

"Control Theory": the importance of control, (Dialogue from 2009-2015)

I work now for the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, for the Office of Inspector General, doing research in health care. congratulations When I wrote you sometime ago, I was a rather "wide-eyed" graduate student who probably made some pretty neophytic comments. I think I mentioned to you that I thought control was at the core of all human behavior. And I think you provided some positive affirmations with subtle caveats that only experience affords someone. 😊

I have to be up front though and tell you that my graduate work and now couple years of research experience have dissuaded me or really changed my opinion about the prominence control plays in understanding human behavior. And I'd have to share with you that nothing has dissuaded me, either!!! In fact, I see it as the codification of power, and I once read a quote by Nietzsche who said all relationships involve power. If Nietzsche is correct, the only way to understand

power is by understanding control. ok, I get this...if you look at relationships, one primary aspect in all relationships is power (control battles, etc). I agree. I also agree that there are healthy and unhealthy ways to address those "battles" e.g., (tai chi dancing - (a form of gentle conflict resolution (see manual, module 3.3). ways of healing dialogue, etc..... (and I also would say control is important intrapersonally (i.e., how we deal with our selves (i.e., self-control) and how we create meaning and order in the universe.... (you know, the small themes of life!)...

What I am most surprised about is that Psychology has seemed to dismiss control as an important construct, usually only paying lip-service to Rotter's work and moved on to more romantic labels or theoretical orientations that simply rename or

re-invent control? again, "a" truth in what you say. although there still is substantial interest in "sense of control" self-control, self-regulation, willpower etc (you may want to look at chapters 1 and 2 of the control therapy book; and appendices 7 (and 10 in the control therapy training manual (at the website controlresearch.net.... (click researcher and then you can download the manual on the left side for free...

Therapy.... Either I'm wrong and didn't learn anything in graduate school, or the psychological community "missed" exactly what you were attempting to measure and explain? The word "control" is so pervasive in our language and culture, yet psychology seems to go to great lengths to discuss depression or anxiety, self-esteem, personality, or social constructs etc. without

ever really looking past the labels to the issues of control that likely drives the behavior under consideration. again, we're on same page. what I'd say a step more nuanced is that there are different aspects of control being used with different clinical populations (see SCI manual -again can be downloaded for free on the website, and the different "control profiles" of different groups: e.g., depression, anxiety, etc. (also see p. 48 in control therapy book)

I hope this email finds you well. You were always very positive when I corresponded with you in the past and I have always valued your responses to my questions and queries. Any guidance or suggestions you chose to offer now will be greatly welcomed.

again, I enjoy your missives. as I may have mentioned to you, I retired many years ago, and now live primary in a contemplative cave! This was a fun email to come out and receive!

I wish you all good luck with your work! I do have a suggestion. we have created a control therapy training manual (again, it's free and on the website.

We have used it for training therapists in Control Therapy. Our approach is what might be called "psychology from the inside out..." The first three modules involve those interested in Control Therapy to apply it to themselves. Let me invite you to go through the first three modules at your leisure. See what your own personal experience is with sense of control, modes, desire. Take the SCI yourself if you haven't already, and look at the print out...etc. (Module Four then is more how to "teach" Control Therapy to others, and wouldn't be as relevant to you.

If you have a chance to go through the first three modules, I'd be interested you feedback/reactions.

In the meantime, keep up the great work, thank you for such an interesting email, and I send you blessings of peace health, happiness, and an overall positive sense of control ☺

Warm regards,

Dr. S

2015

Hello Deane,

> I finished re-reading your book Control Theory and I just wanted to send
> you a brief note. I'm collecting data to test a theory I have been working
> on for several years. I mentioned it many years ago when I contacted you
> as a graduate student and said I thought all human behavior could be
> explained by control. I think you said you agreed except you said most
> "not all." NOW I MIGHT SAY "ALL" TO SOME EXTENT!::!!
> I hope you'll forgive me taking the construct you defined in your book and
> applying it in an
> Econometric sense as a foil to consumer behavior theory. In short, I argue
> in my theory that behavioral intensity (someone's likelihood to act in any
> circumstance) is proportional to the product or interaction between
> Nietzsche's will to power and their control profile (your theory) but
> inversely proportional to their risk assessment regarding the actions. I
> have worked the mathematical models and now I'm going to test the theory
> against Rational Choice theory. FASCINATING.....I'M INTRIGUED...
> I haven't shared my thoughts above with anyone but because my theory has
> been so influenced by your work, I wanted to tell you. I APPRECIATE YOUR
SHARING. I'm doing a survey
> now and I am planning on measuring control with your inventory. Please let
> me know if there are copywriter/and or licensing fees associated with the
> SCI now. THERE ARE NO FEES OR COPYWRITE ISSUES. YOU HAVE FREE USE OF
IT. THE INVENTORY CAN BE FOUND (AND ADMINISTERED) EASILY. GO TO
CONTROLRESEARCH.NET AND CLICK ON THE SCI TEST SITE. THERE YOU'LL BE
GUIDED HOW TO SET UP YOUR OWN ACCOUNT, AND TO THEN ADMINISTER IT TO
OTHERS. (TAKES ABOUT 5-7 MINUTES TO SET UP AN ACCOUNT. IT'S ALL HIPPA
PRIVACY PROTECTED, ETC. HOPE THIS HELPS. KEEP ME INFORMED AS YOU GET
SOME OF YOUR RESULTS...
> I hope this finds you and your family well. THANK YOU. THE KIDS AND
GRANDKIDS (4 AND ONE ON THE WAY) ARE ALL COMING FOR THANKSGIVING.
MAY YOU HAVE A GREAT (AND GRATEFUL) THANKSGIVING.
AGAIN, GREAT TO HEAR FROM YOU. KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK!:)
WARMLY, DEANE

April, 2009

>
HI MICHAEL, WHAT A GREAT EMAIL! I LOVE THE WAY YOU THINK...:) SOME
COMMENTS IN CAPS BELOW IN YOUR EMAIL....
Dr. Shapiro,
>
> My name is Michael Gates, and I am a doctoral student in Experimental
> Psychology at the University of North Texas, in Denton Texas. I am
> interested in the construct of control, which seems to garner little
> attention in the literature now unless it relates to either Rotter's or
> Bandura's work. Simply put, I believe that understanding control can form
> the foundation of understanding almost all human behavior. WHAT A WISE
MAN!!! Perhaps this is
> just the naiveté of a doctoral student, NAH...!!but I believe it
none-the-less. IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO EXPLORE FOR YOURSELF (A LA
JUNG) WHY CONTROL IS A TOPIC THAT GARNERS YOUR INTEREST...NOT THAT
THERE ISN'T "TRUTH" IN THE CONTROL CONSTRUCT, BUT WHAT ATTRACTS SOME OF
US TO IT?
>

> I have looked at your control inventory and compared it with Rotter's LOC
> and Wallston's HLOC. The SCI seems a much better measure of the
construct. THANKS. I THINK IT'S MORE COMPREHENSIVE, AND CAN BE MORE
NUANCED.....

> program. The professors that I have spoken with about control usually
> assume that control is adequately defined/bounded by Rotter's LOC theory
> and what's left over can be adequately captured by Bandura's work on
> self-efficacy. BOTH IMPORTANT. BOTH PART OF AN OVERALL THEORY AND
THERAPY OF CONTROL, BUT AS I'VE SUGGESTED, NOT THE WHOLE
PICTURE...Again, probably because of my inexperience/knowledge, I
> typically fail to explain why 'control' is a much more expansive construct
> than these theories discuss and, more importantly, why I believe control
> is fundamental to any theory that seeks to explain or predict human
> behavior.

>
> Any advice or direction that you might provide would be sincerely
> welcomed. I have read your article "Controlling Ourselves; Controlling
Our World" (December, 1996, American Psychologist), and it is an
excellent

> review of the theories and research on control. THANKS! I am in the

> teacher, I have seen first-hand how individual performance relates to
> student's perceptions of control, especially when control is
> operationalized in terms of content mastery, self-confidence, and (yes)
> self-efficacy. SOUNDS VERY INTERESTING! CLEARLY OTHER IMPORTANT
ASPECTS ARE MOTIVATION (I.E., DESIRE FOR CONTROL); AND HOW THEY DEAL
WITH SETBACKS AND ADVERSITY (INCLUDING THE USE OF THE YIELDING,
ACCEPTING MODE OF CONTROL). 56 .