

The Influence of Teacher and Peer Relationships on Students' Classroom Engagement and Everyday Motivational Resilience

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The quality of students' relationships with teachers and peers is a fundamental substrate for the development of academic engagement and achievement. This chapter offers teachers and researchers a motivational framework that explains how positive and negative student–teacher and student–peer relationships are sustained in the classroom, and strategies for creating solutions to improve relationships.

One of the most exhilarating experiences a teacher can have is to lead a class of enthusiastic, engaged students. It is easy to picture: Students are leaning forward in their seats, hands waving. Questions and opinions roll out, offering the teacher a clear picture of what students understand and where confusion remains. The material to be covered structures itself, its sequence and depth dictated by how fast students can digest the concepts. Students eagerly break into groups and continue animated discussions, showing their comprehension through questions, critical listening, and

arguing about examples as they apply the material to their own lives. The teacher is thoroughly energized, thinking about how the material to be covered next builds on that day's class. The teacher thinks, "Yes, this is why I went into teaching in the first place."

Student engagement and motivation are precious commodities, valuable not only to teachers but also to students. Students' school lives are more enjoyable when they are engaged in their classes. Engagement provides an energetic resource for coping with the challenges of schoolwork, promoting students' motivational resilience (Martin & Marsh, 2009). Long-term, student engagement is a predictor of student learning and achievement, retention and graduation from high school, and entry into and success in college (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Engagement is also a protective factor that buffers students from a host of risky behaviors in adolescence, including truancy, gang involvement, delinquency, and risky sexual behavior (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Janosz, Archambault, Morizot, & Pagani, 2008; Li & Lerner, 2011; Voelkl, 1997).

The power of academic engagement, demonstrated empirically in decades of research and coupled with evidence of its malleability, has resulted in great interest in the study of factors that foster its development. This work is made more urgent by the fact that student intrinsic motivation, engagement, and enjoyment of school all show linear declines across a student's academic career, with dramatic normative losses over the transitions to middle and high school (Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser, & Davis-Kean, 2006).

This chapter focuses on a fundamental substrate for the development of engagement, namely, the quality of students' *relationships* with teachers and peers. Indeed, an extensive body of research suggests the importance of close, caring *teacher*–student relationships and high-quality *peer* relationships for students' academic self-perceptions, school engagement, motivation, learning, and performance, and children who experience lower quality relationships with their peers—who are rejected or socially isolated—are more likely to become disaffected from school and drop out (Berndt & Keefe, 1996; Birch & Ladd, 1996; Hymel, Comfort, Schonert-Reichl, & McDougall, 1996; Juvonen, Espinoza, & Knifsend, 2012; Klem & Connell, 2004; Ladd, Herald-Brown, & Kochel, 2009; Martin & Dowson, 2009; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Wentzel, 2009a, 2009b).

Teachers and students recognize high-quality relationships; they seem effortless because they are intrinsically motivating, enjoyable, and mutually reinforcing. Teachers and students also know when relationships are *not* working, and unfortunately, such relationships are also self-sustaining in ways that detract from instruction and erode classroom cohesion. Everyone wants poor relationships to improve, but finding pathways to better

relationships is not easy. To support teachers in meeting this challenge, the goals of this chapter are: (1) to explain, from a motivational perspective, why classroom relationships work (and don't work), and (2) to offer practical strategies to help teachers improve the motivational dynamics of difficult relationships.

To accomplish these goals, we rely on a model of motivational development based in self-determination theory (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, & Wellborn, 2009). This model assumes that students innately come with a wellspring of intrinsic motivation and the desire and capacity to take responsibility for their own learning. The model has at its core a description of *motivational resilience*, which includes both *engagement* (i.e., enthusiastic, goal-directed participation in academic work; Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009), and *coping* (i.e., constructive ways of dealing with academic problems; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). The model provides a framework for organizing the factors that promote the development of motivational resilience. In offering a motivational analysis of classroom relationships, we draw on a strong evidence base and knit research into a coherent picture that can be useful for teachers and researchers who wish to more fully understand these relationship dynamics.

UNDERSTANDING OUR CURRENT EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE

Before launching into a motivational analysis of classroom relationships, we want to be mindful of the complex educational systems in which classrooms operate. Although a complete review is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to set the stage by describing a number of serious issues facing teachers in the United States today. Perhaps the most ubiquitous influence is the No Child Left Behind act (NCLB, 2002), which has created a climate of high-stakes testing and accountability found to be a significant source of stress for teachers (Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer, 2011). Certain NCLB provisions have particularly influenced teaching. The use of evidence-based practices has led to the standardization of instruction, which some argue marginalizes teacher expertise, especially for those who teach groups with different learning needs (e.g., English language learners or students with disabilities). The provision that teachers be highly qualified, which requires a bachelor's degree in the subject taught, has been difficult to achieve (e.g., for teachers in small, rural communities, given that they often teach multiple subjects). The provision that decision making be data driven has been linked to teachers spending less time one-on-one with students and more time on deficit-driven instruction (Valli & Buese, 2007).

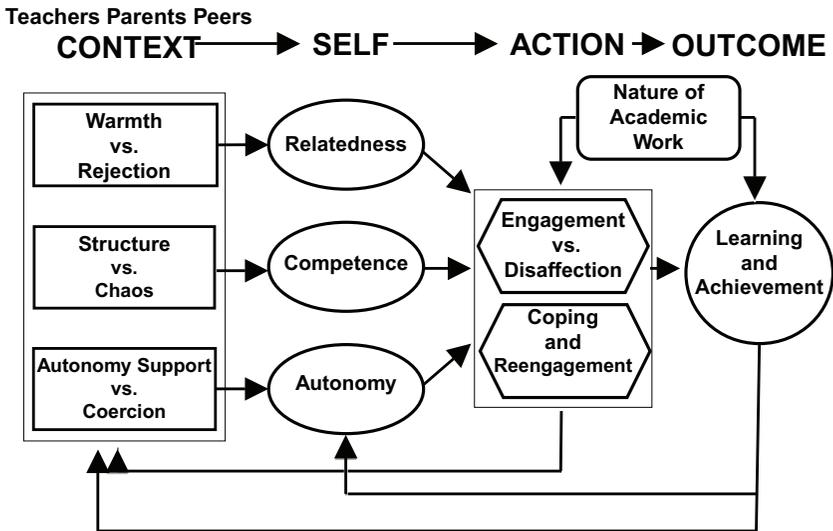
Moreover, teachers must contend with shrinking state budgets, multiple competing reform initiatives, changing student demographics, loss of school-based social services (e.g., health centers, counselors), and a range of other local conditions. These external realities amount to increased demands on teachers (e.g., larger classroom sizes, professional development requirements ranging from culturally responsive pedagogy to formative assessment data systems) in the face of reduced resources (e.g., loss of prep time, diminishing compensation). The bottom line is that teachers are forced to spend more time engaged in activities they feel compete with good teaching. In such a demanding context, it is perhaps even more important that today's teachers have tools for improving relationships, engagement, and motivation in the classroom, which provide some of the few buffers between external pressures and student learning (Rushton & Juola-Rushton, 2008).

RELATIONSHIPS THAT WORK IN THE CLASSROOM

It is easy to imagine high-quality relationships in the classroom: Interactions are courteous and kind, and they focus on learning the material and building academic skills; people say what they really mean and listen openly to others' perspectives; students provide constructive criticism and are receptive to feedback; the classroom is welcoming but focused on academics, and filled with laughter, challenging tasks, hard work, and mutual satisfaction and respect.

Why do these relationships work? One useful way of explaining the inherently complex dynamics of relationships is through the lens of a motivational model. The model holds that social partners promote development by supporting fundamental human needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Skinner, 1995; see Figure 1). *Relatedness* is the need to be connected to others or belong to a larger social group; *competence* is the need to feel effective in interactions with social and physical environments; and *autonomy* is the need to express one's authentic self and be the source of action. In the classroom, teachers and peers are social partners who can meet (or undermine) a student's needs via three pathways: (1) *relatedness* is promoted by *warmth* or undermined by *rejection*; (2) *competence* is promoted by *structure* or undermined by *chaos*; and (3) *autonomy* is promoted by *autonomy support* or undermined by *coercion*. When a student's needs are met, he or she is more likely to be engaged in classroom activities (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008).

Figure 1. The self-system model of motivational development



RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS

The basis for student–teacher relationships, like all close relationships, is interpersonal liking and trust. Students feel they belong in school when teachers express *involvement and warmth* (Martin & Dowson, 2009; Wentzel, 1997) by treating students with care and affection and showing students they enjoy having them in class. When teachers are dependable sources of emotional and instrumental support in difficult times, students feel connected to their teachers and safe at school.

Students also need *structured* interactions, in which teachers set high standards, clear expectations, and reasonable limits for students’ behaviors and performance and consistently follow through on their demands. Optimal structure includes teachers’ confidence in students’ underlying abilities as well as helping students figure out how to reach high levels of understanding and performance (Stipek, 2002). Especially important are breaking tasks into manageable components that students are ready to master, and the provision of informational feedback so that when students do not meet expectations, teachers explain to them how to improve. Together these shape students’ perceptions of themselves as academically competent, including their beliefs about what it takes to do well in school and their own capacities to enact those strategies.

Finally, teachers’ *autonomy support* shapes student motivation. When teachers treat students with respect and seek out, listen to, and value their

opinions, students are more willing to commit themselves to the hard work entailed in learning (Reeve & Jang, 2006; Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio, & Turner, 2004). If teachers give students options, encourage them to work on issues that are interesting and important to them, and provide explanations for why certain activities that are not intrinsically fun are nevertheless relevant and critical to learning, students internalize the value of learning. Together, these allow students to develop an autonomous orientation to schoolwork, to become self-regulated learners, and to take ownership of their own academic progress.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS

Warmth is a key feature of high-quality peer relationships (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Parker & Asher, 1993) and highly functional classroom climates (Cabello & Terrell, 1994). When students have opportunities to talk and listen to each other, provide emotional support, share learning experiences, and develop respect, they are more likely to feel that they belong and are understood and cared for by their peers. Warm interactions with classroom peers create a climate of comfort and help meet students' need for relatedness (Ciani, Middleton, Summers, & Sheldon, 2010; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Martin & Dowson, 2009).

Interactions with peers that contribute to *structure* in the classroom are also important for the development of a sense of control. Although they do not provide structure in the same way that teachers do, classroom peers provide contextual affordances that can support academic competence (Wentzel, 2009b). For example, when interacting with classmates, students practice communicating, give and receive feedback, model academic competencies, resolve conflicts, provide help and advice, and create shared academic goals and behavioral standards (Parr, 2002; Wentzel, 2009b). Predictable, instrumentally supportive interactions between classmates (e.g., interpreting teacher instructions, sharing materials) promote structure and, therefore, feelings of competence because students know they can rely on their peers for information and help.

Interactions with classroom peers can also fulfill students' need for autonomy. Similar to structure, peers are not autonomy supportive in the same way that teachers are (Guay, Boivin, & Hodges, 1999); however, research suggests that peers can promote each other's autonomy when they attempt to understand each other's viewpoints (Youniss & Haynie, 1992). When students work together to negotiate activities in the classroom, cooperate on group projects, examine and challenge their own beliefs, explain the relevance of classroom assignments to each other, engage in self-exploration, and share

their ideas, they cocreate an autonomy-supportive context (Beiswenger & Grolnick, 2010; Deci, La Guardia, Moller, Scheiner, & Ryan, 2006).

EVERYDAY MOTIVATIONAL RESILIENCE AND AUTHENTIC ACADEMIC WORK

Over time, warmth, structure, and autonomy support from teachers and peers not only operate as social resources but also help students to construct their own personal motivational resources by promoting positive self-perceptions of relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Students can draw on these resources when they encounter difficulties, coping constructively, reengaging with challenging academic tasks, and in general developing *everyday motivational resilience* (Martin & Marsh, 2009; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Taken together, these elements contribute to a classroom experienced by all its inhabitants as a caring learning community focused on *authentic academic work*. Authentic academic work comprises tasks that are project based, progressive, and integrated across subject matter and that students consider “meaningful, valuable, significant, and worthy of one’s effort” (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992, p. 23) because they are driven by important real-world questions relevant to students’ goals (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007; Wigfield et al., 2006). Classrooms become genuine cooperative learning communities when the efforts of all members are needed and valued and when they are directed toward collective learning goals that include each member’s progress and success.

RELATIONSHIPS THAT DON’T WORK IN THE CLASSROOM

Unfortunately, it is also easy to recognize relationships that do not work well in the classroom. Students are late for class, sullen, rude, unfriendly, unresponsive, unprepared, and *disaffected* from learning—that is, they are uninterested, rebellious, anxious, or burned out with academics (Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, & Wellborn, 2009). Students ignore their peers, or trade insults and hostility, taking offense over small transgressions and being pulled easily into arguments. The classroom is tense, and too much time is spent on disciplinary matters.

Why don’t these relationships work? The motivational model also provides a framework for understanding how relationships go awry. Teachers and peers can fail to meet a student’s fundamental needs, which results in disaffected motivational patterns and a lower likelihood of positive interpersonal interactions. Over time, poor relationships with teachers and peers become liabilities for students because of a lack of support and negative self-perceptions (e.g., feeling that one does not belong, is

incompetent, or is coerced in the classroom). During stressful academic encounters, disaffected students have fewer social and personal resources to draw on, increasing the likelihood they will have difficulty coping constructively or reengaging in challenging classroom activities, so they fall even further behind (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998; Skinner, 1995).

RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS

The model posits that teachers undermine students' motivational needs when they interact with students in ways that are rejecting, chaotic, or coercive (see Figure 1). *Rejecting* interactions communicate to students that they are not welcome or valued in class. Teachers sometimes overlook students, failing to remember their names or learn about their backgrounds. Teachers can express disinterest by not having time for students, cutting them short, disregarding their input, or not listening to their perspective. Dislike can also be communicated by an irritated or impatient tone of voice, sarcastic comments, or criticism aimed at a student's personality or abilities.

During *chaotic* interactions, students experience teachers as inconsistent, undependable, or arbitrary in their expectations or follow-through, especially in grading or rule-following. Teaching can also be chaotic if educators do not explain to students how to accomplish learning tasks or explain in ways students cannot comprehend. Feedback about performance can be chaotic if it is absent or focuses only on what is wrong rather than how to improve. Especially important are teachers' reactions when students request support. If teachers are unavailable, students soon learn not to count on them. Cumulatively, chaotic experiences can make students feel they do not know how to succeed in school and are helpless and incompetent (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Connell, 1998).

Coercive or controlling interactions with teachers are ones in which students feel pressured, pushed, or bossed around (Reeve, 2009). Coercive tactics rely on external sources of motivation, such as commands, deadlines, incentives, and threats of punishment, and they involve pressuring language, including impatience, guilt-inducing criticism, "should," "must," and "have to." Coercive reactions to students' negative affect (such as boredom or discouragement) include power assertions in which teachers deny the validity of students' experiences and instead insist on compliance using authoritarian reasons (e.g., "because I said so"). "Indirect" control strategies create internal compulsions to act—feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety, or threatening to withdraw approval (Reeve, 2009). Cumulatively, coercion undermines autonomous self-regulation and prevents students from developing a sense of ownership of their own learning.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS

Similar to teachers, the model suggests that peers can fail to meet a student's needs when they are rejecting, confusing, or coercive (see Figure 1). *Hostile* or rejecting interactions with peers erode feelings of belonging. Indeed, research has found that hostile, rejecting, or detached friendship groups make adolescents feel lonely and alienated (Guay et al., 1999) and promote social anxiety and distress (La Greca & Lopez, 1998). Patterns of rejection can range from outward hostility (e.g., bullying) to more subtle forms of neglect (e.g., indifference). In the classroom, rejection has been related to losses in academic motivation and performance (Buhs, Ladd, & Herald, 2006).

Chaotic, confusing, or unpredictable interactions with peers (e.g., telling lies, teasing, emotional outbursts, exclusion) make it difficult for students to feel competent and in control in the classroom. For example, peer victimization (often experienced as unpredictable peer interactions) has been shown to interfere with students' ability to attain academic competencies, which leads to reduced classroom participation, inability to persist when facing academic challenges, and lower achievement (Iyer, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Eisenberg, & Thompson, 2010).

Coercive interactions (e.g., manipulative, controlling, or enmeshed) devalue a student's genuine preferences and diminish his or her sense of autonomy. Children involved in coercive friendships, for example, tend to use direct or hostile strategies to control each other and to have extrinsic motivations toward friendship (e.g., popularity; Hawley, Little, & Pasupathi, 2002). Coercive interactions with classroom peers (e.g., pressure to cheat, not appear "too smart," withhold views for fear of rejection) can erode participation and damage feelings of safety and acceptance in the classroom.

EVERYDAY MOTIVATIONAL RESILIENCE AND DISAFFECTION

Over time, students with a history of feeling rejected, helpless, or coerced by teachers and peers accumulate self-doubts and other motivational liabilities. As a result, when faced with difficulties, disaffected students have neither the personal nor social resources to bounce back and are prone to utilize maladaptive coping strategies and to give up (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Not surprisingly, these patterns are related to lower academic achievement, dropout, and other disadvantages for students (Finn & Rock, 1997; Janosz et al., 2008; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997).

HOW CAN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CLASSROOM BE IMPROVED?

Poor relationships in the classroom are not only hard on students but also a source of stress for teachers. In fact, motivational and disciplinary problems with students are among the most upsetting issues teachers face (Chang, 2009). The model provides a perspective on why student disaffection is stressful and why it may be hard for teachers to maintain their *own* enthusiastic engagement with teaching in the face of apathetic or disruptive student behavior. If teacher engagement in teaching, like student engagement in learning, is promoted by feelings of relatedness, competence, and autonomy, then student disaffection could undermine these needs.

Teachers can take student disinterest or hostility as a personal affront—evidence that students do not like them—thereby impinging on teachers' needs for *relatedness* (Klassen, Perry, & Frenzel, 2012; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). Alternatively, student disaffection could make teachers feel they are not *competent* in their jobs; otherwise students would be interested and attentive (Woolfolk, Hoy, & Davis, 2009). Teachers may also find student disengagement to be *coercive*—it prevents them from getting on with their own goals and lesson plans and can force them into unwanted confrontations (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). To the extent that their basic needs are not being met, teachers may experience their *own* form of disaffection—sometimes with a specific student or class and sometimes with the profession itself, which can be a risk factor for teacher burnout and desistance (Chang, 2009; Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008).

The motivational model suggests that poor student–teacher relationships are unlikely to improve spontaneously because student disaffection elicits teacher disaffection, thereby forming a “vicious circle.” Indeed, when students are passive, unmotivated, bored, or openly hostile, teachers tend to respond either by withdrawing their attention or by becoming more demanding (Furrer & Skinner, 2009; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Both of these typical responses add fuel to the fires of disaffection, as students interpret these teacher behaviors as evidence that “this teacher doesn’t like me” or “this teacher is so mean.” In the language of the motivational model, teachers typically respond to student disaffection with decreasing involvement and increasing rejection and coercion, just the kinds of reactions that *escalate* student disaffection.

Hence, it would be useful for students and teachers alike if pathways out of mutual disaffection could be initiated by teachers. The model suggests several routes, and each starts by encouraging teachers to view student motivational issues not as evidence of inadequacies in their teaching or students' character flaws, but instead as *information* about classroom dynamics.

If teachers can see classroom relationships as valuable sources of information (along with student performance) to help “diagnose” the causes of motivational problems, teachers can use their observations to shape their responses into remedies. Table 1 presents the motivational principles guiding relationships in the classroom and can serve as a reference tool for teachers to use in analyzing their own classroom relationships.

Table 1. Motivational Principles Guiding Relationships in the Classroom Relationships That Work

1. Student–teacher and student–peer relationships inherently include self-sustaining engagement in high-quality teaching and learning, characterized by focused enthusiastic hard work and constructive responses to obstacles and setbacks, or *motivational resilience*.
2. Relationships generate mutual satisfaction and success by contributing to teachers’ and students’ experiences of relatedness to their social partners in the classroom, to their competence as teachers and learners, and to ownership of the goals of creating a caring learning community dedicated to important academic work.
3. Teachers have a special responsibility to support student motivation and learning through the provision of warmth and involvement, optimal structure, and support for autonomy.

Relationships That Don’t Work

1. Student–teacher and student–peer relationships inherently include mutual disaffection from the goals of teaching and learning, resulting in distrust, antipathy, discouragement, frustration, and chronic stress in which energy is channeled toward disciplinary encounters or drained away.
2. Students *and* teachers are at risk for burnout; they feel uncomfortable in the classroom, incompetent and helpless as teachers and learners, and forced to participate in activities that are no longer productive or meaningful.
3. Teachers typically withdraw their regard and involvement with students or become more demanding and coercive. These reactions, although understandable, escalate students’ alienation and lead to further deterioration of relationships.

Self-System Model of Motivational Development

1. The motivational model offers a framework for analyzing the needs that underlie student and teacher engagement and can offer explanations for the dynamics that sustain positive and negative teacher–student and student–peer relationships in the classroom.
2. Awareness of these dynamics can help teachers identify and initiate interactions likely to lead toward more satisfying relationships for students with their teachers and peers.
3. Student engagement and disaffection provide information about what may be going on in students’ heads about their participation in the classroom, specifically about whether they feel like they fit in (relatedness), whether they are able to do the work (competence), and whether the activities seem relevant and important to them personally (autonomy).
4. If teachers can use students’ patterns of action in the classroom to diagnose underlying motivational issues, they can respond to disaffected students in ways that are more likely to renew their intrinsic motivation and improve their relationships with teachers and peers.
5. High-quality relationships are the foundation for the continued development of healthy self-perceptions, motivational resilience, and increased ownership of the learning process.

COMMON SIGNS THAT THINGS AREN’T WORKING AND WHAT TO DO

The motivational model provides a framework for teachers to “diagnose and treat” the dynamics of difficult relationships. We suggest a five-step process, starting with an observation of student behavior and ending with ideas for ways teachers can provide motivational support. The interim steps can help teachers understand both their own and their students’ experiences in the classroom. We walk through two examples to illustrate how the model can be applied in everyday teaching situations.

MOTIVATIONAL ILLUSTRATION #1: STUDENT RESISTANCE

1. **What teachers see: Resistance.** Perhaps the most common sign that a student–teacher relationship is not working is when a student resists participating in class and becomes defiant or oppositional. Resistance exemplifies a motivational pattern that is particularly visible and potentially explosive. Such behavior can disrupt the entire class, derail instruction, and encourage similar behavior in other students.

2. **How might teachers interpret the behaviors and respond?** Resistant behavior directly challenges teachers' needs for autonomy/authority and competence. Teachers might initially feel frustrated when a resistant student seizes the class's attention, and then helpless about how to bring the focus back to instruction. A teacher's first impulse may be to respond with punishment (e.g., sitting the student next to the teacher's desk or assigning extra homework) or by removing the student from class.
3. **How might a student experience the teacher's typical response?** A resistant student might experience the teacher's coercive reactions as unfair, unreasonable, or mean. In response, the student might withdraw from classroom activities or become aggressive. Some coercive teacher reactions, such as sending the student out of class, also lead to losses in instruction, which contribute to the student falling further behind. In response, the student refuses to care about missing classroom activities and is even less motivated to reengage. In the end, the teacher's coercive response could intensify resistance and defiance rather than reduce it.
4. **What could be going on for the student?** The motivational model suggests that resistant behavior occurs because the student's needs are not being met. Resistant students are especially sensitive to the need for autonomy—not only do they experience school as coercive, offering little choice in terms of instruction, activities, and perhaps even peers, but also they do not see the relevance of these things to their own life and future plans. It is likely that these students are also behind for their grade level, leading to feelings of incompetence. One response to feeling that school is irrelevant and coercive is to actively oppose it by resisting participation, verbally attacking other students and teachers, getting kicked out of class or suspended, skipping school, and eventually dropping out (Valerand et al., 1997).
5. **How could teachers provide motivational support?** A resistant student needs a teacher who recognizes that he or she is asking for autonomy support rather than punishment. Providing students with choice is the most obvious way to support autonomy, leading to improvements in interest, effort, and task performance (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Patall, Cooper, & Wynn, 2010). Research suggests that choices are optimally motivating when they are relevant to a student's interests, appropriate in number and complexity, and fit with a student's cultural beliefs (Katz & Assor, 2007). Providing choice may not be a good *immediate* response to oppositional behavior, but

rather a deterrent to help reshape the student's classroom experiences. Other autonomy supportive practices include (1) listening to and acknowledging the student's perspective even if it involves negative affect; (2) creating opportunities for students to work in their own ways; (3) ensuring that students actively engage with each other, materials, and discussion rather than listen passively; (4) using noncontrolling language; and (5) explaining the personal importance of activities (Reeve, 2006; Stefanou et al., 2004).

MOTIVATIONAL ILLUSTRATION #2: STUDENT ASSOCIATING WITH DISAFFECTED PEERS

- 1. What teachers see: Associating with disaffected peers.** One common sign that student–peer relationships are not working to promote engagement in the classroom is disaffected peers sitting together, talking, and choosing each other as partners. Together, disaffected peers can companionably withdraw from classroom activities, disrupt class, avoid instruction, and create behavioral norms not conducive to learning.
- 2. How might teachers interpret the behavior and respond?** Teachers might initially be annoyed with the cluster of disaffected peers and feel challenged to maintain order. A teacher's first impulse may be to split up the group (e.g., make them sit apart, forbid them to work together, remove one from class). Teachers might also try to avoid conflict by ignoring the disaffected peer group, allowing them to get by without mastering the material and passing them along to another teacher. In either case, the teacher's response reinforces the power of a disaffected peer group and encourages a pattern of continued disaffection.
- 3. How might a student experience the teacher's typical response?** In response to the teacher's neglect or coercion, the students in the disaffected peer group might think that the teacher does not like or care about them and that they do not belong in the classroom. Feeling rejected by their teacher (or other classroom peers), these students turn to their disaffected peers to meet their needs for relatedness.
- 4. What could be going on for the student?** Disaffected students typically affiliate with each other because they feel rejected by their engaged classmates (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989). Students who associate with disaffected peers likely have a low sense of classroom relatedness: The classroom feels uncomfortable, and

they feel misunderstood, disregarded, and left out. Although feelings of classroom relatedness are low, disaffected peers can approve of and reinforce each other's disaffection, thereby meeting their needs for relatedness.

- 5. How could teachers provide motivational support?** Students who associate with disaffected peers need a teacher who recognizes that the whole group must be reengaged and made to feel part of the classroom community. In terms of meeting relatedness needs, teachers can communicate unconditional regard for the group and refuse to allow them to withdraw from the classroom. A teacher could take special interest in the peer group, endeavoring to learn more about them and aligning classroom activities to their interests. Another strategy might be to create special roles for these students, thereby demonstrating their worth, purpose, and belonging. By providing meaningful opportunities to collaborate on learning tasks and creating interdependence among students, teachers can increase positive social interactions for all students. Such tactics could help to reengage the disaffected peers, providing them access to engaged classmates and making the classroom community safe and productive (Anderman, 2003; Cabello & Terrell, 1994; Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Jennings, 2003; Soodak, 2003).

Table 2 presents a motivational analysis of other common relationship issues in the classroom (e.g., passivity, giving up, utilizing peers for cheating). This framework suggests ways to identify motivational problems, understand their underlying dynamics, and develop ideas for reshaping classroom relationships. At the same time, teachers will need to expand the framework using their own expertise to contextualize its application to specific classrooms, students, and academic topics at particular grade levels.

Table 2. Motivational Analysis of Common Relationship Problems in the Classroom

1. What Do Teachers See in the Classroom?	2. How Might Teachers Interpret the Behaviors and Respond?	3. How Might a Student Experience the Teacher's Response?	4. What Could Be Going on for the Student?	5. How Could Teachers Provide Motivational Support?
<p><i>Motivational Problems in the Classroom</i></p> <p>Defiance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student resists participation, actively defiant or oppositional. • Example: Student argues, talks back, refuses to work. 	<p><i>Low sense of relatedness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This student hates me <p><i>Low sense of competence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of control <p><i>Autonomy blocked.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student interferes with goals • Frustration or anger <p>REACTION: Coercion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Command, insist, confront • Punish – remove privileges • Remove from classroom 	<p><i>Low sense of autonomy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher is unfair • Withdraws from classroom activities • Becomes more aggressive • Doesn't care about missing classroom activities 	<p><i>Low sense of autonomy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels pressured, pushed • No ownership of work • Blames teacher for problems 	<p><i>Provide Involvement.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out about their goals • Find out about their interests <p><i>Provide Structure.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More appropriate choices <p><i>Provide Autonomy Support.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sense of purpose, explain relevance and importance • Give leadership opportunities • Provide authentic academic work
<p>Passivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is invisible in the classroom. • Example: Student is quiet, never raises hand, never makes trouble. 	<p><i>Low sense of relatedness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student doesn't like being in my classroom • Not sure how to connect <p>REACTION: Neglect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not notice student • Ignores student • Allows student to "get by" because (s)he doesn't make trouble 	<p><i>Low sense of relatedness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher doesn't like me • Withdraws from classroom activities • Avoids connection with teacher/peers 	<p><i>Low sense of relatedness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels shy • Feels insecure • Feels peripheral 	<p><i>Provide Involvement.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to them, get to know them • Express interest, warmth <p><i>Provide Structure.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect more • Check in to see if need help • Give informational feedback <p><i>Provide Autonomy Support.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop common plan of action to increase participation based on student's goals
<p>Quitting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is easily frustrated, gives up. • Example: If student has difficulty, (s)he quits working. If student does badly, (s)he won't study for next time 	<p><i>Low sense of competence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain how to proceed • Helplessness • Frustration <p>REACTION: Coercion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell them to try harder • Threaten with consequences • Motivate by comparing to higher performing students <p>REACTION: Neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just moves on, misses instruction & mastery 	<p><i>Low sense of competence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher/peers think I'm stupid • Doesn't get it • Tries to just get by • Frustrated 	<p><i>Low sense of competence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels stupid • Feels confused • Not sure what to do next 	<p><i>Provide Involvement.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express unconditional regard <p><i>Provide Structure.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide multiple strategies • Focus on effort and improvement • Give informational feedback • Break task into smaller parts <p><i>Provide Autonomy Support.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow repeated attempts • Focus on learning goals • Explain relevance and importance of learning activities

<i>Peer/Motivational Problems in the Classroom</i>				
<p>1. What Do Teachers See in the Classroom?</p> <p><i>Peers are a bad influence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student associates with disaffected peers. • Example: Student sits with and talks to disaffected peers, chooses them for group projects 	<p>2. How Might Teachers Interpret the Behaviors and Respond?</p> <p><i>Low sense of competence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain how to proceed <p><i>Autonomy blocked.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group interferes with goals • Frustration or anger <p>REACTION: Coercion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break up students by sending one to the principal's office • Place in separate groups • Pit one against the other <p>REACTION: Neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow them to do standard work to avoid conflict 	<p>3. How Might a Student Experience the Teacher's Response?</p> <p><i>Low sense of teacher relatedness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher doesn't like me or my friends • Teacher doesn't care about me 	<p>4. What Could Be Going on for the Student?</p> <p><i>Low sense of peer relatedness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels rejected by peers • No access to engaged peers • Feels unwelcome in group with engaged peers 	<p>5. How Could Teachers Provide Motivational Support?</p> <p><i>Revenge Whole Group.</i></p> <p><i>Provide Involvement.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express unconditional regard • Create roles in the classroom <p><i>Provide Structure.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover what they are good at • Create opportunities to experience mastery <p><i>Provide Autonomy Support.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sense of purpose, explain why they are needed
<p><i>Overly focused on peers.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student prioritizes friends over schoolwork • Example: Student talks with friends during class, is late because of friends 	<p><i>Low sense of competence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not a good teacher • Uncertain how to proceed <p>Frustration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to front of class <p>REACTION: Coercion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move, so not sitting near friends • Punish by sending out of class • Embarrass (nicknames, calling out in class) 	<p><i>Low sense of autonomy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher is unfair • Withdraws from classroom activities • Tries to just get by 	<p><i>Low sense of autonomy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't see schoolwork as important • Doesn't see connection to own life and goals 	<p><i>Provide Involvement.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know student interests and goals <p><i>Provide Structure.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities to experience mastery <p><i>Provide Autonomy Support.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sense of purpose, explain why schoolwork is relevant and important • Provide authentic academic work
<p><i>Cheating with peers.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student & friends do not do their own work. • Example: Student does work for friends, student cheats or allows cheating in class. 	<p><i>Autonomy blocked.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is defying me • Frustration or anger <p><i>Low sense of relatedness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students think I'm a pushover <p>REACTION: Coercion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveillance and punishment • Move, so not sitting near friends 	<p><i>Low sense of competence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher thinks I'm stupid • Confused about how to proceed 	<p><i>Low sense of competence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees grades as most important outcome • Is not confident can reach grades without cheating • Does not want to exert effort needed to get grades 	<p><i>Provide Involvement.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know interests and goals <p><i>Provide Structure.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide multiple strategies • Focus on effort and improvement • Give informational feedback <p><i>Provide Autonomy Support.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote learning goals • Allow repeated attempts • Provide authentic academic work

REMEMBERING OUR CURRENT EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE

The motivational model offers teachers a framework for creating solutions for common motivational problems. At the same time, teachers may find that these strategies are challenging to implement in the school systems where they actually work. The stresses that educators enumerate, compounded by the pressures of high-stakes testing, can make it difficult for teachers' own basic needs to be met, thus eroding the social and personal resources they depend on to serve their students. Nevertheless, the picture of cooperative learning communities painted in this chapter is worth aspiring to, both for teachers and those trying to support them. Benefits to students will be visible in their enthusiastic engagement, productive coping, and academic achievement. Benefits also accrue to teachers, providing them the joy of participating in meaningful learning processes with motivated students. All teachers should have such experiences daily to support their own learning and engagement in teaching.

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derived from self-determination theory. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 43, 16–36; and Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., & Skinner, E. A. (2011). The development of coping across childhood and adolescence: An integrative review and critique of research. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 35, 1–17.

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