Chapter 12
Following the Drum:
Motivation to Engage and Resist

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of motivational theory from adult education, psychology and educational psychology, spanning nearly 60 years. The first half of the chapter focuses on the motivational theories in terms of their developmental genesis, while later sections examine the relationship between motivation and learning resistance and engagement. Final sections suggest conclusions regarding the importance of studying learning resistance as a construct over and beyond motivational theory and position learning resistance scholarship as a learner-centered, positive approach to adult learning.

INTRODUCTION

Taylor (2014) defines learning resistance as "a state in which a learner is not open to learning in a specific learning situation as demonstrated through either active rejection or passive disengagement" (p. 60). Defined this way, resistance has, as its more positive opposite, *engagement*. Learning engagement, or rather, engagement with the learning *situation* (though not necessarily acceptance of the learning *content*) is considered a "psychological process, specifically the attention, interest, investment and effort students expend in the work of learning (Marks, 2000, pp. 154-155). While resistance and engagement fit nicely together, conceptually speaking, motivation is less easily "snapped to grid" within the resistance-engagement continuum. Reeve (2015) defines motivation both in a technical manner as "those processes that give behavior its energy and direction" (p. 9), and also in a more colloquial sense by saying that motivational study is for understanding why people "do what they do" (p. 8). It would seem then, that motivation plays a role in both resistance and engagement. Taken together, the latter two definitions of motivation connect firmly with the former two of resistance and engagement and provide a simple yet compelling reason to examine motivational theories in the pursuit of a more complete understanding of learning resistance.

Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, it will examine a somewhat extensive collection of motivational theories with the purpose of providing a somewhat linear accounting of mainstream motivational theory as it has progressed over the past six to seven decades. Over and beyond that, it will use this as a framework for exploring the nature of the relationship motivation has with learning resistance. The analysis provided in the latter sections of this chapter address these issues on the macro level. It is intended to add clarity to the construct of learning resistance so that it may more effectively be brought to bear on the highly practical task of fostering learner engagement in every-day learning contexts.

MAINSTREAM MOTIVATION

Motivation has been addressed in the literature to such an extent as to make it difficult to distill the information into some type of concise summary while still achieving accuracy and remaining thorough. Indeed, the suggestion has been made that such a large number of theories and constructs can appear to be "fragmented and diffuse" (Pintrich, 2003, p. 667; Murphey & Alexander, 2000) and could possibly hinder progress in the field (Pintrich, 2003). There are many ways to arrange a discussion of motivational theories, and in previous scholarship they have been arranged according to the psychological, theoretical framework from which they hail, such as behaviorist, cognitive, social cognitive, and socio-cultural (Perry, Turner, & Meyer, 2007); centered around how they have dealt with a specific aspect of motivation such as self-beliefs (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007); focused on individual frameworks (Anderman & Wolters, 2007; Illeris, 2002); and a variety of other more or less effective approaches. While reviews of the literature have been largely cross-theoretical, ample literature exists on most all the individual theories of motivation. An effort has been made in this chapter to provide an overview of the most well-known and mainstream theories of motivation and should not be considered exhaustive.

It must be noted at the outset that in order to present the material in some sort of linear order for the ease of the reader, certain connections between concepts and constructs have been omitted. It seems that no matter how one arranges the material, many concepts can be linked back and related to different theories, and doing so with perfect attention to detail leads to a very difficult body of work to summarize. An example of such connections would be those that exist between locus of control, as used in attribution theories (Weiner, 1979, 1985; Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest, & Rosenbaum, 1971) and social cognitive theories (Rotter, 1954; Bandura, 1986). A tremendous number of such relationships exist between many of the theories but for the purpose of clarity, only a limited number of cross-references will be provided and it will be left to the reader to spot such connections between constructs, terminology, and theories. A succinct and orderly global integration of motivational theory in a limited amount of space requires that such liberties be taken.

The Distinction and Role of Emotion in Motivation

Before looking directly at motivation it is important to delineate the related concepts of emotion and motivation. There has been a growing emphasis in the sciences on the role of emotion in cognition over the past ten years (Damasio, 2012; Immordino-Yang, 2011). Reeve (2015) defines emotion as "the synchronized brain-based systems that coordinate feeling, bodily response, purpose, and expression so to ready the individual to adapt successfully to life circumstances" (p. 342). He goes on to point out that emotion acts as (a) one source of motivation, and (b) a sort of formative assessment of how well one's

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