

Abstract

Autonomy and Control in Human Behavior: Research and Applications Using Self-determination Theory

The motivation of behavior takes many forms, not all of which are volitional or authentic. Self-determination theory (SDT) distinguishes motivations in terms of the degree to which they are self-regulated or autonomous, versus regulated by external rewards or pressures that are experienced as controlling. People's quality of engagement, persistence and well-being are strongly affected by how autonomous or controlled they feel, a finding that replicates across collectivist and individualistic cultures. In this Lecture Professor Ryan will provide an overview of SDT, with emphasis on recent research in education, clinical care, sports, and work. He will detail how performance and well-being are affected by the motivational strategies of parents, teachers, managers, coaches, and clinicians. He will also highlight some unique phenomena, such as why video games are so addictive, why people can't wait for the weekend, and why we are intrinsically motivated to help others.