

AI-01748 Influence vs Other-Determined

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Is influence similar or comparable to other-determined from SDT context.

Yes, "influence" is highly similar and comparable to "other-determined" within the context of Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

Here's why:

1. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) Continuum: SDT describes motivation on a continuum from "non-self-determined" to "self-determined." At one end of this continuum are behaviors that are completely other-determined, meaning they are driven by external forces, pressures, or rewards.
2. Influence as an External Force: "Influence" by its definition involves the power or capacity to affect or change someone or something in an indirect or intangible way, often without direct force or command. When this influence comes from external sources (e.g., societal expectations, peer pressure, rewards, punishments, authority figures), it aligns directly with the concept of "other-determined" behavior in SDT.
3. Undermining Autonomy: When individuals act primarily due to external influence, it can undermine their sense of autonomy, which is one of the three basic psychological needs in SDT (along with competence and relatedness). Feeling controlled or compelled by others' influence leads to less self-determined behavior and can diminish intrinsic motivation.
4. Locus of Control: In other-determined situations, the perceived locus of control for a behavior is external. The individual feels that their actions are driven by something outside of themselves, rather than by their own choices, values, or interests. External influence contributes to this external locus of

control.

Examples:

5. If a student studies hard because their parents influence them with the promise of a reward, that's an example of other-determined (extrinsically motivated) behavior influenced by external factors.
6. If an employee works overtime because their boss expects it (an external influence), rather than because they genuinely want to or find it fulfilling, it's considered other-determined.

While "influence" is a broader term that can also encompass internal factors (e.g., being influenced by one's values), in the context of SDT's "other-determined" pole, it specifically refers to the impact of external pressures, rewards, or social expectations that lead to a feeling of being controlled rather than acting out of free will.

In mentoring younger another human being, there is always a form of influence. How to determine if I am already crossing the line of demarcation between self-determine and other-determine. Explain and give realistic examples.

In mentoring, the line between self-determination and other-determination is indeed a subtle and crucial one. It hinges on whether you are empowering the mentee to make their own choices and develop their own path, or inadvertently imposing your own will, values, or solutions on them.

Here's how to determine if you're crossing that line, along with realistic examples:

Understanding the Concepts

1. **Self-Determination:** The mentee's ability and right to make their own choices, set their own goals, and take responsibility for their own actions and outcomes. It's about fostering their autonomy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
2. **Other-Determination:** The mentor's imposition of their will, solutions, or values onto the mentee, often without sufficient consideration for the mentee's unique circumstances, desires, or capabilities. This can stifle growth, create dependency, and lead to resentment.

Key Indicators You Might Be Crossing the Line

3. Providing Answers Instead of Asking Questions:

- Self-Determining: You ask open-ended questions that encourage the mentee to think critically, explore options, and arrive at their own conclusions. (e.g., "What are some potential solutions you've considered for this problem?" or "What are the pros and cons of each option from your perspective?")
- Other-Determining: You immediately offer your "solution" or tell them what they "should" do, even if they haven't fully explored the issue themselves. (e.g., "You should definitely do X, it worked for me." or "The only way to handle this is to approach your boss directly.")
- Realistic Example:
 - Crossing the Line: Your mentee is struggling with a difficult colleague. You immediately tell them, "You need to set up a meeting with your manager and report them."
 - Fostering Self-Determination: You ask, "How have you tried to address this so far? What are some different approaches you could take? What are the potential consequences of each approach?"

4. Imposing Your Values or Beliefs:

- Self-Determining: You help the mentee clarify their values and how those values might guide their decisions, even if they differ from your own. (e.g., "What's most important to you in this situation?" or "How does this decision align with your long-term goals?")
- Other-Determining: You assert that your way of thinking or your values are the "right" way, subtly or overtly pressuring them to adopt your perspective. (e.g., "I believe that career stability is paramount, so you shouldn't take that risky startup job." or "In my opinion, you should always prioritize family over work, regardless of the career cost.")
- Realistic Example:
 - Crossing the Line: Your mentee is considering a career change from a stable corporate job to a passion-driven but less financially secure field. You say, "Honestly, you'd be crazy to give up that security. Financial stability is everything."

- **Fostering Self-Determination:** You say, "It sounds like you're weighing stability against passion. What does success look like to you in this new field? What are your financial needs and how would you plan to meet them?"

5. Taking Over Their Problem-Solving Process:

- **Self-Determining:** You guide them through a problem-solving framework, helping them brainstorm, analyze, and evaluate options. (e.g., "Let's break down this problem. What are the contributing factors? What are some different strategies we could consider?")
- **Other-Determining:** You take the lead in solving their problem, presenting them with a fully formed plan or even contacting people on their behalf without their full consent or participation. (e.g., "Don't worry, I'll call my contact in HR and sort this out for you." or "Here's a detailed action plan I've put together for you to follow.")
- **Realistic Example:**
 - **Crossing the Line:** Your mentee is struggling to develop a presentation. You take their draft and completely rewrite it for them, presenting it back as "the corrected version."
 - **Fostering Self-Determination:** You review their draft with them, pointing out areas for improvement and asking questions like, "What message are you trying to convey here? How could you make this slide more impactful? What's your comfort level with public speaking, and how can we address that?"

6. Focusing on Your Own Experiences as the Only Blueprint:

- **Self-Determining:** You share your experiences as one possible pathway or perspective, emphasizing that their journey may be different. (e.g., "In a similar situation, I tried X, and it had Y outcome. What do you think might work for you?")
- **Other-Determining:** You present your own career path or life choices as the ideal or only successful model, implicitly or explicitly suggesting they follow in your footsteps. (e.g., "The only way to get ahead in this company

is to do exactly what I did." or "You must go to graduate school if you want to be successful, just like I did.")

- Realistic Example:
 - Crossing the Line: Your mentee is exploring different career paths. You tell them, "You absolutely have to get an MBA. That's how I got to where I am, and it's the only way to succeed in this industry."
 - Fostering Self-Determination: You say, "An MBA can be a valuable asset, and it certainly helped me in my career. What are your career goals, and how do you see an MBA potentially fitting into those? Have you explored other options for professional development?"

7. Over-Protection or Shielding Them from Consequences:

- Self-Determining: You allow them to experience the natural consequences of their choices (within safe and reasonable bounds), providing support and guidance for learning from those experiences. (e.g., "What did you learn from that outcome? How might you approach it differently next time?")
- Other-Determining: You constantly intervene to prevent them from making mistakes or facing challenges, thereby denying them opportunities for growth and resilience. (e.g., "Oh, don't worry about that meeting, I'll handle it." or "I told your boss you weren't feeling well so you didn't have to present.")
- Realistic Example:
 - Crossing the Line: Your mentee is tasked with a challenging project they're apprehensive about. You go to their manager and ask for the project to be reassigned to someone else without the mentee's full knowledge or consent.
 - Fostering Self-Determination: You say, "This sounds like a challenging project, but also a great opportunity for growth. What aspects are you most concerned about? How can we break it down into smaller, more manageable steps? I'm here to brainstorm and offer support as you navigate it."

The "How-To" for Maintaining the Line

8. Active Listening: Truly hear what your mentee is saying, both verbally and non-verbally. Understand their perspective, their goals, and their fears.
9. Empathy: Put yourself in their shoes. What challenges are they facing? What support do they need?
10. Respect for Autonomy: Recognize that your mentee is a unique individual with their own path. Your role is to facilitate, not dictate.
11. Focus on Process, Not Just Outcome: Guide them through how to think and solve problems, rather than just giving them the answer.
12. Empowering Language: Use phrases that encourage ownership and self-reflection (e.g., "What do you think?", "How might you approach this?", "What's your goal here?").
13. Clear Boundaries: Understand that your role is to advise and support, not to be a parent, therapist, or personal savior.
14. Regular Check-ins: Periodically reflect with your mentee on the mentoring relationship itself. Ask them if they feel supported in making their own decisions.

Crossing the line from self-determination to other-determination, even with the best intentions, can disempower a mentee. The goal of effective mentoring is to equip individuals with the tools, confidence, and self-awareness to navigate their own lives and careers successfully, fostering their independence rather than their dependence.