
INTRINSIC
MOTIVATION
== AND ==
SELF-DETERMINATION
== IN ==
HUMAN
BEHAVIOR

EDWARD L. DECI AND RICHARD M. RYAN

arly in this century, most empirically oriented psychologists believed that all motivation was based in the physiology of a set of non-nervous-system tissue needs. The theories of that era reflected this belief and used it in an attempt to explain an increasing number of phenomena.

It was not until the 1950s that it became irrefutably clear that much of human motivation is based not in these drives, but rather in a set of innate psychological needs. Their physiological basis is less understood; and as concepts, these needs lend themselves more easily to psychological than to physiological theorizing. The convergence of evidence from a variety of scholarly efforts suggests that there are three such needs: self-determination, competence, and interpersonal relatedness.

This book is primarily about self-determination and competence (with particular emphasis on the former), and about the processes and structures that relate to these needs. The need for interpersonal relatedness, while no less important, remains to be explored, and the findings from those explorations will need to be integrated with the present theory to develop a broad, organismic theory of human motivation.

Thus far, we have articulated self-determination theory, which is offered as a working theory—a theory in the making. To stimulate the research that will allow it to evolve further, we have stated self-determination theory in the form of minitheories that relate to more circumscribed domains, and we have developed paradigms for testing predictions from the various minitheories.

In working toward a broad motivation theory, we hope to contribute to the accelerating movement toward a motivational analysis of human functioning. For the past several years, theorists have been increasingly turning to motivational variables as central explanatory concepts in order to explain phenomena that were not well handled by previous theories that focused exclusively on behavioral or cognitive variables.

Our goal is to develop a truly organismic theory within empirical psychology. By assuming human agency (i.e., an active organism), by exploring the needs, processes, and structures that relate to it, and by exploring both the possibilities for and the limitations to human agency, we are attempting to explicate the dialectic of the organism's acting on and being acted upon by the social and physical environments. Since metatheories can be judged in part by the coherence and empirical utility of the theories that are built upon their foundation, we have tried to develop a theoretical framework that would give credence to this philosophical perspective.

Finally, our overriding, sociopolitical interest is examining the possibilities and obstacles for human freedom. In our thinking, this pertains not only to social, political, and economic structures, but also to internal psychological structures that reflect and anchor the external ones. It is our hope that, by engaging in a serious investigation of motivational issues, we can make some small contribution toward the larger goal of human freedom.

Preparation of this book, along with some of the research described in it, was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (BNS 8018628) and by the Xerox Corporation, through the efforts of John W. Robinson. The Department of Psychology at the University of Rochester has also supported our efforts. We are deeply indebted to all three organizations for helping to make this project possible.

For the past few years, we have been working to create the Human Motivation Program at the University of Rochester. Through the juxtaposition of scholars interested in motivation from the divergent viewpoints of social, developmental, personality, and clinical psychology, we have been able to stimulate dialogue, to facilitate research and scholarship, and to provide doctoral training in motivation as it relates to those basic areas and to their applied ramifications. Much of the work presented in this book has been done in collaboration with other people affiliated with the Human Motivation Program. In particular, James P. Connell has worked closely with us in developing the theory of internalization that appears in Chapters 5 and 9. We are indebted to Jim as well as to other faculty members in the Department of Psychology with whom we have collaborated, and we are grateful to all of the graduate students who have contributed to the research effort. We would especially like to acknowledge the significant empirical contributions of Wendy Grolnick, Richard Koestner, and Robert Plant. In addition, we express our appreciation for the efforts of our colleagues at other universities who have contributed greatly toward an explication of the issues raised in this book. Robert J. Vallerand made comments on several chapters

The study of motivation is the exploration of the energization and direction of behavior. Psychological theories are *motivational* theories only insofar as they address these two aspects of behavior.

Energy in motivation theory is fundamentally a matter of needs. An adequate theory of motivation must therefore take into account both the needs that are innate to the organism (i.e., those that must be satisfied for the organism to remain healthy) and those that are acquired through interactions with the environment. Direction in motivation theory concerns the processes and structures of the organism that give meaning to internal and external stimuli, thereby directing action toward the satisfaction of needs. Simply stated, then, the field of motivation explores all aspects of an organism's needs and the processes and structures that relate those needs to behavior; motivational theories organize the findings of those explorations.

It has often been said that the study of motivation is an inquiry into the *why* of behavior. Indeed, the field of motivation is concerned with answering *why* questions, although there are theories that have offered nonmotivational answers by focusing only on direction, to the exclusion of energization. These theories, therefore, are not motivation theories.

MOTIVATION THEORIES

Motivation theories are built on a set of assumptions about the nature of people and about the factors that give impetus to action. These assumptions, and the theories that follow from them, can be viewed as falling along a descriptive continuum ranging from the mechanistic to the organismic. Mechanistic theories tend to view the human organism as passive, that is, as being pushed around by the interaction of physiological drives and environmental stimuli, whereas organismic theories

Handbook of Self-Determination Research



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Self-Determination Theory

**Basic Psychological Needs
in Motivation, Development,
and Wellness**



Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci

When we began the project of developing self-determination theory (SDT), it was with a particular paradigmatic concern in mind. Both as researchers and clinicians, we felt there was a need for a Copernican turn in empirical approaches to human motivation and behavior change, finding the dominant approaches to these topics focused not on understanding how organisms naturally learn, develop, and self-organize actions, but on how they could be controlled to behave or change using external contingencies and cognitive manipulations. To us, this was a science pointing in the wrong direction. Our interest was not in how motivation can be controlled from without, but instead in how human motivation is functionally designed and experienced from within, as well as what forces facilitate, divert, or undermine that natural energy and direction.

The publication of this volume represents for us, if not the culmination of this effort, at least a further touchstone in providing a general paradigm for researchers and practitioners who are interested in active human functioning and wellness. Herein we hope to have provided a comprehensive statement of self-determination theorizing and the most up-to-date review of research since our initial volume together in 1985.)

Having said that, from our personal viewpoint, this book remains unfinished. That is not because we didn't try. We have been writing and revising each year, synthesizing the experimental and field research, the intervention results, and new theoretical extensions emerging around the globe. But each year there has been an enormous amount of new material to consider, with ever more studies appearing and additional phenomena being addressed. Finally, we simply had to surrender to the idea that this book must be published, however incomplete. The SDT community of researchers has been too active, too diverse, and too generative, reducing any attempt to review the theory as a whole to merely a snapshot of where the research and theory are at this particular moment.

There are many people who can be held responsible for this incessant growth of research in SDT, which has continually outpaced our ability to summarize it. But most generally we lay the blame upon the large and still growing community of SDT scholars who share information, methods, and practices through the Center for Self-Determination

theory (CSDT) website (www.selfdeterminationtheory.org) and at our triennial SDT International Conferences, held thus far in Rochester, New York (twice); Ottawa, Toronto, and Victoria, Canada; and Ghent, Belgium. This network of international scholars from more than 40 nations has been challenging, refining, and extending SDT's propositions in ways we had not imagined when we began this theoretical endeavor.

First, from early on in the formulation of SDT research, **Canadian scholars** have played an especially prominent role. Robert **Vallerand**, Luc **Pelletier**, and Richard **Koestner** enriched SDT through both **basic and applied research**. They are today joined by creative researchers across Canada, including, in random order, Fred **Grouzet**, Philip **Wilson**, Marc **Blais**, Frederick **Guay**, Genevieve **Mageau**, Mireille **Joussemet**, Isabelle **Green-Demers**, Celene **Blanchard**, Kim **Noels**, Michelle **Fortier**, Natalie **Houliort**, Claude **Fernet**, Caroline **Senécal**, Gaëtan **Losier**, Cameron **Wild**, Jacques **Forest**, Lisa **Legault**, Marina **Milavskaya**, and the many others who have made Canada a major center for SDT. Three of our six SDT conferences have been held in Canada, attesting to the fact that it continues to be a strong center of SDT research.

In **the European community**, SDT is similarly thriving. In Ghent and Leuven, Maarten **Vansteenkiste**, Bart **Soenens**, and their many colleagues, including Bart **Duriez**, Bart **Neyrinck**, Wim **Beyers**, Anja **Van den Broeck**, Luc **Goossens**, Beiwen **Chen**, Stijn **Van Petegem**, and the late **Willy Lens**, have stimulated an enormous amount of new research on **developmental and clinical processes associated with need-supportive and need-thwarting environments**. Their highly original work is often **longitudinal or experimental** and has contributed greatly to the theory. Nearby in the **United Kingdom**, scholars such as **Martyn Standage**, **Ian Taylor**, **David Markland**, **Helga Dittmar**, **Joan Duda**, **Kou Murayama**, **Simon Sebire**, and **Kimberly Bartholomew** have explored SDT formulations in varied spheres. In **Norway**, **Hallgeir** and **Anne Halvari** and their collaborators, such as **Anja Olafsen**, have extended SDT findings in **organizations, sport, and medicine**. Indeed, **all around Europe** are colleagues who have embraced SDT, including scholars such as **Andreas Krapp**, **Bruno Frey**, **Nicola Baumann**, **Athanasios Papaioannou**, **Symeon Vlachopoulos**, **Nicholas Gillet**, **Rashmi Kusurkar**, **Martin Olesen**, **Mia Reinholdt**, **Leen Haerens**, **Pedro Teixeira**, **Marlene Silva**, **Frank Martela**, **Stefan Tomas Güntert**, **Margit Osterloh**, **Isabel Balaguer**, **Philippe Sarrazin**, **Phillipe Carre**, **Alexios Arvanitis**, **Krzysztof Szadejko**, and **Juan Alanso**.

In **Israel**, especially centered at Ben-Gurion University, **Avi Assor**, **Guy Roth**, **Haya Kaplan**, **Idit Katz**, **Yaniv Kanat-Maymon**, **Moti Benita**, and others have built yet another major SDT research hub. They have opened up new territory in areas of **parenting and education** and have made theoretical breakthroughs in basic SDT ideas about **internalization and regulation in development, emotion regulation, and relationships**.

In **Asia**, scholarship on SDT has been robust and increasingly active. In **Singapore**, the Motivation in Education Research Lab (MERL) includes scholars such as **Woon Chia Liu**, **John Wang**, **Bee Leng Chua**, **Youyan Nie**, **Caroline Koh**, **Mingming Zhou**, **Coral Lim**, and **Masato Kawabata**, who have applied SDT to **multiple domains**, but especially to **education and sport**. In **Korea**, **Hyunshim Jang**, **Johnmarshall Reeve**, **Woogul Lee**, **Ayoung Kim**, and other scholars have been advancing SDT in terms of its analysis of teaching and learning processes and interventions, as well as exploring the neurological underpinnings of autonomous versus controlled motivations. In Japan, **Shigeo Sakurai**, **Tadashi Hirai**, **Nobuo Sayanagi**, **Takuma Nishimura**, **Ayumi Tanaka**, and **Quint Olga-Baldwin**; and in China, **Shui-fong Lam**, **Jian Zhang**, **Ye Lan**, **Liang Meng**, **Wilbert Law**, **Qingguo Ma**, **Qin-Xue Liu**, and **Junlin Zhao** are just a few of many Asian colleagues applying SDT to important problems, from language learning to Internet use.

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