



ELSEVIER

Psychology of Sport and Exercise 6 (2005) 189–204

Psychology
OF SPORT AND EXERCISE

www.elsevier.com/locate/psychsport

Attribution in sport psychology: seeking congruence between theory, research and practice

Tim Rees^{a,*}, David K. Ingledeu^b, Lew Hardy^c

^a*Exercise and Sport Psychology Unit, School of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Exeter, St Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter EX1 2LU, UK*

^b*School of Psychology, University of Wales, Bangor LL57 2DG, UK*

^c*School of Sport, Health, and Exercise Sciences, University of Wales, Bangor LL57 2DG, UK*

Received 4 December 2002; received in revised form 17 June 2003; accepted 28 October 2003

Available online 23 December 2003

Abstract

Objectives: This paper urges revision of the way attributions are conceptualised, investigated, and applied in sport psychology. There has been a recent decline in attribution research in sport psychology, despite the generally accepted relevance of attributions in applied settings. In seeking closer links between attribution theory, research, and practice, we argue that there is a mismatch between research and practice in sport psychology.

Methods: Relevant literature is reviewed and theoretical arguments offered within seven sub-headings: attribution theory in practice; linking consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus information to attribution dimensions; controllability as the primary attribution dimension; the generalisability of controllability; assessing attributions; implications for practice; and the social context.

Results and conclusions: Research within sport psychology should focus on the central issue of how controllability attributions generalise across time, situations, and people. Measurement should reflect this approach to research within the field of attributions and, to this end, researchers might consider using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. Practitioners should use consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus information to challenge clients' attributional thinking and help them attain adaptive perceptions of controllability. Practitioners should also help clients to be their own psychologist. Future research and practice should include a consideration of the social context in which attributions are shaped.

© 2004 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Attributions; Causal attribution dimensions; Attributional retraining; Controllability

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 1392 264 722; fax: +44 1392 264 726.

E-mail address: tim.j.rees@exeter.ac.uk (T. Rees).

In sport psychology, there has been a decline in the frequency of published studies featuring attributions as the primary topic of interest (Biddle, 1999). This is despite attribution theory being a popular topic in the 1970s and one of the ‘hot topics’ of the 1980s (Biddle, 1999; Biddle, Hanrahan, & Sellars, 2001). We hope that this paper inspires readers to regenerate research inquiry into this important topic. To achieve this aim, we provide a critical review of past research, and propose a focus for the future.

Attributions can be considered under the general heading of explanation (see e.g. Anderson, Krull, & Weiner, 1996). By *explaining* the causes of events, people create an understanding that they take with them into future situations, and this helps them develop mastery over their lives (White, 1959). The reflections of Heider (1944, 1958) addressed these issues and initiated interest in attributions. Heider considered people naïve psychologists, who try to better understand their own and others’ behaviour by piecing together information helping them to link behaviour to its root cause. According to Heider, people use a layperson’s form of science that serves a similar purpose to that of scientific research (e.g. Hempel, 1966), namely, to increase control over the environment and to satisfy a desire to understand and gain knowledge about the world. In a similar way, people also try to derive explanations for their performances in sport. The issues for sport psychology are how people explain performances and pinpoint the root cause of them, and what impact an in-depth search for these causes has on future emotions, expectations and performance. This paper focuses attention primarily on attributions for failure, rather than attributions for success. This is because negative and/or unexpected events are generally believed to be more likely to lead to causal search (e.g. Lau & Russell, 1980; Wong & Weiner, 1981).

Building upon the foundations laid by Heider (1944, 1958) and Jones and Davis (1965) developed their Correspondent Inference Theory. This theory focuses on the psychological processes involved when people make judgements about the dispositions and intentions of others, as a result of observing their actions. Correspondence is high when it is believed that a certain action truly reflects the underlying disposition of the actor. A correspondent inference is therefore derived by extrapolating from observation of some behaviour or act to the disposition of the person being observed; for example, in relation to a poor performance in sport, extrapolating rightly or wrongly from this one event the inference that the person is poor at sport.

Kelley’s (1967) Covariation Model built upon and extended the work of Heider (1958) and Jones and Davis (1965), placing it in a much more accessible format (Gilbert, 1998). According to Kelley, people use three types of information—consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus—to link outcomes to causes. Försterling (1988) also suggested that by using such information people can be helped to overcome the negative impact of making maladaptive attributions. Sport psychologists probably intuitively use these concepts as well. For example, having lost a match, a tennis player might become despondent, saying, “I’m just no good. I feel like giving up”. A sport psychologist might challenge this way of thinking, asking questions that help the player reassess her initial post-match reaction. Using consistency information, the psychologist might ask about other times the player performed well. Using distinctiveness information, the psychologist might ask about aspects of her performance that were good, even though she lost the match. Using consensus information, the psychologist might ask whether other players have been in a similar situation, had similar feelings, but pulled through. The psychologist might use all three types of information (or just one or two, depending on the most important aspect to work on) to help the performer develop a clearer and potentially more adaptive and functional way of thinking.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات