idea of God punishing; between God punishing and the justice of the punishment; between justice of punishment and guilt; between guilt and a power to do otherwise; between a power to do otherwise and freedom; and between freedom and self-determination, sees the connexion between men and self-determination (Locke 1690).

Locke is considered a soft determinist, someone who saw both causality and free will at work in human behavior. Elsewhere in the Essay, which was intended to establish the foundations for a new science of human understanding and knowledge, Locke hypothesized that all human thought comes from sensation and reflection and, consequently, all human action comes from human thought. Writing in an "Abstract of the Essay" published in 1688, he stated:

> In the thoughts I have had concerning the Understanding, I have endeavoured to prove that the mind is at first rasa tabula. The mind having been supposed void of all innate characters, comes to receive them by degrees as experience and observation lets them in; and we shall, upon consideration, find they all come from two originals, and are conveyed into the mind by two ways, viz. sensation and reflection. The mind, taking notice of its own operation about these ideas received by sensation, comes to have ideas of those very operations that pass within itself: this is another source of ideas, and this I call reflection; and from hence it is we have the ideas of thinking, willing, reasoning, doubting, purposing. From these two originals it is that we have all the ideas we have; and I think I may confidently say that, besides what our senses convey into the mind, or the ideas of its own operations about those received from sensation, we have no ideas at all (Locke 1688).

As illustrated above, Locke adamantly opposes any notion that ideas are innate as had been suggested by other philosophers, most noticeably in Descartes' declaration that we are born with the idea of God planted in us by God. All human ideas and knowledge, according to Locke, emerge from experience (sensation) and from reflection on that experience or sensation. That is, Locke's view places self-determination as a developmental phenomenon – as a guiding feature of development and as an outgrowth of developmental experiences.

Locke classified ideas as simple and complex, with complex ideas derived from relations between simple ideas, generated by reflection. Among these complex ideas were what Locke called “Modes” or ideas that combine simpler elements to form a new whole that does not exist except as a part or feature of something else. For example, we understand the ‘idea’ of infinity without ever having to see it exist as an actual object that can be counted. Mixed modes, which combined both sensory and reflective elements, were especially important to Locke since they encompassed the ideas of human actions, including the ideas of power, volition, and liberty. Locke defines power as the ability to make (active power) or receive (passive power) change (Kemerling, 2000–2001). According to Locke, the human mind has the active power of beginning or ceasing its own operations as activated by a preference. The exercise of that power is volition or will. Freedom or liberty (a complex mixed mode idea) is “the power to act on our volition, whatever it may be, without any external compulsion or restraint” (Locke 1690; Chapter II, XXI). Locke avoids entanglement in the free will problem by noting that the cause of the volition is irrelevant, since it is the agent, not the will, which is free. Human beings act freely just insofar as they are capable of translating their mental preferences to do or not to do into their actual performance of the action in question (Kemerling 2000–2001). Locke writes:

> Every one, I think, finds in himself a power to begin or forbear, continue or put an end to several actions in himself. From the consideration of the extent of this power of the mind over the actions of the man, which everyone finds in himself, arise the ideas of liberty and necessity. All the actions that we have any idea of reducing themselves, as has been said, to these two, viz. thinking and motion; so far as a man has power to think or not to think, to move or not to move, according to the preference or direction of his own mind, so far is a man free. Wherever any performance or forbearance are not equally in a man’s power; wherever doing or not doing will not equally follow upon the preference of his mind directing it, there he is not free, though perhaps the action may be voluntary. So that the idea of liberty is, the idea of a power in any agent to do or forbear any particular action, according to the determination or thought of the mind, whereby either of them is preferred to the other: where either of them is not in the power of the agent to be produced by him according to his volition, there he is not at liberty; that agent is under necessity. So that liberty cannot be where there is no thought, no volition, no will; but there may be thought, there may be will, there may be volition, where there is no liberty (Locke 1690; Book II, Chapter XXI).

Freedom (from the Latin libertas), a frequent target of hard determinists like B.F. Skinner, is conceptualized as the human capacity to act (or not to act) as we choose or prefer, without any external compulsion or restraint. Freedom in this sense is usually regarded as a presupposition of moral responsibility: that is, the only actions for which I, as an autonomous person, may be praised or blamed, rewarded or punished, are just those that I perform freely (Herbermann et al. 1914). This view is the crux of the free will problem in determinism; that an omnipotent being (God) can only hold humans accountable for their behavior and actions if, indeed, those humans had the autonomy and free will to act based on their own volition as opposed to all actions being predetermined by God.

Locke’s proposals about the causes of human action as both caused and volitional are important as the foundation for understanding the modern sense of the term self-determination. Note Locke’s soft deterministic distinction that it is the agent (the person him or herself) who is free to act, not the action itself (since it is ‘caused’ by perception or sensation). From Locke and onward, determinism was gradually decoupled from the sole form of determinism considered to that point, theological

determinism. Today we recognize numerous 'determinants' of human behavior , including physiological, structural, environmental, and/or organismic factors. Theories of human behavior recognize the impact on human actions and behavior of biological or genetic determinism (behavior as an effect of biological functions such as genes or neurochemicals), familial or relative determinism (human behavior as an effect of family or parental influence or treatment), environmental determinism (behavior as an effect of the environment), psychological determinism (behavior as an effect of how we perceive or understand situations), economic determinism (action as an effect of economic forces or circumstances) and so forth.

With the turn of the twentieth century and the emergence of psychology as a discipline distinct from philosophy, the philosophical discussion of determinism and self-determination as it pertains to human action and behavior becomes overshadowed by discoveries and theories in biology, psychology and anthropology. Nevertheless, even as the meaning or sense of the construct changes as it is used in other disciplines, it is important to remember that the construct's roots lie in the free will problem that was the basis of philosophic discussions for centuries. That is, is human behavior the effect of human thought, free will, and volition or are such actions predetermined and indeterminant? As discussed subsequently, the scope of the question altered somewhat during the twentieth century and there is currently less focus on theological determinism and more on biological, psychological, environmental or other forms of determinism. Nevertheless, self-determination still refers fundamentally to and its meanings derive directly from the philosophical debates around determinism.

Self-Determination in Psychology

In the last half of the nineteenth century the rapidly growing discipline of psychology brought its empiricism and experimentalism to bear on questions that had previously been the sole domain domain of introspective philosophers and, in so doing, changed the question posed by the free will problem slightly, from whether human behavior is the effect of free will or is predetermined to whether human behavior is caused by internal versus external forces. In essence, the anti-determinist or indeterminist view espoused in philosophy was never adopted by psychologists, leaving only the hard versus soft determinism perspectives. This separation is likely a function of several factors. The earliest psychologists were heavily influenced in the early 1900s by the perceived explanatory power of the 'new biology' which featured the merger of Darwinian evolutionary theory with the newly rediscovered mechanisms of Mendelian genetics (Cravens 1978). To the pioneers trying to establish psychology as a viable science, the new biology could, seemingly, explain the causes of human behavior through mechanistic and deterministic means without having to resort to the introspective techniques that dominated philosophy. Psychologists looked toward these biological models of determinism to begin to explain human behavior, focusing first on what were identified as social problems, like mental deficiency, feeblemindedness, crime, pauperism, and so forth. This focus was no more clearly in evidence then in the establishment of the field of mental measurement in the early 1900s. While Binet and Simon held what might be seen as a soft determinist position regarding intelligence, crediting both nature and nurture, the field of intelligence testing in America, led by Goddard, Terman, and Yerkes, rapidly became firmly associated with a hard determinist perspective of the hereditary nature of intelligence and, indeed, with the strong determinist position of eugenicists, which claimed social ills like crime, prostitution, and poverty were attributable almost exclusively to heritability in intelligence (or the

lack thereof, feeblemindedness). Even Edward Thorndike, the founder of the mental measurement movement in education, held strongly eugenic, and thus deterministic, beliefs. The field was not exclusively hereditarian and deterministic, of course. William Bagley, in his 1925 text Determinism in Education rails against the assumptions of hereditarian determinists' conception of intelligence, writing:

> It is the purpose of the present paper to show that the sanction which mental measurements apparently give to this particular variety of determinism [note: referring to the hereditarian position in intelligence] is based, not upon the facts that the measurements reveal, but upon the hypotheses and assumptions that the development of the measures has involved; that these hypotheses and assumptions, while doubtless justified for certain purposes, are at basis questionable in the last degree; and that the present tendency to extend them ad libitum beyond a very restricted field is fraught with educational and social dangers of so serious and far-reaching a character as to cause the greatest concern (Bagley 1925, pp. 11–12).

Nevertheless, a hard deterministic view of human behavior held sway in early psychology. Skinnerian psychology rejected the claim that behavior is a function of volitional thought or ideas or, indeed, any internal mechanisms. In Beyond Freedom and Dignity Skinner challenged the existence of "autonomous man" and labeled as myths, illusions, or 'prescientific superstitions' all such constructs associated with 'autonomous man,' including reason, mind, values, concepts, thought, judgment, volition, purpose, memory, independence, or self-esteem. Skinner's hard deterministic position is, in essence, that all human behavior is governed (caused) by laws of operant conditioning – all functions that other psychological perspectives apply to 'autonomous man,' including volitional thought, can be explained by reinforcement contingencies. Skinner (1971) stated:

> To be for oneself is to be almost nothing. The great individualists so often cited to show the value of personal freedom have owed their successes to earlier social environments. The involuntary individualism of a Robinson Crusoe and the voluntary individualism of a Henry David Thoreau show obvious debts to society. If Crusoe had reached the island as a baby, and if Thoreau had grown up unattended on the shores of Walden Pond, their stories would have been different. We must all begin as babies, and no degree of self-determination, self-sufficiency, or self-reliance will make us individuals in any sense beyond that of single members of the human species. (pp. 123–124.)

Not surprisingly, modern behaviorists continue to hold this perspective with regard to the self-determination construct. Baer (1998) noted, in discussing "problems in imposing self-determination" (p. 50), that proposals with regard to promoting self-determination are, fundamentally, ideologies (such as personal autonomy or freedom) as opposed to behavioral science, and that if the goal of practitioners is to ensure that people with disabilities (the topic of the special issue of a journal he was commenting on) have greater choice opportunities and experience greater control, then the course of action to follow is to arrange the environments of people in ways that they want them arranged. Baer explained that this environmental control can be achieved through the use of a concurrent schedules approach, where the intervener creates two environments that differ in only one dimension, provides the person with the disability access to those environments, and measures how much time the person spends in each environment.

It was not until the establishment of the field of personality psychology as a discipline distinct from general psychology in the late 1930s that issues pertaining to self-determination were addressed with

any systematic focus by psychologists. Just as the free will problem had been one of the dominant themes in philosophy in the preceding centuries, issues pertaining to causation of human behavior became central to the emerging discipline of personality psychology. In his early text titled Foundations for a Science of Personality, Angyal (1941) proposed that an essential feature of a living organism is its autonomy , where autonomous means self-governing or governed from inside. According to Angyal, an organism "lives in a world in which things happen according to laws which are heteronomous (e.g., governed from outside) from the point of view of the organism" (p. 33). Angyal stated that "organisms are subjected to the laws of the physical world, as is any other object of nature, with the exception that it can oppose self-determination to external determination" (p. 33). Angyal suggested that the important task for developing a science of personality was in identifying principle(s) of the biological total process – the movement of organisms from undifferentiated parts to an organized whole. He defined the "biological total process" as a trend toward autonomy and argued that the science of personality is, in essence, the study of two essential determinants to human behavior, autonomous-determinism (or self-determination) and heteronomous-determinism (other-determined). He noted that "in the realm of organismic happenings we find neither entirely autonomous nor entirely heteronomous determinants" (p. 21), and suggested a psychology of individual differences by noting that, within nature, there are marked variations in the importance and balance of autonomous and heteronomous determinants to behavior. Nonetheless, Angyal places primary importance for laying the foundation for a science of personality in the fact that a central process of an organism is the movement toward autonomous-determination. He showed this by stating:

> It would probably be generally agreed that without autonomy, without self-government, the life process could not be understood. Selection, choice, self-regulation, adaptation, regeneration are phenomena which logically imply the autonomy of the organism. Selection, that is the search for certain environmental conditions, is only possible in a being capable of self-directed activity (p. 34).

Angyal's links to issues arising from biological determinism are evident here (e.g., [natural] selection, [species] adaptation), and the central problem he poses is the degree to which human behavior is caused by internal versus external factors. Nonetheless, autonomous-determination, or self-determination, as described by Angyal returns the discussion to the issues characterizing the discussion of self-determination in philosophy; that of human action as both internally-determined and volitional . Themes of choice and autonomy that are today accepted as primary to defining the construct appear in Angyal's proposal for the new science of personality psychology, though without the baggage of philosophy's free will problem. Self-determination had moved from its philosophical alignment with the problem of free will versus theological determinism to one of autonomous-versus heteronomous-determination. Furthermore, Angyal's use of the term moves away from the hard determinism that dominated the psychology of previous decades toward a soft determinism that considers the importance of both nature and nurture. He noted:

> …the autonomy of the organism is not an absolute one. Self-determination is restricted by outside influences which, with respect to the organism, are heteronomous. The organism lives in a world in which processes go on independent of it. The organism asserts itself against the heteronomous surroundings (p. 38).

This use of the construct not only typifies a soft deterministic perspective, but also embodies Locke's distinction of the person being free to act, but not the action itself being free from causality.

Self-Determination in Motivational Psychology

The most influential use of the self-determination construct in psychology emerged from the work of psychologists Edward Deci, Richard Ryan, and colleagues. Although Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is covered in detail in subsequent chapters, given the importance of this work in moving the application of the self-determination construct forward, it is relevant to highlight some of Deci and Ryan's early work as critical to the general or overall understanding of self-determination. Edward Deci, in an early text, The Psychology of Self-Determination (Deci 1980), discussed, as we have in this chapter, distinctions concerning self-determination, will, and free will. Deci argued that, despite the lack of a focus in psychology on issues of freedom and self-determination evident at that time, movement away from mechanistic theories and the recognition that "[i]nternal, mental events ... have been shown to be useful in explaining behavior, and numerous phenomena have been investigated that are relevant to the larger issue of the interplay of freedom and boundedness in human behavior" (p. 3). Such developments, suggested Deci "set the stage for an extended discussion of self-determination" (p. 3). He argued that in focusing on self-determination, "we are really raising the question, 'To what extent can people decide their own behaviors'" (p. 4). Deci (1980) answers this question as such:

> People have considerable capacity for self-determination, and the operation of will—that capacity to choose behaviors based on inner desires and perceptions—is the basis of self-determination (p. 5).

At this juncture in the development of the self-determination construct, Deci proposed that "will is the capacity of the human organism to choose how to satisfy needs" and that "self-determination is the process of utilizing will" (p. 26). Will is the "capacity for conscious choice to determine behavior" (p. 26) and is "inextricably involved with the intrinsic need for competence and self-determination" (p. 26). Further, Deci (1980) argued, "the conceptualization of intrinsic motivation as a basic human need for feeling competent and self-determining provides a framework for studying self-determination and will…" (p. 27).

In 1980, Deci and Ryan articulated a formal theory of intrinsic motivation that incorporated a central role for self-determination, and in 1985 they expanded this to be a theory of both intrinsic motivation and varied forms of extrinsic motivation. Working from White's (1959) proposal of an innate, intrinsic energy source, labeled by White as effectance motivation , which was theorized to motivate a wide variety of human behavior, and also building on work by cognitive theorists on personal causation and perceived locus of causality (deCharms 1968; Heider 1958), Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed that intrinsic motivation and self-determination were "necessary concepts for an organismic theory " [of motivation] (Deci and Ryan, p. 7).

In fact, Self-Determination Theory has gradually expanded over time. In 1980 Deci and Ryan presented a formal theory to explain empirical findings concerning the effects of external events on intrinsic motivation. Called Cognitive Evaluation Theory , it contained three primary propositions: (1) intrinsic

motivation requires a sense of autonomy or self-determination; (2) intrinsic motivation also requires a sense of competence and mastery; and (3) events relevant to the initiation and regulation of intrinsically motivated behavior have three aspects (informational, controlling, and amotivating) that can be differentially salient to people, thus enhancing or undermining their motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) later expanded SDT to include a theory of internalization and the development of autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation and self-regulation (Organismic Integration Theory or OIT). Still later they articulated a need based theory of well-being (BPN; Basic Psychological Needs Theory Deci and Ryan 2000; Ryan and Deci 2000). These formulations, along with other mini-theories are collectively described as Self-Determination Theory (see Chap. 4, this volume).

Importantly, Self-Determination Theory has continuously asserted the importance for modern psychology of concepts of autonomy and volition, arguing that these are not in any way problematic for a thoroughly deterministic understanding of behavior. Indeed, SDT suggests that both autonomous and controlled behaviors have distinctive neuropsychological underpinnings, and both harness both implicit and explicit mental processes (e.g., Ryan and Deci 2006).

Today Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci and Ryan 2000; Ryan and Deci 2000, 2011) represents the most extensive use of the self-determination construct in the field of psychology during the second half of the twentieth century to the present, and subsequent chapters will provide more detail on the current status of the theory. Meanwhile, other disciplines were applying the construct to their fields as well.

Self-Determination in Social Welfare

For much of the 20th Century a guiding principle of social work was the client right to self-determination (Biestek and Gehrig 1978; McDermott 1975). Owing much to the sense of the term as a national or political right, which emerged in the early twentieth century and which is discussed subsequently, the emphasis in social work on client self-determination became a principle that guided the way in which services should be provided by social workers. More than just a right of people in general, however, the use of the construct in social work embodies a respect and value for the rights of individuals to make choices and decisions and to, in essence, live autonomous lives.

…

Self-Determination in Education

In the early 1990s, the growing emphasis on self-determination in the disability rights movement entered into national efforts to educate students with disabilities . Over the course of 25 years, researchers and interventionists in special education have examined the role of self-determination, and efforts to promote self-determination, on the lives of students with disabilities (see Wehmeyer et al. 2003 for overview). Many of these interventions were conceptualized more by the rights-based language used in the empowerment or disability rights movement (e.g., rights to make decisions, control one's life, live independently, etc.). Causal Agency Theory, discussed in a subsequent chapter, is one such theoretical model, conceptualizing self-determination determination as a dispositional

characteristic (and not explicitly within a motivational framework), but drawing from and aligning with the organismic nature of SDT.

Conclusion

From its initial use in philosophy to modern usages pertaining to volitional action and autonomous motivation, the self-determination construct has proven to be a useful heuristic across multiple disciplines. The following chapters will further the examination of the construct in the larger context of human agentic theories and in adolescent development.

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2. Human Agentic Theories and the Development of Self-Determination

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Abstract

Self-determination theories are housed within theories of human agentic behavior. Human agency refers to the sense of personal empowerment involving both knowing and having what it takes to achieve goals. Human agentic theories share the meta-theoretical view that organismic aspirations drive human behaviors. An organismic perspective of self-determination portrays people as active contributors to, or "authors" of their behavior, where behavior is defined in terms of self-regulated and goal-directed actions. This chapter will review the major theories of human agentic behavior and will examine the role of self-determination in each.

Keywords

Human agentic theories – Organismic perspective of self-determination – Causal action – Action-control theory – Psychological needs – Causal agency theory

Theories of human agency provide a framework for understanding human behavior. Human agentic theories , including theories of self-determination, share the meta-theoretical assumption that

organismic aspirations drive human behavior (Little et al. 2006). Organismic aspirations can be understood as the drive to be active contributors to, or agents of, one's behavior. Thus an agentic person, driven by organismic aspirations, seeks to be the origin of his or her actions (Little et al. 2002). Human agentic theories assume that actions are volitional and that an agentic person uses self-regulated and goal-directed agentic actions to "plot and navigate a chosen course through the uncertainties and challenges of the social and ecological environments… continuously interpreting and evaluating actions and their consequences" (Little et al. 2002, p. 390). This ongoing process of navigating challenges and engaging in self-regulated, goal-directed actions gives rise to a sense of personal empowerment and action-control beliefs, or the sense that one knows and has what it takes to achieve goals, which contributes to the development of a sense of causal agency ; that is, that the person acts with an eye toward causing an effect to accomplish a specific end or to cause or create change in his or her life. Repeated experiences of causal agency lead to enhanced self-determination.

In the following sections, we describe the general assumptions of human agentic theories and the features that differentiate such theories from other theories of understanding human behavior. We will also describe how human agentic theories provide a broad framework for organizing constructs related to causal agency and the development of self-determination.

Assumptions of Theories of Human Agency

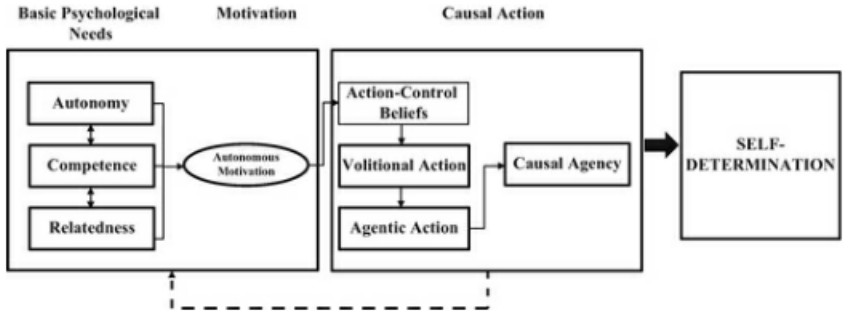
Theories of human agency differ from other frameworks for understanding human behavior (e.g., theories that emphasize stimulus-response accounts of behavior) because of the assumption underlying all theories of human agency that each person is integral to his/her organismic functioning. Unlike stimulus response theories which, by and large, assume that stimuli in the environment drive behavior, agentic theories assume that the person actively shapes his or her environment and responses to that environment. Contextual factors are still highly relevant, as contexts provide supports and opportunities as well as hindrances and impediments for volitional and agentic action, but it is the individual and their drive to act as a causal agent (not environmental stimuli) that is the primary driver of behavior. People who consistently engage in causal action to exert causal agency are self-determined. Specifically, as individuals strive to meet basic psychological and biological needs, they engage in self-regulated, goal directed action, or causal action , that enables them to navigate varying environmental and contextual challenges and they become more effective in their causal action and develop a sense of causal agenc y and enhanced self-determination.

The process of engaging in causal action has a self-evaluative feedback process, where persons continuously interpret and evaluate their actions and the consequences of actions. This meta-cognitive monitoring shapes, on an ongoing basis, each individual's action-control beliefs about the activities that he or she is capable of in varying contexts. Specifically, people are always learning under what conditions their causal actions will have desired effects. Under optimal circumstances, this continually evolving and actively monitored self-system gives rise to a strong, integrated sense of causal agency—a self-determined person. A highly self-determined person is the primary origin of his or her actions, has high aspirations, perseveres in the face of obstacles, sees more and varied options, learns from failures, and has a strong sense of well-being. A less self-determined person is shaped by extra-personal influences, has low aspirations, struggles with problem solving and goal setting, and often feels hopeless. Thus, theories of human agency have an explicit focus on the person-environment fit. It is in

the context of this interaction between personal competencies and environmental demands that people become agents of their own action or causal agents over their lives, and, ultimately, self-determined.

In addition to the assumptions regarding organismic aspirations and contextual influences, theories of human agency also assume that: (a) Actions are motivated by both biological and psychological needs . (b) When actions are directed toward self-regulated goals, this serves biological and psychological needs, both short-term and long-term. (c) Actions are volitional and agentic and shaped by understandings about general action-control behaviors that entail self-chosen forms and functions (Deci and Ryan 2002; Little et al. 2002).

These assumptions create an organizational framework for a theoretical model of the development of self-determination (see Fig. 2.1). In the following sections, we will further describe this model, specifically discussing the various human agentic theories that contribute to an understanding of the development of self-determination.



Theoretical Model of the Development of Self-Determination

As described previously, Fig. 2.1 provides a theoretical model of the development of self-determination. At the start of this system are basic psychological needs for autonomy , competence , and relatedness proposed by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and discussed in more detail subsequently in Chap. 4. Satisfaction of these basic needs facilitates autonomous motivation , defined as intrinsic motivation and well-internalized extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan 2012, p. 88). Consistent with assumptions of organismic theories, the interplay between the context and the individual's psychological needs satisfaction is complex and reciprocal. When a motive or motives are salient, people are in a position to select goals on the basis of their expectations about the satisfaction of these motives (Deci and Ryan 1985, p. 235). As per Fig. 2.1, these psychological needs initiate a causal action sequence that, through interaction with environmental supports and opportunities, enables the development of a "synergistic set of action-control beliefs and behaviors that provide the self-regulatory foundation that is called upon to negotiate the various tasks and challenges of the life course" (Little et al. 2002, p. 396). Action-control beliefs about the link between the self and the goal (control expectancy beliefs), the links between the self and the means that are available for use to address a challenge (agency beliefs), and about which specific means are most effective for reaching one's goals (causality beliefs) (Little et al. 2002, p. 396)

interact with and mediate volitional and agentic actions (employing causal and agentic capabilities), resulting in causal agency. Repeated experiences with the causal action sequence leads to multiple experiences with causal agency and, as a result, enhanced self-determination. In the following sections, we describe each of these contributors to the development of self-determination in greater depth.

Psychological and Biological Needs

As mentioned previously, a fundamental assumption of human agentic theories is that actions are motivated by both psychological and biological needs , and that if psychological and biological needs are addressed overall, well-being is supported. For purposes of this text, we are focusing on the psychological needs that motivate causal action, but, of course, biological needs also motivate action. In terms of biological needs, an assumption of human agentic theories is that all organisms require resources for physical growth and development (Hawley 1999; Little et al. 2002). These resources create an appetite for biological needs; however, to meet biological needs there is an evolutionarily duality that shapes action in pursuit of resources. On one hand, people can participate in social groups, using social connections and capital to acquire needed resources. This social group, however, can also become a source of competition as multiple people in the social group pursue resources. Within social groups, therefore, people experience both supports and threats to the attainment of resources. Ethologists describe this duality as a dominance hierarchy. Hawley (1999) further defined such hierarchies as the emergent ordering of individuals based on their relative competitive abilities. People that become highly agentic are more likely to attain needed resources, whereas those with less developed causal agency experience fewer opportunities to access resources (Hawley 1999; Little et al. 2002). Thus, contextual factors interact with the pursuit of resources to meet biological needs that shape the development of personal agency. Essentially, as people are able to meet their biological needs, they learn the types of volitional and agentic actions that enable them to access needed resources. They learn that goals can be set and met, that they can influence their environment, and that their future efforts are likely to be successful (Hawley and Little 2002). This cyclical process is why biological (and psychological needs, discussed subsequently) are foundational elements to the development of causal agency and self-determination.

Of particular focus in this text, human agentic theories also assume that there are basic psychological needs —organismic necessities for psychological growth, integrity, and wellness—that shape the development of self-determination, defined such hierarchies as the emergent ordering of individuals based on their relative competitive abilities. People that become highly agentic are more likely to attain needed resources, whereas those with less developed causal agency experience fewer opportunities to access resources (Hawley 1999; Little et al. 2002). Thus, contextual factors interact with the pursuit of resources to meet biological needs that shape the development of personal agency. Essentially, as people are able to meet their biological needs, they learn the types of volitional and agentic actions that enable them to access needed resources. They learn that goals can be set and met, that they can influence their environment, and that their future efforts are likely to be successful (Hawley and Little 2002). This cyclical process is why biological (and psychological needs, discussed subsequently) are foundational elements to the development of causal agency and self-determination.

Of particular focus in this text, human agentic theories also assume that there are basic psychological needs —organismic necessities for psychological growth, integrity, and wellness—that shape the

development of self-determination, result in autonomous motivation, and motivate causal action (volitional action, agentic action, and action control beliefs). As mentioned previously, Self-Determination Theory (see Chap. 4 for overview) describes three fundamental psychological needs: Competence, Relatedness, and Autonomy (Deci and Ryan 2002). Self-Determination Theory assumes that social contexts motivate human action to meet these basic psychological needs. The need for competence is defined as the need to successfully engage, manipulate, and negotiate the environment. The need for relatedness reflects the desire for close emotional bonds and feelings of connectedness to others in the social world. The need for autonomy reflects the need to feel that one's actions are predicated on the self or volitional in nature (Vansteenkiste and Ryan 2013). These basic psychological needs serve as the "energizer of behavior" (Deci and Ryan 2012, p. 101) or, within this theoretical model of the development of self-determination, the autonomous motivation that energizes causal action.

A significant body of research has emerged documenting the efforts undertaken by individuals to address their need for autonomy (Deci et al. 1991; Vansteenkiste et al. 2012). Deci and Ryan (2012) observed that:

> To be autonomous means to behave with a sense of volition, willingness, and congruence; it means to fully endorse and concur with the behavior on is engaged in. Autonomy—this capacity for and desire to experience self-regulation and integrity—is a central force within both the life span development of individuals and in the movement of history toward greater freedom and voice for citizens within cultures and governments.
>
> In healthy individual development, people move in the direction of greater autonomy. This entails internalizing and integrating external regulations over behavior and learning to effectively manage drives and emotions. Additionally, it means maintaining intrinsic motivation and interest, which are vital to assimilating new ideas and experiences." (p. 85).

As Deci (1996) noted, "without choice, there would be no agency, and no self-regulation" (p. 222). Autonomy is therefore understood as a critical need, and actions undertaken to address this need are critical to the development of a sense of causal agency and self-determination.

As organisms take action to meet these three basic psychological needs, this energizes the development of autonomous motivation, consisting of intrinsic motivation (doing an activity because it is enjoyable) and/or internalized extrinsic motivation (doing an activity because it leads to a valued consequence separate from the activity itself) (Deci and Ryan 2012, p. 88). The interaction between the organism's efforts to meet basic psychological needs and the resultant autonomous motivation stimulates causal action, discussed in the next section.

Causal Action

While the self-system processes pertaining to psychological needs and autonomous motivation are detailed and explained by Self-Determination Theory, we turn, by and large, to Action-Control Theory (Chap. 22) and Causal Agency Theory (Chap. 5) to explain causal action and the development of causal agency leading to self-determination. As mentioned previously, human agentic theories assume that actions are volitional and that an agentic person uses causal actions to "plot and navigate a chosen course through the uncertainties and challenges of the social and ecological environments…

continuously interpreting and evaluating actions and their consequences" (Little et al. 2002, p. 390). As discussed in Chap. 1 self-determined action is self-caused action. Organisms act volitionally and self-initiate action based upon conscious choices that reflect one's preferences in pursuit of goals that enhance personal well-being. The interaction between causal action and the context or environment is complex, but in essence, reflects the organism's response to opportunities or threats in the environment. As depicted in Fig. 2.2, these two classes of challenges to which the organism responds (opportunity or threat) are composed of three distinct contextual conditions. Opportunity refers to situations or circumstances that provoke the organism to engage in causal action to achieve a planned, desired outcome that is available because of the opportunity. Opportunity implies that the situation or circumstance provides a chance for the person to create change or make something happen based upon his or her individual causal capability (knowledge and abilities leading to volitional action, discussed subsequently). If a person has the causal capability to act on the situation or circumstance, that situation or circumstance can be construed as an opportunity. If the person is unable to act on the situation or circumstance because of limitations to causal capability, that may be a 'missed opportunity.' However, if the person has limited causal capability, the situation or circumstance is not an opportunity. An opportunity is definitionally bound to the person's causal capability. Opportunities can be "found" (unanticipated, happened upon through no effort of one's own) or "created" (the person acts to create a favorable circumstance).

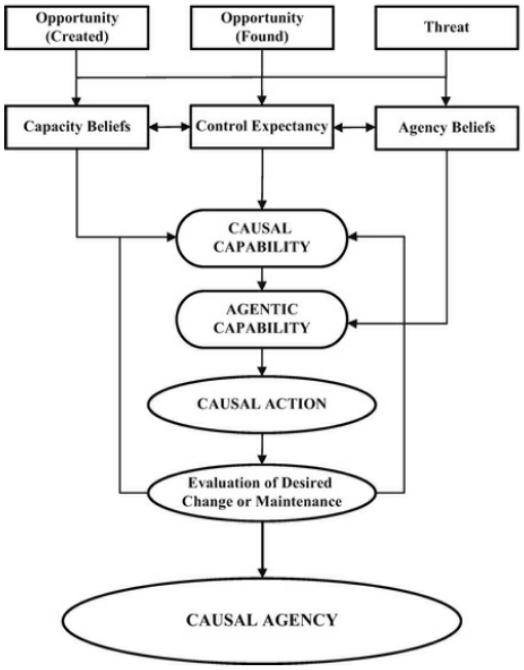


Fig. 2.2 Causal action schema

The second challenge condition, threat, involve situations or circumstances that threaten the organism's self-determination and provoke the organism to exercise causal action to maintain a preferred outcome or to create change that is consistent with one's own values, preferences, or interests, and not the values, preferences or interests of others. The interplay between autonomous motivation and these

challenge conditions is, as mentioned previously, complex. In the case of created opportunities, it is the organism's autonomous motivation that directly motivates the effort to create the opportunity. In the case of found opportunities or threats, these contextual challenges emerge unsolicited by the organism, so that it is the context or the condition that triggers the autonomous motivation to take advantage of the opportunity or minimize the impact of the threat. In all cases, though, the emergence of these environmental and contextual conditions lead to the innervation of a set of action-control beliefs that mediate volitional and causal action.

Action-Control Theory

The interaction between the organism's efforts to meet basic psychological needs and the resultant autonomous motivation and the environmental conditions of opportunity or threat stimulate causal action, beginning with "self-perceptions about the means and competencies one has to reach one's goals" (Little et al. 2002, p. 396). These self-perceptions are articulated through Action-Control Theory as a set of action-control beliefs:

> From this view point, the general agency system of individuals gives rise to a synergistic set of action-control beliefs and behaviors that provide the self-regulatory foundation that is called upon to negotiate the various tasks and challenges of the life course. More specifically, action-control theory focuses on the role of specific self-regulatory beliefs as mediators of motivated action (i.e., they are the proximal links to behavior). (Little, Hawley, Heinrich, & Marsland, 2002, p. 396).

These self-regulatory beliefs involve:

> Control Expectancy Beliefs : Control expectancy beliefs "reflect the general expectations about the link between the self and the goal" (Little et al. 2006, p. 70); they reflect "the general perception of the degree to which a person feels that he or she can attain a given goal" (Little et al. 2002, p. 396). Agency Beliefs:
>
> Agency beliefs "reflect the links between the self and the various means that they are relevant for attaining a chosen end" (Little et al. 2006; p. 71); they are "beliefs about whether these means are personally available for use" (Little et al. 2002, p. 396).

Greater detail about these action-control beliefs can be found in subsequent chapters. Before moving to the operators involved in volitional and agentic action (as per Fig. 2.1), it is important to note that these interrelated action-control beliefs contribute jointly to the initiation of volitional action, but also contribute uniquely. Control expectancy beliefs are more generalized beliefs about one's ability to set and attain goals, influencing both capacity and agency beliefs as well as the initiation of volitional action. Capacity beliefs contribute more directly to the initiation of volitional action (and specific causal capabilities), while agency beliefs contribute more directly to agentic action and the agentic capabilities that energize that action. Each of these is described in greater detail in the next section.

Causal Agency Theory

As will be detailed in Chap. 5 Causal Agency Theory specifies how one becomes self-determined. Within Causal Agency Theory, self-determination is defined as:

> …dispositional characteristic manifested as acting as the causal agent in one's life. Self-determined people (i.e., causal agents) act in service to freely chosen goals. Self-determined actions function to enable a person to be the causal agent is his or her life. (Shogren et al., 2015, p. 257)

Causal Agency Theory holds that self-determined action is characterized by three essential characteristics – volitional action , agentic action , and action-control beliefs . As has been discussed, the causal action sequence depicted in Fig. 2.2 begins with the organism's response to (or attempt to create) environmental opportunities and threats, resulting in the stimulation of action-control beliefs. In turn, these beliefs mediate causal action in the form of volitional and agentic action.

Briefly, as per Causal Agency Theory, volitional action is defined as making conscious choices based on one's preferences and engaging in self-initiated actions that promote autonomy. Agentic action refers to the process of identifying pathways that lead to specific ends and engaging in self-directing and self-regulating action to navigate environmental opportunities and threats. The primary operators in propelling volitional and agentic action involve the capability to perform causal actions or behaviors, subdivided into causal capability and agentic capability. Capability refers to the condition of being capable; that is, having requisite mental or physical capacity to accomplish a particular task. Two types of capabilities are important to causal agency; Causal Capability and Agentic Capability. These capabilities differentiate between the two aspects of causal action; (1) causing something to happen (e.g., Volitional Action) and (2) directing that action toward a preferred end (e.g., Agentic Action). As can be seen in Table 2.1, these capabilities provide an overarching theme for the skills and knowledge needed to develop and acquire in relation to the essential characteristics of Volitional Action and Agentic Action.

Table 2.1 Component elements of Causal Agency Theory

Essential characteristics	Component constructs	Component elements
Volitional action	Autonomy	**Causal capabilities**
	Self-initiation	Choice-making skills
		Decision-making skills
		Goal setting skills
		Problem solving skills
		Planning skills
Agentic action	Self-regulation	**Agentic capabilities**
	Self-direction	Self-management skills (self-monitoring, self-evaluation, etc.)
	Pathways thinking	Goal attainment skills
		Problem solving skills
		Self-advocacy skills
Action-control beliefs	Psychological empowerment	Self-awareness
	Self-realization	Self-knowledge
	Control expectancy	
	Agency beliefs	
	Causality beliefs	

Causal capability refers to the mental or physical capacity (e.g., the ability to perform an action or behavior) that enables a person to cause or make something happen. Such capacities include the skills and knowledge associated with making a choice or a decision, setting a goal, solving a problem, planning a course of action; the skills and behaviors that enable self-initiation and autonomous functioning and, as such, volitional action. However, we would emphasize that limitations to the number or complexity of such capacities that might otherwise hinder causal or agentic action can, in fact, be mitigated by a wide array of supports, including technological devices, social networks and supports, and so forth, thus enabling people who might otherwise not be able to perform requisite actions to, in fact, engage in causal action and become more self-determined.

Conclusion

Figure 2.1 introduced a theoretical model of the development of self-determination. This process involves the stimulation of action through the organism's response to contextual and environmental challenges (opportunities, threats) that energize basic psychological needs and resultant autonomous motivation, stimulating a causal action sequence in which volitional and agentic actions are mediated by action-control beliefs, resulting in experiences of causal agency. Repeated experiences of causal agency result in enhanced self-determination. Though explained by three different theories (Self-Determination Theory, Action-Control Theory, Causal Agency Theory), all share the broad metatheoretical assumptions inherent within human agentic theories that organismic aspirations drive behavior, and that humans engage in goal-directed activity to meet basic biological and psychological needs, influenced by contextual and environmental challenges, and that, by learning to engage in volitional and agentic action and developing action-control beliefs, causal agency increases ultimately enhancing self-determination and the agentic self. The following chapters will provide more detail on specific theories and process that also influence the development of the agentic self.

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