A Theory of Motivation for Some Classroom Experiences

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A theory of motivation based upon attributions of causality for success and failure is offered. The heart of the theory consists of an identification of the dimensions of causality and the relations of these underlying properties of causus to psychological consequences. Three central causal dimensions have been discerned: stability, loci, and control; these dimensions, respectively, are linked with expectancy change, self-affect relations, and interpersonal judgments. Within achievement-related contexts, the theory is pertinent to a diverse array of phenomena and topics, including self-esteem maintenance, achievement-change programs, classroom investigations, self-efficacy, and related matters. The range of the theory is further demonstrated by applications in hyperactivity, anxiety, parental decisions, loneliness and affiliation, and depression. It appears that a general theory of motivation is under development that has important implications for the understanding of classroom thought and behavior.

The attributional approach to classroom motivation and experience has proven exceedingly rich. In this article I examine the particular attributional pathway I have followed and document its richness by outlining a few of the empirical and theoretical relations that appear to be conclusive. The assertion of the theorematical framework suggests that a general theory of motivation is under development; I also address the issue of theoretical breadth here.

Some of the thoughts expressed in this article have been voiced in previous reviews (Weiner, 1972, 1964, 1965). With such periodicity to take stock of where we are, some ideas become more firmly fixed, others are discarded and new presumptions take their place. Some earlier evidence gains in stature, and other prior data require reinterpretation. There certainly is some advantage to the debit of publish and perish, which allows one to convey his or her ideas in a single, self-contained, and final package. Like most others, however, I communicate my thoughts as they evolve, and prior questionable truths give way to new, equally-un-

certain laws, while other notions remain unchanged.

The Search for Causes

A central assumption of the attributional theory, which sets it apart from pleasure-pain theories of motivation, is that the search for understanding is the (or one) basic "spring of action." This does not imply that humans are not pleasure seekers, or that they never bias information in the pursuit of hedonic goals. Rather, information seeking and veridical processing are believed to be normative, may be manifested in spite of a conflicting pleasure principle, and, at the least, comprehension stands withhedonism among the primary sources of motivation (see W. Meyer, Folkes, & Weiner, 1976).

In a school setting the search for understanding often leads to the attributional question of "Why did I succeed or fail?" or, more specifically, "Why did I think this?" or "Why did Mary get a better mark on this exam than me?" But classrooms are environments for the satisfaction of motivations other than achievement. Thus, attributional questions also might pertain to, for example, interpersonal acceptance or rejection, such as "Why doesn't Johnny like me?" However, for the time being attention will be centered upon achievement concerns.

References


Among the unknowns of this attribution analysis is a clear statement of when people ask “why” questions. It has been demonstrated that this search is more likely given failure (after-the-fact) than success (in advance). Furthermore, it is plausible to speculate that unexpected events are more likely to lead to “why” questions than expected events (Fishbein & Kantor, 1978), and that subjective importance also will influence the pursuit of knowledge. Finally, it has been demonstrated that, during task performance “nature-oriented” or “helplessness” studies, especially if random attribution biases, helplessness can be inferred. The ability of tasks, such as problem-solving, to generate a number of experiences, is significant because of the immediate awareness and, are intimately tied with self-esteem and self-concept.

Thus, I believe that attribution is supplied by the mastery-oriented children as well, although not necessarily during or immediately following the task performance.

Near the beginning of the study, it was suggested that the perceived causes of success and failure (Weiner, 1975, Frieze, 1971, Elkind, 1971) was supposed by Heider (1958) and others (see, for example, Fishbein, 1970, and Frieze, 1972). These studies have been conducted (there is undoubtedly many more in the study) and there have been a number of studies that examine attribution processes in the classroom context (see, e.g., work experiences and athletic experiences). The methodologies of the classroom studies require some minor variations, with students or teachers attributing causes of success or failure at real or imagined events, and judging themselves or others. The responses are then categorized and tabulated.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Causes</th>
<th>Failure Causes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abilities</td>
<td>Ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical effort</td>
<td>Effort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immediate effort</td>
<td>Expectation</td>
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<td>Task</td>
<td>Ability</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>Effort</td>
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In turn, there are many perceived causes of achievement events. In a cross-cultural study, it was again suggested that people in Greece and Japan and had numerous findings that are perceived as causes of successes and failures (Triandis, 1972). But there is a rather small list from which the main causes repeatedly are selected. Furthermore, within this list ability and effort appear to be the most salient and general of the causes. That is, outcomes are frequently dependent upon what we can do and how hard we try to do it. A clear conceptual analysis of ability and effort would greatly add to our knowledge of attribution theory.

Dimensions of Causality

Inasmuch as the list of conceivable causes of success and failure is infinite, it is essential to create a classification scheme or a taxonomy of causes. In so doing, similarities and differences are delineated and the underlying properties of the causes are identified. This is an indispensable requirement for the
The earlier theoretical analyses of Rotter (1966) and Heider (1956) were available to serve as our initial guides in this endeavor. As a result, Heider and his colleagues proposed a one-dimensional classification of causality, Causes were either causal (internal) or non-causal (external) to the behavior. In a similar manner, Heider (1958) as well as Lerner (1958, 1959), and many others have attempted to develop an internal-external classification of causality. Rotter labeled this dimension the control of behavior, whereas in the present context it is conceptualized as a backward-looking behavior and referred to as focus of causality. Indeed, I contend that the concepts of locus and control must be specified.

The causes listed in Table 1 can be readily cataloged as internal or external to the individual. From the perspective of the student, the personal causes include ability, effort, mood, maturity, and health, while teacher, task, and family are among the external causes of causality. The relative placement of a cause on this dimension is not invariate over time or between people. For example, health might be perceived as an internal ("I am a sickly person") or as an external ("The teacher gave me a bad grade") cause of failure. Inasmuch as attribution theory deals with personal and external causes of causality, the personal interpretations made by taken into account. That is, the location placement of a cause depends upon its subjective meaning for the individual. It is not possible, in spite of possible individual variations, that there is a general agreement among psychologists that distinguishing causes as internal or external.

A second dimension of causality, which we now come to perceive as equally important, is labeled stability (Weiner, 1977). The stability dimension distinguishes causes as stable (irrelevant over time) or unstable (variable over time). Again Heider (1958) as well as others have provided the data that cause an event to be attributed to stable causes will be considered relatively fixed, whereas external factors are more volatile. Further, effort, attention, and mood are more unstable.

Within one of eight cells (e.g., levels of locus X stability) there is a level of control. Among the internal causes, ability is stable and uncontrollable; typical effort is stable and controllable; mood and fatigue are unstable and uncontrollable; and temporary exertion is unstable and controllable. Among the external causes, task difficulty is stable and uncontrollable; teacher bias may be perceived as stable and controllable; lack of instruction is unstable and uncontrollable; and unusual help from others is unstable and controllable (see Table 2).

Some problems with this classification scheme remain unsolved, primarily among the external causes. For example, can an external cause be perceived as controllable? The answer to this question depends on how far back one goes in a causal inferential chain. For example, among the external causes, task difficulty is stable and uncontrollable; teacher bias may be perceived as stable and controllable; lack of instruction is unstable and uncontrollable; and unusual help from others is unstable and controllable (see Table 2).

The dimensions of causality introduced above were derived from a logical examination of perceived causes. More recently, a number of investigators have employed techniques such as factor analysis or multidimensional scaling to discover the dimensions of causality (e.g., J. Meyers, 1978; R. F. Kasl, 1977; Michela, 1978, et al., 1976). In the inductive study by Fasee, male and female subjects rated the similarity of the causes of either success or failure. Eighteen causes were presented in all possible pairs to the subjects. The similarity judgments provided the input for a multidimensional scaling procedure. The method is akin to a cluster analysis and provides an underlying judgment of the dimensions. Fasee found two clear dimensions of causality: task and student. The first dimension, anchored at the internal end with causes such as bad mood and self-confidence and at the external extreme with causes such as bad teacher control, reflects a simple factor of internality-unintentionality (which I will call controllable-uncontrollable), anchored at the controllable end with causes such as
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never studied hard and lazy, and so on. The uncontrolled variables with nonlinearity and nonadditivity. The findings of the research of Posner (1972) were similar for males and females in both the success and failure scales.

The third dimension of causality, stability, was not displayed. Nevertheless, the results of the research are encouraging in that when the three dimensions of causality were measured, different ideas about the way in which individuals organize the causal concepts of the person.

Consequences of Causal Properties

I turn now to the dimensions of causality to the consequences or the implications of these dimensions for thought and action. I contend that each of the three dimensions of causality has a primary psychological function or influence, as well as a number of secondary effects. The primary role of the dimension of causality is to the magnitude of expectancy change following success or failure. The two-dimensional relationship between causality has implications for self-esteem, one of the emotional consequences of achievement; performance; affect also is a secondary association for causal stability.

The dimensional linkages with expectancy and affect reveal themselves as empirical associations with expectation, value, and motivation as outlined by Atkinson (1964), Lewin (1935), and others (see Weiner, 1972, 1974), although this unification is not examined in this article. Finally, perceived control by others relates to helping, evaluation, and liking. The theory thus addresses both self- and other-perception and interdependence. The focus and control dimensions have a number of secondary effects that will also be very briefly considered.

Stability

The primary conceptual linkages for the expectation of success with performance is first explored by Weiner et al. (1971) and has not greatly changed since then (see Weiner, 1972, 1974, 1976). I now more fully perceive the implications of this association, other secondary linkages with causal stability have been uncovered, and the empirical data have grown in clarity. But the following discussion is consistent with prior statements and is partially redundant with those earlier writings.

Research in the attributional domain has been definitively shown that causal attributions for past success are an important determinant of goal expectations. For example, failure that is ascribed to low ability or to the difficulty of the task decreases the expectation of future success more than failure that is ascribed to bad luck, mood, or a lack of immediate effort. In a similar manner, success ascribed to good luck or extra exertion results in lesser increases in the subjective expectancy of future success at that task than does success ascribed to high ability or to the cause of the task. More generally, expectancy shifts after success and failure are dependent upon the perceived stability of the cause of the prior outcome; ascription of an outcome to stable factors produces greater changes in expectancy (increases in expectancy following success and decreases after failure) than do ascriptions to unstable causes. Stated somewhat differently, one attains success or failure and the conditions or causes of that outcome are perceived as being unchanged, then success for failure will be anticipated with a greater degree of certainty. But if the conditions or causes are subject to change, then there is some doubt that the prior outcome will be repeated.

Empirical Evidence

A large number of research investigations support the above theoretical contentions (e.g., Fontaine, 1974; McMillan, 1973, J. Meyer, 1978; Overton, 1978; Rotter, 1972; Valler, 1974; Valler & Fritsch, 1976; Weiner, 1976, Krier, & Goldstein, 1976; W. Meyer, 1976; Parker, 1978). In the research of Weiner et al. (1976) investigation, it was demonstrated that expectancy changes are related to the dimension of stability and are not associated with the locus of causality. This is an important finding, not only because two attributional dimensions are disconfirmed, but also because it is a test of the literature relating expectancy changes to the dimension of locus (see Weiner et al., 1976, for a review).

Weiner et al. (1976) gave subjects either 0, 1, 2, or 4 or a consecutive success failures at a block-design task, with different subjects in the six experimental conditions. Following the success trials, expectancy of success and causal attributions were assessed. Expectancy of future success was determined by having subjects indicate "how many of the next ten similar designs you believe that you will successfully complete." (Weiner et al., 1976, p. 4). To assess perceptions of causality, subjects were required to mark four rating scales that were identical to either the stability of locus dimension anchors or by altering the alternate dimension. Specifically, on the attributional question was, "Did you succeed on this task because you are always good at this kind of task, or because you tried especially hard on this particular task?" "Always good" and "tried hard," the anchors on this scale, are identical in the locus of causality dimension (internal), but they differ in perceived stability, with ability being a stable attribute and effort an unstable cause. In a similar manner, judgments were made between "lucky" and "hard work" (stable causes differing in locus), "those tasks are always easy" and "those tasks are hard" (external causes differing in stability), "those tasks are easy" and "those tasks are hard" (stable causes differing in locus). Thus, the judgments revealed a direct test of the locus versus stability interpretation of expectancy change.

Expectancy estimates were examined separately for each of the causal judgments. The data revealed that within both the internal and the external causes, expectancy increments were positively associated with the stability of the observation, that is, there were higher expectancy values given ability and task case expectations than were given effort or luck attributions. Contracting locus of causality stability and differences within either the stable or unstable categories indicated that the disparate causal locus group did not differ in their expectancies of success.

Loss of Control Controversy

One of my disappointments has been that investigations associated with social learning theory and locus of control have failed to recognize or admit the stability-expectancy
linkage and the existence of other dimensions of perceived causality. Some researchers (e.g., Lefcourt, von Baeyer, Ware, & Can, Note 8) are incorporating the stability dimension into perceived causality scales. But this is in contrast with the position of other investigators. For example, Phares (1974) states:

At the present time there does not appear to be a strong body of data supporting the utility of utilizing the stability dimension... (p. 279).

In opposition to this statement, the literature associating stability with expectancy change is unconvincing, and the findings generalize outside of the laboratory as well as beyond the achievement domain (as will be documented later upon the concept of self-concept). It may indeed be that the concept of internal control has great utility, my modest hope is that individuals in this area will acknowledge some of the prior shortcomings in their conceptual analysis and use a self-concept and self-attitude tasks and in their limited approach to causality (for a fuller discussion of these issues, see Weiner et al., 1975).

Formal Analysis and Self-Concept Maintenance

McEwan (1975) and Valle and Frizee (1976) have developed formal models of expectancy shifts based upon the concept of self-concept. Valle and Frizee proposed that predictions of expectancies (P) are a function of the initial expectancy (E) plus the degree (O) to which outcomes (C) are attributable to stable causes (S):

\[ P = E + O \times f(S) \]

In addition, Valle and Frizee (1976) also note that the perceived causes of success and failure are related to the initial expectancy of success. It has been clearly documented that unexpected outcomes lead to unstable attributions, particularly luck (Weiner, 1979; Feather & Simon, 1971; Frizee & Weiner, 1972). Hence, Valle and Frizee (1976) conclude:

There is some reason for the difference between the initial expectancies and the actual outcome that will subsequently change a person's conditions for the future. If a person's difference is greater than this point, the outcome will be attributed to unstable factors to such a great extent that it will have little influence on the person's future predictions. (p. 155)

These ideas have important implications for the maintenance of self-concept, and for attributional change programs (see Weiner, 1974, 1976). For example, assume that an individual with a high-self-concept of ability believes that he or she has a high probability of success at a task. It is probable that failure will then be attributed to unstable causes such as luck or mood, which may not reduce the subsequent expectancy of success and sustain a high ability self-concept. On the other hand, success would be attributed to ability, which increases the subsequent expectancy of success and confirms one's high self-regard. The converse analysis holds given a low self-concept of ability and a low expectancy of success. Success would be attributed to unstable causes, and failure to low ability. These attributions result in the preservation of the initial self-concept (see Ames, 1975; Garb, 1976; Gillmore & Minton, 1974; Jekas & Gysen, 1978). In addition, the above analysis suggests that in change programs involving expectancies or self-concept the perceived causes of performance must be altered, and a modification in self-perception would have to involve a gradual process (Valle & Frizee, 1976).

In one research investigation guided by the above reasoning, Ames, Arens, and Garb (1977) had children of high or low social status in the class attribute causality for positive or negative outcomes. For example, the children were given situations such as, "Suppose you meet more student at school and you become friends quickly," or "Imagine you ask someone to play with you after school, but then they say they cannot play." The children then attributed causality for each situation either to an internal, external, or mutual cause. The data indicated that given negative interpersonal outcomes, high-social-status children made greater use of internal causal attributions, and given positive interpersonal outcomes, they made more internal attributions than the low-social-status pupils.

Resilience to Extinction and Achievement Change

The stability concept is generalizable to the body of psychological literature concerning experimental extinction (see Rest, 1976). Experimental extinction often is defined as the cessation of a previously instrumental response following the permanent withholding of the reward. It is reasonable to presume that when a response is perceived as no longer instrumental to goal attainment, the organism will cease making that response. Hence, any attribution that maximizes the expectation that the response will not be followed by the goal should facilitate extinction. On the other hand, attributions that minimize goal expectancy decrements after nonreward should retard extinction.

As discussed above, the stability or instability of the perceived causal factors influences the expectancy that the outcome of an action might change in the future. Therefore, I suggest that the function of attributions to the causal dimension of stability during the period of nonreinforcement. Attributions of nonreinforcement to luck, lack of immediate effort, or other unstable causes are hypothesized to maintain expectancy decrements and result in slower extinction than attributions of nonmeasurable to a goal to perceived stable factors, such as teacher bias, high task difficulty, or lack of ability. Rest (1976) has presented strong evidence confirming these hypotheses. Inasmuch as random reinforcement schedules elicit unstable causal attributions (Weiner et al., 1974), they also should (and do) facilitate resistance to extinction. In a similar manner, chance rather than skill instruction also increase resistance to extinction (Phares, 1977), presumably because failure is ascribed to unstable causes only given the chance interpretations.

A related notion is that information generating lack of effort attributions for failure also should result in response maintenance (see Rest, 1976). There are data in the experimental literature that may be interpreted as supporting this hypothesis. Lawrence and Festinger (1952) marshalled evidence to support their cognitive dissonance explanation of extinction, report that responses are less easily extinguished and are positively related to the effortfulness of a response. Our analysis suggests that when great effort is required to attain a reward the salience of effort as the cause of goal attainment is augmented. Thus, the expectancy of reward following nonattainment of the goal should be comparatively unchanged, and extinction prolonged. With increased nonreward, however, the attribution shifts from effort to ability and/or task difficulty, thus decreasing expectancy and producing extinction.

These ideas have more than just a passing relevance to educational practices. Many of the more direct or indirect use of attributional principles. These programs often attempt to induce students to attribute their failures to a lack of ability, which is both unstable and under volitional control (see Andre, 1973; Clapin & Deck, 1976; Dweck, 1975). This goal is expressly expressible for "ability-oriented" children who apparently ascribe their failures to a lack of ability, which is a stable and uncontrollable cause (see Diener & Dweck, 1978). Presumably, such as effort as can be increased voluntarily, nonreward of nonattainment of a goal to lack of ability is stable and under volitional control, and ascription of nonattainment of a goal to lack of ability is stable and uncontrollable cause (see Diener & Dweck, 1978). Presumably, such effort as can be increased voluntarily, and nonreward of nonattainment of a goal to lack of ability is stable and uncontrollable cause (see Diener & Dweck, 1978).
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Loeb

In contrast with the rather stable beliefs about causal stability, our thoughts concerning causal stability have fluctuated greatly. A temporary resolution is proposed here which is a synthesis of our previous theoretical positions and better accounts for the complexity of human affective response.

Initially, Weiner et al. (1977) postulated that locus of causality is related to the affective consequences of success and failure. Emotional reactions were believed to be maximal given internal attributions for success and failure and minimal given external attributions. Thus, for example, pride and shame, the alleged dominant affects in achievement situations (Atkinson, 1964; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953), would be most experienced given personal responsibility for success and failure, as opposed to situations in which external factors such as luck or others were perceived as the causal agents. This postulation seemed intuitively reasonable, was consistent with Atkinson's (1957) formulations concerning the incentive value of success and failure, and found support in a variety of research investigations. Because a detailed account of the position recently was presented in this journal (Weiner, 1977), I will not discuss it in any further detail.

Subsequently, it became evident that it is incorrect to presume an invariant positive relationship between internal and the magnitude of emotional reactions in achievement settings. For example, failure ascribed to others, such as the blame of a teacher or hinting from students or family, will presumably generate great anger and hostility. In this case, externality is positively related to emotional disturbance. Thus, the position expressed in Weiner et al. (1977) cannot be correct (see Weiner, 1977; Weiner, 1980).

We therefore initiated a series of studies to determine the relation between attribution and affect (Weiner, 1972; Weiner, 1974; Weiner, 1983). In our first investigation, subjects were given a scenario that depicted a success or failure experience at an exam, along with a causal attribution for that outcome (e.g., Joan failed because she didn't have the ability). The subjects then reported the affect that they surmised would be experienced in this situation. About 100 affects for success and 100 for failure were recorded, with responses made on rating scales indicating the intensity with which the affective effects would be experienced.

There were two general findings of interest. First, there was a set of outcome-dependent attributions that were related more closely to such phenomena as feeling helpless, depressed, and upset. The attributional attributions for those subjects who reported the same amount of distress are more closely related to the outcome's affective consequences. Given success, feelings of pleasure, happiness, and satisfaction, and so on were reported as equally experienced in the disparate attribution conditions. In a similar manner, given failure, feelings of frustration, anger, and disappointment, and so on were reported as equally experienced in the disparate attribution conditions. The counter-contained effects for both success and failure were reported as the ones that would be most intensely experienced. For both success and failure there were many emotional dispositions related to specific attributions. Given success, the unique attribution-affected linkages were follows: pride—competence—aggression; ability—competence—aggression; effort—effort—aggression; others—aggression—aggression; and lack—aggression. Given failure, the attribution-effect linkages were as follows: ability—competence—effort—guilt, and shame; personality—competence—effort—guilt, and shame; others—aggression—aggression; and lack—aggression.
patterns. There were significant outcome linked emotions including disappointment, as well as attribution-association effects, constant with prior research. Inability to demonstrate that the effects of guilt, shame, and anger are differentially effective. Given the attributional and emotional effects, the effects of guilt, shame, and anger are differentially effective. Internal anxiety attributions for success were correlated with the experience of guilt and shame. In sum, particular effects clustered with the internal causes. Improvability analysis of Weiner et al. (1978) revealed similar results.

It therefore appears that achievement situations there are (at least) three sources of affect. First, there are emotional ties directly to the outcome. One feels “good” given success and “bad” given failure, regardless of the reason for the outcome. This probably are the initial and strongest reactions. Second, accompanying these feelings are more distinct emotions, such as guilt or insecurity if success or failure, respectively, is due to others, surprise when the outcome is due to luck, and so on. Third, the affects that are associated with self-esteem, such as competence, pride, and shame, are mediated by self-schemata. Many emotional reactions are shared given success due to ability or effort, the two dominant internal attributions. It therefore may be that the achievement outcomes that facilitate the empirical subsequent achievement performance are dimensionally linked, referred by one’s ability or self-actualized. Some affects thus seem to be mediated by the locus dimension, but in a manner that is much more complex than was originally pointed. It is likely that these dimensions-heavy affects have the greatest longevity and most significance for the individual.

Stability and Affect

In addition to the locus-effect linkage, there is also a relation between causal stability and emotions. Weiner et al. (1978) found that the affects of depression, apathy, and resignation were reported primarily given internal attributional explanations. This suggests that only attributional explanations can account for the effects of guilt, shame, and anger. Rather, it seems that the experimental state of an origin and correlated behaviors are exhibited because of the perceived personal control of the situation, or the belief that causality is both stable and controllable.

The discussion of the second linkages with locus is postponed until the presentation of the control dimension.

Control

Achievement theory as formulated by Atkinson (1971) and Jones (1970) is a major theory concerning person perception, or inferrence about the intentions, and dispositional attributions. However, in this article I have only been concerned with self-attribution. I believe that one of the main contributions of our work has been the adaptation of some principles of social perception for the construction of a theory of motivation that has the individual as the unit of analysis.

In the discussion of the implications of control dimensions, self- and other-affect were not distinguished. Considering the success in the expectancy of success, the current focus is on causal stability, and not on causality which stability should hold when considering oneself or others. The discussion of affect also is applicable to both the self and others, although of course, the emotional experiences are limited to the self and inferred about others. But if success or failure is perceived as being due to certain causes, then particular affective experiences should follow.

The following examination of the dimension of control centers upon inferences about others and not beliefs about another’s capability for success and failure. In general, it is likely that the locus of control relates positively to behaviors such as information seeking and to experiences such as feeling like an “origin ate monster,” where in contrast, the concepts of locus and control are unified. It is not reasonable to expect individuals who attribute failure to lack of ability which is internal but unattainable, to seek out information or feel like origins.

Some Thoughts About Feelings

Psychology is completing two movements that have relatively neglected the study of affect. The first is the behavioralistic period, which defined verbal reports of the second movement, which focuses on intersubjective structures. In contrast to these periods, I believe that psychologists and educators now will turn to the study of affect.

At present many of the investigations of affect in the schools measure some global feeling states such as “satisfaction.” But for the study of emotions greater differentiation must be allowed. For example, one might speculate that discriminative classroom “atmosphere” provide the opportunity for the experiencing of disparate emotions. Perhaps settings that promote internal attributions to cause positive or negative self-images and feelings of pride and shame. On the other hand, environments that promote external attributions to cause positive or negative self-images and feelings of pride and shame. On the other hand, environments that promote external attributions to cause positive or negative self-images and feelings of pride and shame. On the other hand, environments that promote external attributions to cause positive or negative self-images and feelings of pride and shame.

Cognitive Emotion Neurosis in Achievement Contexts

On the basis of the above discussion, I suggest that in achievement-oriented contexts (and, in particular, school settings), the actor progresses through something like the following cognition-emotion scenario:

1. I just received a D in the exam. That is a very low grade.” (This generates feelings of being frustrated and upset.)
2. “I received this grade because I did not try hard enough.” (Followed by feelings of shame and guilt.)
3. “There really is something lacking in me, and it is permanent.” (Followed by lower self-esteem or lack of worth and happiness.

Secondary Linkages

Because of the vast literature in the area of control, it might be anticipated that causal locus is directly linked with many psychological reactions in addition to external-related affects. This indeed is likely to be the case. For example, it has been reported that locus of control relates positively to behaviors such as information seeking and experiences such as feeling like an “origin ate monster,” where in contrast, the concepts of locus and control are unified. It is not reasonable to expect individuals who attribute failure to lack of ability which is internal but unattainable, to seek out information or feel like origins.

Helping

Ickes and Koll (1976) guided by Weiner et al. (1977) and Greenhouse (1972), provided an attributional analysis of helping behavior. A number of investigators prior
to Ickes and Kidd (1976) had established that the tendency to help is influenced by the perceived cause of the need for aid (e.g., Berkowitz, 1963; Ickes, Kidd, & Berkowitz, 1968; Pliner, Radin, & Fivian, 1979; Schopler & Matthews, 1965). The majority of these experiments concluded that help is more likely when the perceived cause of the need is an environmental barrier, as opposed to a personal condition that is perceived as internal to the person desiring aid. For example, Berkowitz (1963) reported that individuals are more inclined to help an experimental subject when the experimenter caused a delay to the subject's response, in contrast to a condition in which the subject is perceived as personally responsible for failing behind in the experiment.

In their review, Ickes and Kidd (1976) argued that this basis of control explanation of helping confounds the causal dimensions of locus and controllability (which I again will call controllability). They suggest that in the study conducted by Berkowitz (1963), the causal ascription to the experimenter is both external and uncontrollable (from the perspective of the actor), whereas an attribution to the subject's own management in internal to the actor and is perceived by the potential helper as under volitional control. Hence, two dimensions of controllability are conflated, and it is impossible to determine which of the two causal dimensions is responsible for the differential helping behavior. Ickes and Kidd, in contrast with Berkowitz, suggest that it is the controllable aspect of the perceived cause and not the locus that mediates the helping behavior. The reader should note how similar this analysis is to the one pertaining to expectancy shifts in skill and chance tasks. In both cases, what is required is research that separates the various causal dimensions.

Other data support the Ickes and Kidd (1976) interpretation of helping behavior. For example, Pliner et al. (1969) found that there is a bias to aid an ill person in distress as opposed to helping a drunk. According to the above argument, this is because drunkenness is perceived as subject to voluntarism, whereas illness is not. When a failure is perceived as controllable, then help is withheld; the person presumably should help themselves. For this reason, it is much easier to take charge of the behavior of battered children or bystanders than to take charge of an alcoholic.

Guided by the prior research of Berkowitz, Loughlin, Ickes, and Kidd (Note 1), Simon and Weiner (1969) applied these ideas to the response of altruism in the classroom—taking the class notes of an unknown classmate. In this investigation, two conditions were created for the student: failure to take class notes. One theme involved a professor, and the second concerned an employer. In the professor theme, the student always (stable) or sometimes (instable) did not take class notes because of something about himself (internal) or something about the professor (external). Either he was unable to take good notes (uncontrollable) or he did not try (controllable), while the professor either was unable to give a clear lecture or did not try. Thus, for example, an internal, stable, and uncontrollable cause was that the student never was able to take good notes (low ability), while an external, unstable, and uncontrollable cause was that the professor at times could not give a clear lecture. Each story within the eight possible causal combinations (2 levels of ability x 2 levels of locus x 2 levels of control) elaborated the basic scenario. The second theme involved a work situation in which the student in the prior condition did not have the notes because he had a hole in his book. This situation was designed for his coming into school, which could (would not) have been avoided.

Following each causal statement the subjects rated the likelihood of lending their notes to the student. Judgments were made in a 0-degree scale and criteria of criteria were chosen to indicate "definitely would lend my notes" and "definitely would not lend my notes." The mean helping judgments for four conditions of locus x 2 levels of ability x 2 levels of control were shown in Table 4. The judgments did not affect the judgments and thus is given in the analysis. The table 4 revealed that helping is reported to be relatively equal and reasonably high in all conditions except when the cause is internal and controllable, in which case aid is unlikely to be given. That is, if the student did not try to take notes (professor theme) or could avoid being absent (employer theme), help is withheld. The findings concerning the influence of intent information on moral judgments and criminal justice support this line of reasoning (see Cornell & Payne, 1976, 1977, discussed later in this article).

Evaluation

Some of the early experimental work conducted by me and my colleagues was undertaken to promote the distinction between voluntary causes of success and failure. In particular, we attempted to provide evidence that ability and effort should be distinguished, although both are internal in loci of causality.

In one reference experiment that was employed, the subjects were asked to pretend that they were teachers and were to provide evaluative feedback to their pupils (e.g., Eerola, 1972; Kaplow & Swann, 1973; Rest, Nisbett, Weiner, & Ben-Eliahu, 1973; Weiner & Kukla, 1973). The teachers were characterized in terms of ability and effort, and performance on an exam. The data from these investigations consistently demonstrated that effort is perceived as greater than ability in determining reward and punishment. High effort was rewarded more than high ability given success, and lack of effort was punished more than lack of ability given failure. To explain these findings, I stated:

There appear to be two reasons for the discrepancy between ability and effort: one is the determinants of reward and punishment. First, effort attribution elicits strong moral feelings—trying to attain a socially valued end implies that one "ought" to do. Second, reward-feels and punishing effort is instrumental in changing behavior. Thus, interest in effort is believed to be subject to emotional control. On the other hand, ability is perceived as unvolitional and relatively stable and (thus) leads to external control attempts (Weiner, 1975). Thus, both the moral and control aspects of evaluation are considered. It was not realized that evaluation is conceptually similar to behaviors and feelings such as liking, and blame. That is, there is a pervasive influence of perceived controllability on personal responsibility for interpersonal judgments in achievement-related contexts, including how students are graded.

Situations

Investigations linking liking to perceptions of controllability (Note 8) have been conducted in the area of loneliness (see Pepinsky, Russell, & Heim, in press; Michela, Pepinsky, & Weeks). Note 8) found that persons lonely for reasons thought to be controllable (e.g., do not try to make friends) are liked less than individuals lacking for uncontrollable reasons (e.g., no opportunity to meet people). In addition, when a lonely person puts forth effort to make friends, the person is liked and elicits sympathy (Weiner & Poppy, 1974). In contrast, if, it is believed that the lonely person is responsible for his or her plight, then sympathy is not forthcoming, and respondents indicate that they would avoid such persons. I assume that these patterns of results will also be evident in achievement-related controls. Surely a teacher will not particularly like a student who does not try and failure perceived as due to lack of effort does not elicit sympathy.

Self-Perception of Control

While perceived control in others relates to interpersonal judgments, self-perceptions of control have quite a different array of consequences. These inferential aspects appear to be vast, ranging from experimental states, such as feeling as an origin of actions (Chambers, 1968) and perceptions (freedom of
choice (Steiner, 1970), to specific behaviors, such as information search (see Rotter, 1966) and normal functioning rather than learning, cognitive, and motivational deficits that are postulated to accompany the loss of control (Elkind, 1973). This is a complex subject matter with serious implications for systemic examination and synthesis that goes well beyond the scope of our present knowledge.

**Summary**

A variety of sources of information must be considered in this article. The perceived causes of success and failure primarily are ability and effort but also include a small number of other salient factors such as home environment and teacher, and a small number of idiosyncratic factors. These causes can be encompassed within three primary dimensions of causality: stability, locus, and control. There are also an undetermined number of subordinate causal dimensions, including perhaps intentionality and globality. The three main dimensions, respectively, are linked to expectancy changes, causal-related effects, and interpersonal judgments (decisions about helping, evaluation, and sentiments). In addition, there are secondary linkages between the causal dimensions and psychological effects. Stability relates to depression-type changes, and control is associated with particular feeling states and behaviors. The dimension consequences linkages influence maintained behaviors such as pessimism and choice. This theory is depicted in Figure 1.

**Theoretical Range**

The theory rather sketchily conveyed in the introduction is to be relevant to many classroom-related thoughts and actions. The topics already examined in this article include the perceiver's reasons for success and failure, expectancy change, self-concept maintenance, achievement, change problems, reinforcement schedules, stability, emotions, self-efficacy, learning, evaluation, and liking. Still other achievement-related topics have been demonstrated to be encompassed within this attributional conception (see Weiner, 1974, 1975). The breadth of the phenomena incorporated within our attributional framework indicates that a general theory of motivation is being constructed. In the remainder of this article I discuss other areas to which the theory is applicable. Some of the theoretical extensions are germane to the school setting, while other topics are of interest to an audience of educational psychologists primarily because they demonstrate the range of the conception.

**Hyperactivity and Psychostimulants**

When and Henker (1975) have outlined an attributional analysis of the effects of drug treatment for hyperactive children. They contend that when hyperactivity is combined with a drug, the belief is conveyed to both the child and his or her parent that the effects of hyperactivity is a physiological dysfunction. Hence, the involved individuals are no longer responsible for or in control of the maladaptive behavior that is exhibited. Because this physiological deficit is perceived as an uncontrollable cause, neither the child nor the family feel guilty or blame themselves for the aberrant behavior. That is, the shift in perceived causality from "lack of effort" minimizes self-blame, ion self-esteem, and negative evaluation from the parents of the child affects the child's perceived value and an unexpected side effect of the treatment technique.

On the other hand, Whalen and Henker (1976) also state that "the reputed physiological dysfunctions used to explain the failures of hyperactive children are frequently viewed as stable and relatively resistant to behavior change effects." (p. 1320). Thus, the perception of fixed causation might lead to "depersonalization about problem solutions... and indifference with effective coping" (Whalen & Henker, 1976, p. 1334).

In sum, again, this is an analysis of a psychological phenomena from the perspective shown in Figure 1. Individuals utilize information (treatment techniques) to infer causation about an event (hyperactivity). The perceived cause is to generate defense, which is uncontrollable and stable. This minimizes the negative affects and improves evaluation (functional effects) but also weakens the perceived possibility of recovery in harmful consequences. These two factors, in turn, influence the long-term influence of the treatment negatively, according to Whalen and Henker, 1976, maximally as they perceive expected change to be the more potent determinant of long-term behavioral change.

**Maturity**

The labels "mastery," "competence," and "ability" are prominent among the writings of many psychologists (e.g., Nisbett, 1969; White, 1965). However, in my opinion, systematic experimental work elucidating these alleged motivational variables has not been conducted in a consistent manner. The problem of hyperactivity is a physiological dysfunction. Hence, the involved individuals are not responsible for or in control of the effects of hyperactivity. Thus, the shift in perceived causality from "lack of effort" minimizes self-blame, ion self-esteem, and negative evaluation from the parents of the child affects the child's perceived value and an unexpected side effect of the treatment technique.

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response-outcome correlation - perceived internal causation - perceived external causation - perceived fate of the criminal - perceived severity of the punishment - perceived likelihood of recidivism - perceived likelihood of the perpetrator being caught - perceived likelihood of the perpetrator being punished

A Theory of Motivation

The cause of the crime has been or can be altered (e.g., economic conditions have improved, a job can be found, etc.), then the criminal will be perceived as a good parole risk.

Given the above analysis, a criminal is least likely to be paroled if the cause of the crime is perceived as an external and/or controllable but unstable ("in the control of the evil peer") event. Conversely, parole will tend to be granted when the crime is perceived as caused by external and/or noncontrollable and unstable factors (e.g., prior economic conditions). The remaining causal combination should fall between these extremes in terms of parole probability.

Carroll and Payne have furnished support for these hypotheses, examining professional parole decision makers and the judgments of college students when given simulated criminal cases. They find, for example, that perceptions of the criminal's past behavior, stability, and control of causes significantly relate to perceived responsibility for the crime, likehood of recidivism, likelihood, prior term, and the purpose of the sentence.

In sum, according to Carroll and Payne (1977, 1977) the parole decision procedure is conceptually identical to the perceived severity of the events in the achievement domain. Antecedent information is processed, a causal judgment is reached, and the cause is placed within the locus of control, stability, and controllability (control) dimensions. The influence of evaluative and expectancies, which are the main determinants of the parole decision.

Affiliation and Loneliness

It has been reasoned that in our culture two forms of motivation are most observed: socialdriving (reward) or socialdriving (punishment). Thus, criminal behavior is assessed in terms of the individual's need for affiliation or independence. Hence, affiliative motivation is a natural area to focus on in the development of theories of motivation.

An attributional analysis of affiliative motivation guided by the theory shows in Figure 1 a conceptual model of affiliation as a social process (Kimball, 1980, Stein & Bailey, 1978). However, Note 11 and Note 12 demonstrate that the perceived causes of social success and failure and found them to be similar to the causes of achievement success and failure. As already indicated, Michela et al. (Note 12) using scaling procedures to discover the dimensions of the causes of social success and failure and found them to be similar to the dimensions uncovered in achievement contexts.

The question that then remains is whether the attributional dimensions in the affiliation domain relate to psychological factors in the same manner as in the achievement domain. Research reveals that indeed the case (see Poplau et al., in press). Stability relates to the perceived probability of remaining lonely in the future. Loneliness is associated with emotionally related affects, and as previously stated, control is linked with liking and sympathy toward the lonely person (Baze-Folks, 1978).

Depression and Learned Helplessness

In accordance with the trend in loneliness research, recent explanations of depression have focused upon the cognitive, rather than the affective, aspects of this disorder (e.g., Beck, 1976). The work of Seligman (1975), captured under the label of learned helplessness, has been especially influential. I will not dwell upon Seligman's use of this construct or the supporting empirical evidence in this context. Rather, my goal is to convey the importance of the learned helplessness literature to the attributional model depicted in Figure 1 (see Abramson et al., 1978; Weiner & Litman-Adler, in press).

Learned helplessness communicates the belief that there is no perceived association between responding and environmental outcomes. That is, the actor believes that the likelihood of an event is independent of what he or she does. The belief in helplessness is alleged to produce deficits in motivation and learning, negative affect, and a syndrome that has been labeled depression.

As this work has progressed from infancy to human research, it has become evident that also is essential to consider the affective aspects and consequences of learned helplessness. For example, Klein, Poplau, and Seligman (1976) found that...
only individuals making internal attributions for response-outcome independence exhibit aspects of the learned helplessness syndrome. Attributions of response-outcome independence to external factors do not produce any learning deficits. In a similar manner, Tenen and Elley (1970) found learned helplessness only under conditions that promote low, rather than high, expectations for prior success.

Partially because of these data, Abelson et al. (1974) adopted an attributional framework for hopelessness. I have extended the following from the Abelson et al. manuscript and pieced together new paragraphs to illustrate their thinking.

Our reanalyzed hypothesis suggests a major new set of positions. The hypothesis individual finds out that certain successes and responses are independent, and he makes an attribution about the outcome. This attribution determines the cognitive stability, and intensity of the hopelessness. Depressed persons seem to make more global, stable, and powerful internal attributions that the cause of their hopelessness and it comes about as a consequence of external, unstable, and intense attributions that depressed persons may make.

Depression occurs and other individuals expect that the person will not be highly successful in the future, so they expect that he is helpless to it. If the attribution of the present self of others are stable and global success, then the impact is due to the individual. He expects that he will find himself helpless again and again. This is what makes even the "hopelessness". Another implication of the situation is that individuals will show the greater bias of self-efficacy when they make internal, stable, and cause attributions for their failures. (Abelson et al. 1974)

In sum, it is argued that depressed individuals attempt to make sense out of perceived evidence that their responses do not affect outcomes. A sense is determined which often is classified as stable, internal, and global. This leads to a low expectation of success across a wide array of environments and a heightened negative affect (loss of self-esteem) which is sufficient precursors of depression.

Conclusion

I have selectively reviewed the extensive literature outside of the achievement domain, including hyperactivity, mastery, personal

References


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