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Attributing success and failure : attribution theory at work

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Abstract

Attribution Theory demonstrates how people can appropriately attribute success and failure. Teachers must learn how to help students handle their successes and, perhaps more importantly, their failures. If teachers are not successful in this endeavor, the students will not succeed in a traditional school setting.

Attributing Success and Failure:

Attribution Theory at Work

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Introduction

In an increasingly complex and global economy, Americans need to become more proficient workers and more accepting of change. With that in mind, it is the job of today's educators to impart wisdom to tomorrow's workers in the ways of an ever-changing society. Many of today's students are not equipped to appropriately deal with setbacks; particularly those students who have known a great deal of failure in the academic setting. By the time this type of student reaches the high school level, it is increasingly difficult for teachers to reach this student and assist him in the ascent toward success. Attribution Theory is a model that can aid teachers in educating students about how to accept failure and continue forward, while students are also learning to attribute their successes to the appropriate causes. This paper will examine the use of Attribution Theory in a high school classroom and how it may be used to educate students in the understanding of failures and successes.

Statement of the Problem

As an educator in a large, urbanized high school, this educator frequently sees the frustrations felt by both educators and parents about students' lack of success in the academic arena. One needs only to walk through the hallways of any similar school and find these underachieving students. This problem is not localized; it can be found in many schools across the country. Perhaps the larger problem is that teachers do not generally know how to reach these types of students. In these situations, teachers tend

to leave them alone, instead of addressing the situation. When teachers confront these types of students, they are much more likely to become hostile or, at times, violent. Ultimately, these are the students who are most likely to drop out or, at best, choose to obtain a diploma from an alternative type of institution.

The dropout rate is not decreasing at an acceptable rate for most educators. There needs to be a way for educators to better serve this type of student. While some might say that high school is a little late to start trying to reach these students, others might proclaim that high school is the perfect place to try – at this age students are starting to see that adulthood is approaching quickly, which allows them to grow up and realize they are in charge of their future. They are also more levelheaded and one can reason more effectively with this age group.

Some students who drop out do eventually earn their GED; some even do so in a short amount of time after leaving high school. However, the GED exam is not the same as taking coursework in order to earn a high school diploma and many do not view both of these documents with the same attitude. Although the GED is a viable alternative, students need to understand the repercussions of such a decision.

Not all students who are generally unsuccessful in the traditional academic setting decide to attend another type of institution; some stay in the traditional setting. These are the students who educators may see in their classrooms for the same class, multiple times. This causes problems for everyone from the student, to the teacher, to the entire student body. These students tend to become bored very easily because they have heard the material before. This causes problems for both the teacher and other students. The teacher becomes frustrated because sometimes the student will become

a behavior problem; it is not unreasonable to assume someone would misbehave when he has heard all of the material before and does not care about its content. At other times the teacher knows that the student has shut down, but needs to pass the class and so he will spend extra time with the second-time student and seemingly ignore the new students. This, in turn, causes frustration for the new students. Another problem is increased class sizes. The students who do not pass the class the first time must take the class again which only increases the class size in future years.

At the author's school, students often blame the teacher for their failures or they believe that they simply do not possess the necessary aptitude to complete a task. By the time they reach the high school level, they often do not care to try because of the deep-seeded beliefs in their inability. These students generally do not pass classes, proceed to the next grade level, or even graduate on time, if at all.

Attribution Theory, which demonstrates how people can appropriately attribute success and failure might allow students to address the above problems. Teachers must learn how to help students handle their successes and, perhaps more importantly, their failures. If teachers are not successful in this endeavor, the students will not succeed in a traditional school setting.

Significance of the Problem

According to the Waterloo Community School's Annual Report, only 73% of the students who were freshmen during the 2001-2002 school year graduated in the spring of 2005. The Waterloo Schools stated that the state average is 85%. Obviously a 15% drop out rate is not good, but one that is over 25% is most definitely in need of improvement. From grades seven through nine there was a dropout rate of only 3.3%.

Obviously, the dropout rate drastically increases at the high school level. Of course, this is in part due to the mandatory attendance ages, but a portion of the high number must be attributed to the traditional high school setting. Students are not being taught how to handle academia's ambiguous situations and are therefore deciding that the traditional approach is unacceptable in education. These students generally see themselves as failures in the traditional setting and therefore seek a situation where they can succeed. Educators in the traditional classroom have been unsuccessful in assisting these students in addressing their attributes for success and failure. Often, these students blame the teacher or simply their bad luck in failing. Several programs address this problem, but they have mixed results. The Waterloo schools have a number of alternative programs for students who do not feel that they can be successful in the traditional school.

For example, the Grad Connect program allows students to attend both their home high school and Hawkeye Community College. The graduation requirements are not as restrictive as in the home high school and students like the freedom they are given within this program. During the 2005-2006 school year there were 207 students enrolled in the Grad Connect Program; 89 of these were from West High School. A total of twenty-four graduated from West High and fifty students in total graduated. Ninety-four students continued the program into the 2005-2006 school year.

Another program is EXPO, which is the alternative high school in Waterloo. Students in grades nine through twelve are allowed to enroll at EXPO. While there, students go for only part of the day and are not responsible for completing any work outside of the class or, for that matter, taking any materials home. There are stringent

rules students must abide by while attending this school and therefore some drop out of EXPO. This school also offers a "May Term" which allows students to earn credits by partaking in one class during the month of May. These classes can range from theater type classes to those dealing with the outdoors. If these students attend a four-year college or university, they might not be acclimated to the type of work that is required.

Thirty-five students from West High School enrolled in EXPO during the 2005-2006 school year. These students ranged in age from freshmen to seniors. This author contends that the majority of these students chose to attend EXPO because they did not have the desire to be successful at the traditional high school and viewed EXPO as an easier alternative.

A third program is Waterloo's Alternative Program for Attendance (WAPA) that mainly addresses those students who desire to remain in the traditional high school but have difficulties with attendance. Students do not have the choice of attending WAPA, at least not consciously. Once students have been deemed attendance problems by the administration, or once they are enrolled in fewer than five academic classes, they must attend WAPA. WAPA itself is not a problem; it is a temporary solution to the much larger problem. Most of the students attend WAPA because they do not see the value in coming to school each day. Generally, the students who are enrolled in WAPA are not successful in their academic classes. If these students were more successful, or better knew how to handle their failures, they would perhaps have a greater desire to come to school. Through WAPA, they earn one hour of credit and are then allowed back into their home school.

During the fall of 2005, WAPA experienced an average of twenty-two students enrolled per month in the program. This program serves a much more transient population, as once students attend a certain amount of days and have earned one credit, they are allowed back into the general high school population. While these three programs assist some students on the road to success, they are not successful for everyone.

The problem of success and failure is not germane to just high school; it is a growing problem in the world at large. People do not understand why they are failing or succeeding; in fact, most people simply do not ever think about why they succeed or fail.. People erroneously blame the government, their employers, and a host of others when they are the ones at fault. In schools, students blame parents, teachers, and other students. Once people are taught to look at the causes of their successes and failures, they need terminology to better understand them. Attributions allow people to explain why they succeeded or failed. Once they have done this, they can become more successful. Amy Mezullis co-authored a paper on self-serving attributional bias across age groups. As Mezullis states, "People are more likely to attribute positive events to themselves but dismiss negative events as attributable to other causes" (711). This problem can filter across the gamut of society. If students do not learn that they are not necessarily responsible for their successes, this can cause them to think too highly of their abilities. If students never take ownership of their failures, they will find it difficult to ever be successful in today's world. Families are crumbling, as well. If students do not see their parents attributing their successes and failures to the appropriate causes, teachers must educate the students about the appropriate attributional causes.

Ultimately, this inability to appropriately attribute causes could become a problem for the United States as a whole in this increasingly global society. At most faculty meetings, teachers must listen to how the United States is falling behind and that soon it will not be the superpower it is today. Attribution Theory can only assist the students of today in being more successful in the race for power.

Definitions

Affects: feelings associated with the attribution; positive affects are pride, competence, confidence, and satisfaction (Weiner 21)

Attribution: the perceived cause of an outcome; a person's explanation of why a particular event turned out the way it did (Seifert 138)

Attribution Theory: how students perceive causes in terms of certain characteristics, which gives rise to emotions and those emotions have behavioral characteristics (Seifert 140)

Causal Antecedents: factors that may influence which particular attribution is formed and may include personal characteristics, circumstances, or comparisons to others (Seifert 138)

Controllability: whether or not the person has influence over the cause (Weiner 188)

Learned Helplessness: when there is no perceived association between responding and environmental outcomes (Weiner 21)

Locus of Causality: whether the cause is perceived as temporary or permanent (Weiner 188)

Organization

Chapter one has introduced the topic of the paper, Attribution Theory, and discussed the statement of the problem, as well as its significance. This chapter also has defined some of the key terms used in Attribution Theory. Chapter two focuses on some of the historical background, ranging from the evolution of the theory to some of the key gentlemen involved in the creation of the theory. This chapter then focuses on how Attribution Theory has evolved over the years and arrived at its current state. It is not an exhaustive review of texts, but rather shows a logical progression of the theory, which culminates with the research of Bernard Weiner. Chapter three begins with a look at Weiner's modern day Attribution Theory. The chapter then focuses on theories that directly support Attribution Theory and are therefore imperative when looking at Attribution Theory. The first is Learned Helplessness, which is looked at from the standpoint of E.P. Seligman and Carol S. Dweck. Lastly, a look at Self-Efficacy and Expectancy Value Theory is taken. Chapter four evaluates Attribution Theory and looks at its role in some of today's schools. This chapter looks at the LINKS, PLAN, BrainPower, and KYAC Programs. It not only looks at similarities and differences of the programs, but also evaluates their usefulness. Chapter five focuses not only on how to implement Attribution Theory in the author's classroom, but also within the English Department and throughout the entire school at West High in Waterloo, Iowa. This Plan of Action is based upon the strengths of the programs described in chapter four and upon past research on Attribution Theory, Learned Helplessness, Self-Efficacy and Expectancy Value Theory.

Chapter II: Historical Perspective

Introduction

When contemplating the history of attribution, one must first look at the changes in the theories of motivation over the past decades, ranging from theories that did not look at attributions all the way to a very detailed Attribution Theory. This chapter will first focus on pre-Attributionists such as Sigmund Freud, Clark Leonard Hull, and G.A. Kelley. These men worked on theories that, although they did not necessarily specifically mention attributions, were integral to the creation of Attribution Theory. It will then progress to early Attributionists such as Young, Heider, and Rotter who were important in setting the groundwork for the later theory. The chapter will finish by discussing four decades of Bernard Weiner's research because his is some of the most highly respected work in this field.

Pre-Attribution Theory

There were a number of motivational theories that anticipated and preceded Attribution Theory. Weiner, in his essay "Metaphors in Motivation and Attribution" has suggested a method to think about these theories by explaining that there are two components of metaphysical beliefs: mind and body (921). Mind correlates with the subjective and non-physical, whereas body correlates with the objective and physical. He states that these two components have generally been at odds in past theories. With this in mind, Weiner goes on to discuss the two different metaphors for man: that of man as a machine, and that of man as god.

The metaphor of man being a machine is substantiated with the knowledge that because a machine and man both have parts and a desired end – man is a machine (922). He goes on to state that because men's and machines' behaviors are subconscious and involuntary, their actions are routine, and energy is given off when they are working; this also equates man with the machine. Sigmund Freud, in his early twentieth century work with psychoanalytic theory focused on this metaphor. Freud stated that although humans do not think, they still work via energy in order to achieve their desired ends (923). Within this metaphor, man is not concerned at all with attributing his successes and failures; he simply feels he is predestined to either succeed or fail; it is not up to him. Freud believed in the conservation of energy that states that if energy is used in one aspect, then there is not enough for another aspect. Therefore, if people are working diligently in one regard then there is not energy to entertain another avenue. Freud was one of the first to substantiate the man as machine motif.

In Freud's paper entitled "Instincts and Vicissitudes," he discussed how the pressure of an instinct has a "motor factor" (122). One does not generally think of people as having working motors, so to speak. However, Freud returned time and again to this metaphor. Later, he spoke of the love-hate relationship and how love can become a "motor urge" (137). Freud was implying that human beings have, at times, urges that they seemingly cannot control; they are overtaken by their urges and must succumb to them. People, however, can learn to control these urges and understand that there is an option. This would later lead into Attribution Theory and the concept that

if people begin to attribute their successes and failures, they will understand that they have some role in them.

Later in the twentieth century, during the 1940s, the most influential mechanical metaphor was created – that of Drive Theory (Weiner 923). This continued the machine metaphor because machines have engines and use incentives like fuel. In Weiner's essay, entitled "History of Motivational Research in Education," he explains Drive Theory by stating that an incentive must follow a response in order for motivation to increase (618). Hull stated "response reinforcement and drive reduction" are necessary to facilitate learning. He believed that man is driven, much like an animal. Animals, however, do not look at the causes of a result; humans must do so in order to be successful. If humans are not given incentives, they will not desire to achieve. Also, man must understand that the drive impulse is just that, an impulse – not a necessity. Man can overcome the drive; reinforcement response might assist that endeavor.

The aforementioned metaphor of the man as machine was prevalent during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s (Weiner 924). After this time, Weiner argues that Hull's work aided the downfall of this theory. Hull had brought about the concept of choice. Choice is something man has that a machine does not. "Drive" is just that – an impulse and impulses can be ignored; it is not an order. Therefore, some argued that the machine metaphor did not explain the use of man's higher order thinking skills. This left the door open for a new theory that included the use of higher order thinking skills.

The godlike metaphor was created by those believing that man used the concepts of being wise, powerful, loving, noncorporeal, and just (Weiner 922). Although this theory tends to be a bit more difficult to connect with human beings, as

they are not constantly all of the aforementioned items, it is substantiated through Heider's and Kelley's work with Attribution Theory. This theory was at the cusp of Attribution Theory because it showed that man has choices; he can peruse his attributes to determine the appropriate or probable causes.

Kelley chose to see man as a scientist, who could be construed as halfway between man and god, but researchers believe it is perhaps a bit closer to god (4). He believed that man's ultimate aim is to predict and control, just as it is the scientist's ultimate goal. A god ultimately does the controlling. He asserted that man is in a continual state of controlling and trying to predict the outcome of activities with which he comes in contact. This is similar to the godlike metaphor in that man is trying to be god. Man is trying to change what happens to him, whether it is under his control, or not. It was at this time researchers decided to create a theory that would demonstrate how man has choices as to how he relates cause and effect.

Early Attribution Theory

The concept of man and his higher thinking skills gave rise to a new concept. Attribution Theory came about because it could focus on man's decision-making process. Paul Thomas Young wrote on motivation in the 1940s; he was one of the first to write about an experimental approach to motivation. He focused on activity level, incentives, defense mechanisms, and degree of motivation (Weiner 616). At this time, the study of motivation was limited to instinct, drive, arousal, need, and energization (617). Scientists merely wanted to know what caused a person at rest to engage in activity. They did not focus on the more specific types of motivation. Another problem

with motivational research at the time was that educational psychologists did not engage with those studying motivation. As the study of motivation was rather basic, the scientists concerned themselves with "subhuman" behavior, such as rats in mazes and other experiments with animals. With a closer look at motivation, the next obvious step was looking at how people are motivated and what causes them to lose motivation. Thus, Attribution Theory was created so researchers could contemplate how people attributed their successes and failures.

Historically, one of the first to work on Attribution Theory was Fritz Heider, during the 1950s. In Weiner's essay entitled "An Attributional Theory of Achievement Motivation and Emotion," he describes some of Heider's contributions to the area (550). First and foremost, Heider stated that two items affected an action: factors within the person and factors within the environment. He believed that it was not just the person who could affect the body, but the outside world could affect a human, as well. If there were trauma occurring in the outside world, such as 9/11, it would adversely affect a person's motivation.

Julian Rotter continued Heider's work in the 1960s (Weiner 551). Rotter focused even more on the internal-external comparison. Rotter believed that motivation consisted of what one desired and how likely it was to be acquired (Weiner 619). This was known as Expectancy-Value Theory. The more likely something was to happen, the more likely people were to try to achieve it. Human beings want to put forth minimal effort in order to achieve the greatest return.

Weiner's Attribution Theory

Of all the people who have worked with Attribution Theory, perhaps Bernard Weiner is the one the most closely associated with it and has had the most influence over it in recent decades. His work has bridged the past forty years, with his most current publication being released in the current calendar year, 2006.

Weiner in the 1960s

During the 1960s, Weiner focused on high achieving and low achieving students in his article "Achievement Motivation and the Recall of Incompleted and Completed Exam Questions" (184). In this article, Weiner focused on the fact that, time and again, high achieving students were attracted to tasks at which they had initially failed. In the reverse of this concept, low achieving students tended to avoid situations in which they had previously failed. Weiner found that the high achieving students would ultimately learn the task because they had multiple experiences with the material, whereas low achieving students gave up and therefore never learned the task.

In the late 1960s he believed that there was another dimension of causality to the theory (551). He believed that not all of the items were constant. Effort and mood, he stated, could change; but ability was a constant. He did not believe that the others' work showed this important aspect. This aspect, that he now chose to focus on, came to be known as "controllability." In the late 1960s, in an article entitled "An Attributional Analysis of Achievement Motivation," Weiner started to fine-tune his focus by studying motivation and ability (3). At this point, he found that people who possessed high motivation and low ability were successful because people value those who can triumph

over "personal handicaps." At this time, Weiner had started to look at what he called "causal attributes" (7). He wanted to know what caused a student to succeed or fail; moreover, he wanted to know what the students saw as key to their success or failure. Perhaps Weiner's greatest discovery at this juncture was that he found the highest achievers were most likely to believe that the key to their success was located within themselves; they did not attribute their success to some outside cause (12).

Weiner in the 1970s

During the late 1970s, Weiner focused more closely on affects and attributions in his article "The Cognition-Emotion Process in Achievement-Related Contexts" (1211). He found that if a person believed that success was due to his ability, then that person felt more confidence and competence (1212). Weiner became more specific when he stated that when success is involved, internal attributions cause pride in oneself, whereas external attributions cause gratitude (1217). The latter attributions cause the person to rely more heavily on an outside causal agent. When failure is the result, those with internal attributions feel guilty, whereas those with external causal agents feel angry.

At this point in time, Weiner wrote a paper entitled "A Theory of Motivation for Some Classroom Experiences," in which he reflected on how his opinions have changed (4). Weiner explained that he had thought that success and failure could be attributed to ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. He then added mood, fatigue, illness, and bias. He also stated that at that point in time the popular attributions included others, motivation, habits, attitudes, and physiological processes. He believed that

people not only attribute their successes and failures to other people, but also to their own motivation, or a lack thereof. He also saw that people's habits and attitudes influenced their attributions.

Weiner in the 1980s

In the 1980s, Weiner realized that he had not fully developed his ideas dealing with controllability and came to the decision that most, if not all, of the aforementioned areas of controllability could change (Weiner 551). He said that some researchers believed that ability could change with learning and that some of the other concepts could have been viewed as either changeable or unchangeable, depending on the person and the circumstances. With that in mind, Weiner chose to rename the areas aptitude, temporary exertion, objective task characteristics, and chance.

During the 1980s, feelings were a concept that entered the theory. In an article Weiner wrote, entitled, "May I Borrow Your Class Notes: An Attributional Analysis of Judgments of Help Giving in an Achievement-Related Context" he stated that, "what we think determines feelings, and feelings determine what we do" (680). He went on to say that this was merely a suggestion at this point because of inconsistencies in the data (681). This would prove to be a point to which he would return.

During this time, Weiner also continued his work with locus, stability, and controllability in his paper entitled "Analysis of Judgments of Help-Giving" (188). He described how educators are much more likely to assist those who are trying to learn the material, as opposed to those who do not show evidence of trying (189). Therefore, Weiner asserted, a lack of effort is "punished" more severely than a lack of ability. He

stated, this time in an educational context, that those who are having academic difficulty are much more likely to be given assistance than those who are not trying.

By the late 1980s, Weiner was finding fault with his past findings when he wrote his paper "Attribution Theory and Attributional Therapy" (99). It was then that Weiner started to give ideas on how to change attributions. He stated that it is acceptable for an outside attribution to assist the person with the difficulty in changing the perception of the result (101). He explained that it is not necessarily the outcome that is hurting the individual, but how the individual is ascribing the result. Weiner believed that it is of utmost importance that the afflicted person discovers that there are multiple causal antecedents (103). If the person with the problem finds the appropriate cause, then that person will be able to overcome the negative attribute.

Weiner in the 1990s

During the early 1990s, Weiner published a paper entitled "Public Confession and Forgiveness." While this study did not primarily focus on education, it did focus on attributes. He looked at televangelists, politicians, and other public figures and why they were forgiven after they had confessed (284). He made reference to a study that stated that when people confess they are acknowledging that they broke a rule. Therefore, they knew that there was a rule that they had broken in the first place. This is in opposition to those who assumed that they were never guilty of breaking a rule. Weiner also explained that confession implies that the problem is not stable and therefore will not continue (285). If people assume that the problem will not recur, they are more likely to forgive. He went on to show that confession resulted in more sympathy and less

anger by the outside society (293). In a further look at this concept, he said that those who spontaneously confessed elicited a greater amount of sympathy than those whose confession was given after time had elapsed (299).

In the 1990s Weiner believed that cognitive approaches to motivation were invaluable (620). He believed that the key to motivation is through causal ascriptions and goals. Weiner believed that one must understand what is causing the person to succeed or fail in order to gain success. He also saw striving for achievement as key to motivation (620-1). It was at this point that he also chose to focus more intently on the aspect of emotion and how it contributes to motivation. When writing a section for the Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Weiner noted that there are three dimensions of causality: locus, stability, and controllability (861). Whether the cause is internal or external, whether it changes over time, and whether the person can control the cause are all key points to Weiner's Attribution Theory.

Weiner claims that the metaphor or comparison of man to god is the one that is found in Attribution Theory (926). He states that humans want to know what outcomes will be associated with their actions and that people also want to know what inferences they can make about others. He believes that this concept underlies the belief that behavioral changes are "mediated by causal perceptions," a key in Attribution Theory.

Weiner chooses to take this theory a step further and say that people are judges. He claims that this is a sub metaphor based off of the person as a god motif (927). Weiner states that judges must evaluate positives and negatives in order to come to a responsible conclusion. He believes this is what human beings do; they constantly evaluate in order to determine the appropriate course of action. Responsibility and self-

control also fall under the umbrella of man as judge, according to Weiner. He also states that the person as judge metaphor is appropriate because people give help willingly, at times (928). Judges are duty bound to assist those in need and people tend to want to help most those who seemingly need the help.

On the opposite side of assistance is aggression. The judge assesses a situation and determines the appropriate level of retaliation. People do the same when they are faced with others who have chosen to take part in some negative aspect of action. Ultimately, the judge's job is to assess the causal nature of an action and prescribe the appropriate level of punishment, which is similar to Attribution Theory.

Summary

Chapter two covered the beginnings of Attribution Theory, ranging from Freud to Weiner. It started with the metaphor of man as machine, traveled through the man as god metaphor and concluded with the man as judge metaphor – thus arriving at the metaphor that persists in the current day. This chapter covered one hundred fifty years of study and writing, both before the invention of Attribution Theory with Hull and Kelley, and during the actual study of attributions with men ranging from the father of Attribution Theory, Heider to today's leading expert, Weiner. Chapter three will focus on Weiner's Attribution Theory as understood today, as well as the supporting theories of Learned Helplessness, Self-Efficacy, and Expectancy-Value Theory.

Chapter III

Introduction

During the last century, Attribution Theory changed and grew into a more detailed concept. While Weiner still believes much of what he wrote about in the past, such as locus of causality, controllability, and stability, today he has found new ideas to support his theory. Various metaphors were used in the past; today, the man as judge metaphor reigns. In the past, emotions were not discussed; today they are of utmost importance. While Bernard Weiner is perhaps the most prolific, there are other researchers who have contributed to the study by continuing research in the field. Some have continued research on topics from the past; finding they are still relevant today while others have forged ahead in slightly different directions. There are also a number of theories that have similarities and are closely related to Attribution Theory. Learned Helplessness, Self-Efficacy, and Expectancy-Value Theory are three of the most important and relevant of those closely related theories. Learned Helplessness, first explored by E.P. Seligman and continued by Carol Dweck demonstrates how a lack of appropriate attributions can cause significant problems. Self-Efficacy, created by Albert Bandura, demonstrates how positive experiences can be when attributions are used appropriately. Lastly, Expectancy-Value Theory, examined by Rodriguez, Cocks, and Watt, shows how people can be coerced into performing a task when the value of doing so is seen through their attributions.

Weiner's Contemporary Attribution Theory

Reexamining Earlier Concepts

Recently, Weiner has taken another look at some of his earlier concepts; one of which is locus of causality, or internal and external causes. In his work "The Cognition-Emotion Process," he states that internal attributes have to do with ability and effort, whereas external attributes are luck and difficulty of the task. In his article, "A Theory of Motivation," Weiner states that those who attribute their success internally have feelings of pride, confidence, and satisfaction (14). People like this will have high self-efficacy and belief in themselves. They are generally set up to succeed time after time. Those who fail and attribute their failure internally feel guilt and resignation. These people come to believe that they will always fail; often they give up and decide to not try because it will simply lead to another failure.

Another concept that Weiner has chosen to take a closer look at in recent studies is controllability and stability. These have been key tenets of Attribution Theory for a number of years, but Weiner has found a slightly new angle for them. As far as controllability is concerned, Weiner states in his article "Analysis of Judgments of Help-Giving," that controllability greatly impacts help giving (189). If a student looks as if he is capable but he does not try, then he will not be given assistance as much as those students who have the ability, but do not put forth much effort. This is because effort is controlled by the individual and thus, is under the umbrella of controllability.

As controllability and stability are directly related, a corollary of stability is explained in "An Attributional Theory of Achievement Motivation and Emotion" (Weiner

562). Weiner states, "If the outcome of an event is ascribed to a stable cause, then that outcome will be anticipated with increased certainty, or with an increased expectancy." He also explains that when an outcome is believed to be based upon a stable cause, then the same outcome will be expected, with greater certainty, on subsequent experiences. This also leads people to believe that if they perform the same, or a very similar, task they will succeed. In this situation people are generally more likely to pursue the endeavor. The higher the possible, or probable, return, the more likely a person is to complete the task.

Emotions

Within the last fifteen years, Weiner has also realized the impact of emotions on attributions and has therefore chosen to focus much of his research on emotions. In his early work, Weiner did not mention the concept of emotions. In his most recent work, this is a major emphasis. Thus, Weiner's most recent text, Social Motivation, Justice, and the Moral Emotions points to the importance of emotions. Feelings of blame, anger, and neglect create thoughts of low effort and are on the controllable side of attributions (131). Conversely, feelings of pity and unsolicited help infer low ability, uncontrollability, and no responsibility. Weiner believes that looking at feelings from the result of a situation is just as important as looking at the causes of a situation when assisting students in changing their attributions.

His basic premise within this arena of emotions is that motivation is directly related to feelings (122). He defines some emotions as being related to effort and perceptions of causal control (92). These emotions would be admiration, anger,

gratitude, guilt, indignation, jealousy, regret, and schadenfreude, or joy with the shame of another (94). Ultimately, he tied emotions with the man as a judge metaphor by stating that this metaphor has much to do with emotions (123).

Rewards and Punishments

Today, Weiner has come to believe that rewards and punishments, just like emotions, are integral parts of the Attribution Theory equation. He focuses on these aspects in an entire chapter in his latest work. In his work of 1970, entitled "An Attributional Analysis of Achievement Motivation," he pointed out how rewards are markedly better in controlling behavior than any type of punishment (3). In Social Motivation, Justice, and the Moral Emotions, Weiner claims punishment can be better than reward when the individual is guilty of low effort or motivation (158).

He believes that punishments can be seen by some students as being caused by a lack of effort. This can be a positive; on the other hand he views rewards as negative. Rewards are viewed by some students as being caused by their high effort although they have low ability (158). He also believes that punishments need to change because they have been viewed as retributive. They are not given in order to cause change; they are merely given to make someone "pay" for his mistake.

Man as Judge

Perhaps the most profound change in modern day Attribution Theory is Weiner's new metaphor of man as judge. Weiner's most recent text, Social Motivation, Justice, and the Moral Emotions focuses on man as judge, within the justice motif (4). This is a

continuation of the man as machine, scientist, and god metaphor. He took this metaphor a step further when he compared the classroom to a courtroom (161). He stated that in a classroom students are given feedback, much like the sentencing of a criminal (162). Educators are ultimately the people who tell students what they have done correctly and incorrectly, not only during an assignment, but also during non-instructional time. Weiner also explained that in a classroom, educators hold those of "feeble" mind to a lower standard than those who are capable of mental success. This is similar to a courtroom when a criminal is found not guilty by reason of mental defect. Weiner then explained that retribution must be paid in either case – in education, students must make up for whatever failures they have had, just as those found guilty of a crime must. Lastly, Weiner claimed that in both situations the accused wishes to lesson personal responsibility or control for the failure. Human beings do not generally wish to be at fault or suffer the consequences for their poor decisions. Weiner has been fine-tuning Attribution Theory and came back to the items that he thought were lacking in his past research, such as emotion and metaphors about man. While Weiner has been the key to Attribution Theory, there are others who have studied attributions.

Other Contributions

While Weiner is the most well known current expert in Attribution Theory, there are other researchers who have enhanced different aspects in the area. Just as Weiner has recently looked at earlier concepts, some of the other researchers are returning to older concepts as well. Taggar and Neubert are focusing on cognitive ability and conscientiousness (938). They state that if someone's poor performance is deemed

controllable by others then the outsider will see the performance with anger and become punitive (939). Taggar and Neubert have discovered that emotions play a more important role in outsider response than do attributions or expectations (950). They are not negating the effect of attributions; they are merely stating they believe emotions are more important.

These authors also believe that low conscientiousness might be contagious from member to member (952). They have found that once a person has demonstrated high cognitive ability and low conscientiousness, in a group situation, then others tended to follow suit. This type of individual was also viewed as less prosocial than other combinations of cognitive ability and conscientiousness (957). Taggar and Neubert also claim that training in attributions might allow people to not "self-handicap," or push their failure onto something other than their lack of competence or ability (959).

According to a study by Mary B. McPherson, students note that when teachers are insulting, hostile, or are yelling, that behavior negatively impacts their learning (357). These students also believed that this anger was internal to the teacher (363). These students understood that their misbehavior or lack of effort was in some way responsible for their failure, but they still held their teachers ultimately responsible.

While Weiner and others mostly focus on emotions, other researchers are looking at people's perceptions of life, how they see events as opposed to what actually occurred. Another current researcher who supports Attribution Theory is Lynley Hicks. In an article entitled "Motivation and Middle School Students," she states that perceptions of experiences are greater influences on motivation than actual experiences (Hicks). In this relatively new concept of looking at perceptions as opposed to reality,

Hicks goes on to explain that success breeds success. When a student fails, it is extremely difficult to keep trying to be successful because the students are inappropriately attributing their failures. This article claims that teachers can play a key role in teaching students how to attribute both their successes and their failures.

Cheng and Furnham have also done work with perception versus reality. Their study states that if a person believes that positive outcomes arrive by inner assistance, that person is more likely to be happier and have fewer issues with mental defect (322). They go on to state that if a person blames another for failure, it may not improve situations, especially if there are interpersonal relationships involved (323). Ultimately, Cheng and Furnham believe it may be more beneficial, as far as happiness and mental health issues go, if a person sees situations as less personal and less permanent (324).

While some researchers have been focusing on perception versus reality, others have been focusing on the older concept of locus of causality. In "Self-Concept, Attributional Beliefs, and School Achievement," the authors state that students with high self-esteem attribute their successes to internal factors (Kurtz-Costes 202). Students with low self-esteem attribute their failures to low ability. This, in turn, causes the low students to decrease their motivation because they do not feel that they can ever be successful. In fact, these students tend to avoid difficult situations (213). Although this is not a new concept, it is important to note that the belief continues today.

In a study entitled "Is There a Universal Positivity Bias in Attributions," the authors have found that people generally attribute positive events to themselves and negative events to others (711). They have also discovered that this bias is extremely high in childhood, but lessens in adolescence, until increasing again in late adulthood

(734). For adolescence, the researchers discovered that negative events are less positive; less stable and more internal. The authors attribute this phenomenon to the fact that it is at this point in time when people begin to realize that ability is stable; therefore, when they fail once they believe that they will always fail at that particular task. This concept demonstrates what a key role a teacher can play in how students wrongly attribute their failures.

Learned Helplessness

A theory, which is closely linked to that of Attribution Theory, is Learned Helplessness because Learned Helplessness is Attribution Theory at its lowest point. In Learned Helplessness a subject attributes failure internally to low ability or some other stable factor (Valas 103). This aspect of Learned Helplessness generally gives rise to depression. In fact, early research believed that Learned Helplessness and depression had similar symptoms, preventions, and cures (Klein 12).

E.P. Seligman

Steven F. Maier and Martin E.P. Seligman originated the term "Learned Helplessness" in 1967 (Maier 3). It was in the 1970s that Learned Helplessness came to be widely acknowledged (Weiner 862). Seligman was a key character in the creation of this concept. He explained that if people believe that no matter what they do they will not succeed, then they will become helpless. This is much like the rat in the maze that gets shocked. The rat will not avoid the shock; it will merely believe that the shock is its fate, and therefore, it will continue performing whatever task causes the shock. People

exemplify Learned Helplessness when they are failing; if they do not believe that they can succeed, they merely accept their fate and resign themselves to it. They are doomed to fail until they see the possibility of success.

In the mid 1970s, Seligman added changes in emotionality to his theory (Maier 19). He stated that fear is created when a traumatic event first occurs. When and if a subject learns that he can control the trauma, the fear will lessen and often dissipate. When the event cannot be controlled, the subject's fear will lessen, but it may also be replaced with depression.

Bernard Weiner

Weiner, although not a specialist in Learned Helplessness addressed it in one of his essays, entitled "A Theory of Motivation" (21). He stated that only those who make internal attributions were found to have shown aspects of Learned Helplessness (22). He explained that it was also found that Learned Helplessness was exhibited when circumstances "promote low ability attributions for prior lack of control." He went on to state that a depressed circumstance would allow people to see only causes that are stable, internal, and global. This, he continued, would merely lead to low expectations of success, and thus, Learned Helplessness.

Carol S. Dweck

Carol S. Dweck has been a leader in her work with Learned Helplessness. In an article co-authored with Barbara Licht, Dweck states that if people can alter students' attributes, then it is possible to alter their response to failure (Licht 628). This study

showed that when students have been confused by previous material, they would perform poorly if they have a helpless attributional style (633). These authors also discovered that within the male population the less able students were the most debilitated. Within the female population, the gifted students were the most harmed by the confusing material (634). Therefore, the confusion caused the most harm to the opposite populations between the sexes.

In another article, Dweck came to the conclusion that when schools are extremely academic oriented, students are more accurate when discussing their academic ability (Benenson 1185). This was found true for students as young as kindergarten. While this study was done in an elementary school, one would assume that this would hold true for older students, as well.

Dweck has done a great deal of research on sex differences in Learned Helplessness. In the first article of a series on sex differences, Dweck stated that when girls are given feedback about failure via a peer, they drastically improve (154). For boys, an adult is much better for future improvement. She went on to state that boys would attribute failure to lack of ability when approached by a peer, girls would attribute their failure to ability when approached by an adult.

In a later article on sex differences, Dweck and three other researchers found that since teachers are far more critical of boys, the boys tend to attribute their failure to the attitude of the teacher (Dweck 274). In this study, 45% of the negative feedback was in regard to form, as opposed to content. Therefore, the boys did not see any correlation between their intellectual ability and their failure. The teachers did not see lack of

motivation as a problem for the girls and were much more specific in regard to the girls' failures.

In the fourth of the studies on sex differences, Dweck and the other researchers found that girls did not believe their lack of ability to be task specific (447). When girls failed at one task, they carried that memory of failure with them to the new task. This was not discovered within the boys. The boys' lack of ability was found to be more task specific (448).

In testing this hypothesis, Dweck studied students the following fall and discovered that boys had higher expectancies in the fall than the girls did (450). This substantiated the findings of the previous study. Later in the fall the girls' expectancies rose (451). This was after they got to know the teacher and had some successes in the classroom. Although the girls' expectancy rose, the boys did not lower. At this point in time, the teacher's negative feedback had not created a sense of debilitation. Due to these findings, Dweck stated that boys are much more resilient in the face of failure.

In a study by Carol Dweck and Carol Diener, students who were trained to stress motivational attributes, as opposed to ability attributes, showed improvement in regard to their behavior regarding failure (Diener 452). This study focused on learned helpless students and mastery-oriented students. The researchers discovered that the helpless students merely worried about the cause of their failures and never got around to finding ways to overcome the failure (460). The mastery-oriented students searched for a solution and were therefore more successful. This study went on to suggest that not only attribution retraining, but teaching students to focus on self-monitoring and self-instruction would be beneficial (460).

Other Contributions

Although Dweck is a leader in Learned Helplessness, other researchers have enhanced different aspects of this theory in the academic arena. Steven Maier stated that Learned Helplessness occurs when a subject learns that he cannot control outcomes and is seriously debilitated by such knowledge (Maier 4). This helplessness, he believes, does not result from any type of trauma (6). Studies showed that people exhibited Learned Helplessness not as a result of some type of physical trauma, but from a seeming lack of control. Learned Helplessness, like depression, can be caused by uncontrollable situations, which lead the subject to believe that his responses will not affect change (Klein 12). Early on, the two identified behavioral symptoms were motivational and cognitive (11). Later, Seligman introduced emotional behavior as well (McReynolds 141). The Learned Helplessness theory was said to be a "broadly inclusive theory of behavioral disturbance," according to McReynolds. This theory is a cognitive theory of learning that explains the lack of learning in terms of cognitions and expectancies (149).

Early research on helplessness dealt with noise and shock among dogs, cats, rats, fish, monkeys, and eventually, men (Maier 10). During this research, one of the key findings had to do with uncontrollability (13). Researchers found that when a subject lacked control, that belief might actually slow his perception of control. They also discovered "learning that an outcome is independent of a response makes it more difficult later to learn that responses produce that outcome" (18).

McReynolds cited three methods of empirical support for this theory (141). He noted the unavoidable and inescapable shock given to a variety of laboratory animals. He also described how dogs were used to show that control over shock, not the actual shock, was critical. Lastly, he cited a study with college students who were involved with a study about inescapable noise or insolvable visual discriminations versus those who could escape the noise and solve the discriminations (142).

With Learned Helplessness, students ignore their effort when looking at their failures (Abrami 203). These types of students see their failures as insurmountable. They believe there is no reason to try any further because they will only fail which will only point out that they are failures. Learned helpless students show negative self-cognitions, negative affect, and impaired performance when they fail. This type of student desires only performance goals. He does not want to learn anything; he merely wants to show that he can succeed.

In a study by Valas, on learning disabled and learned helpless students, he discovered that these types of students not only showed lower academic expectations for themselves, but they also showed lower self-esteem and higher depressive tendencies (111). He believed that these students had come to the faulty realization that they were incapable of ascertaining a positive outcome.

In a paper by Firmin, the researchers focused on components of helplessness so as to discover relief for the afflicted. Learned Helplessness is stated to have three components: contingency, uncontrollability of the situation; cognition, the attributions people make regarding the situation; and behavior, whether the person will give up or persevere (688). The authors stated that Learned Helplessness was most likely to occur

when failure seems uncontrollable and when people relate failure to internal causes. They also stated that those with ADHD are much more likely to exhibit characteristics of Learned Helplessness (689).

In a more specific area, researchers decided to focus on scholastic examinations. Regarding tests, Firmin et al. have discovered that it is imperative that educators place easier questions at the beginning of exams (692). Students are much more likely to give up if they feel that they have failed at the earlier questions in an exam. It does not matter that they are not truly aware of failure at that point; the possibility of failure is enough for them to feel helpless and give up.

Regarding failure and success, Elliot, in an article entitled "Goals: An Approach to Motivation and Achievement," explained the difference between high ability and low ability students. In this article, the authors have found that students who perceived their abilities as high behaved positively in the face of obstacles (Elliott 10). This type of student chose to look for solutions to their problems and not make attributions for their failures. However, these students did not choose to work on their skills if the possible practice entailed the possibility of making mistakes in public situations. Generally, students who appeared to have high ability did not want to appear ignorant in the eyes of their peers.

Self-Efficacy

Self-Efficacy is demonstrated when a person appropriately attributes successes and failures; therefore, it can be considered an arm of Attribution Theory. Albert Bandura has done extensive work with Self-Efficacy in his work with social cognitive theory. Bandura explains the concept in his article entitled "Role of Affective Self-

Regulatory Efficacy in Diverse Spheres of Psychosocial Functioning" (769). In this article, Bandura explains that one of the key components in social cognitive theory is a human's capacity to self-regulate. People are capable of watching what they do and changing their behaviors when necessary. He goes on to explain that Self-Efficacy is a key in this process, both directly and indirectly. What people believe about their efficacy affects how much effort they put forth, as well as how resilient they are in the face of failure.

Bandura continues by explaining that Self-Efficacy is created and expanded by mastery experiences and social experiences, such as modeling and persuasion of social influences (769). Different cultures create different levels of efficacy, just as different individuals possess differing amounts of efficacy. Some people do not experience the positive type of efficacy because it does not generally exist in their particular culture.

In support of his theory, Bandura spends a great deal of time discussing the notion of affect (770). He states, as do attribution theorists, that negative affect brings about adverse reactions, whereas positive affect has a more positive result. He explains that, in society, how people handle emotional experiences vary a great deal. He states that in order for people to better adapt, they must regulate their affect in a more discriminatory manner. An example of this might be when a student is nervous about giving a speech. If that student is capable of overcoming his fear, he most likely possesses a high perception of self-efficacy.

Positive affect creates a greater perception of self-efficacy (771). Conversely, negative affect diminishes self-efficacy; the more intense the affect, the greater the

impact on self-efficacy. If an event is extremely intense, whether positive or negative, it will have a greater impact on self-efficacy, as opposed to an event that is smaller in intensity.

Another component of Self-Efficacy has to do with how one views failure (772). Those individuals who possess high self-efficacy do not view failure as insurmountable. Their efficacious abilities demonstrate to them that they are capable of overcoming whatever obstacle might exist. However, those individuals who possess low efficacy are more likely to become despondent and see the failure as insurmountable, which simply reinforces their low efficacy.

This lack of efficacy carries into the academic realm. When those with low efficacy fail, they are more likely to disengage themselves from school and gravitate to those who are pursuing less academic goals, and thus, more troubling aspects of the world at large. Conversely, those with high efficacy are more likely to put forth effort and surround themselves with likeminded individuals. These students are more likely to speak with their parents about aspects of their lives outside of the home setting, as well (778).

While completing his research, Bandura found some striking differences between the sexes. He found females to be more likely to be prosocial and less likely to delinquency, but more prone to bouts of depression (777). This is, in part, because females are generally more efficacious and able to stand up to their negligent peers. However, when females are unable to effect change in the delinquent youths, they are more likely to become despondent. Females, Bandura states, are more able to visualize themselves undergoing similar experiences, and thus are better at the empathic

response (779). This also can lead the females to become more depressed; they sometimes feel as if they are going through whatever turmoil the others are.

While focusing on the academic arena, in an article entitled "Multifaceted Impact of Self-Efficacy Beliefs on Academic Functioning," Bandura explains that students' beliefs in their efficacy do not just affect their achievement; it also affects their motivation and interests (1206). He goes on to state that the greater a student's belief in his efficacy, the more occupations he will consider, which also means he will show greater interest in the pursuit of the career. Therefore, he will also be better prepared for his chosen career, and will ultimately acquire greater academic success (1207).

He discovered that parents also play a great role in the efficacy issue. Parents who are more efficacious are more likely to promote their child's educational progress (1207). In turn, these children are more likely to have higher efficacy and aspire to greater goals. In turn, parents' involvement in their child's education can increase a teacher's commitment to the child (1208). Bandura found that when parents are more involved with the school and the child has higher ability, then the school is more likely to place the child in a more challenging atmosphere, which will allow the child to perform at a higher level both now and in the future. He goes on to explain that high academic and social efficacy creates prosocial behavior that creates greater peer acceptance (1209). These children are also less likely to start troublesome activities (1216).

Ironically, teachers with low self-efficacy try their best to discourage parents from trying to become involved with their child's education (1209). Parents with negative efficacy toward parenting are less likely to try to push their children academically (1216).

In this article, Bandura makes a brave jump and explains how, in the near future, the act of educating will be performed in a multimedia fashion outside of the present school boundaries (1219). He states that when this happens, the achievement gap will greatly increase. Those with high self-efficacy will be able to self-direct their learning; those with low self-efficacy will not.

Bandura explains that people with high efficacy are more likely to visualize success scenarios (729). They are more likely to be able to rehearse positive solutions to possible problems. Those who have low efficacy are more likely to dwell on their possible failures and not see ways to overcome them. This behavior lessens motivation and performance.

People with higher efficacy are more likely to create loftier goals for themselves (730). When they set these goals, they are also more likely to stick to them. These higher goals also raise motivation, and ultimately, the performance attained. These people are more likely to make things happen, as opposed to just sitting there and allowing things to happen to them (731). Conversely, those with low efficacy are going to acquire less and be motivated less.

A key point that Bandura makes is that this efficacy can be perceived; it does not need to be real, in order to have a great impact (733). He states that perceived efficacy could affect actual memory performance. If a student perceives himself as not worth much, it will impact his actual performance. It does not matter that the student could do better; if he sees himself as inept, he will be inept.

Expectancy-Value Theory

Expectancy-Value Theory monitors the expectations and values given to a task. If these are both high, the person will be more likely to complete the task. Thus, through people's attributions, they can value a task. This is the point of Expectancy-Value Theory. According to Rodriguez, Expectancy-Value Theory asserts, "expectations and values combine to determine the effort with which a specific action is carried out" (324). Therefore, if the expectations of the result are high, as is the value that one asserts on said action, then the person is very likely to carry out said action. According to Expectancy-Value Theory, those who believe that they can succeed should demonstrate high levels of self-esteem (325).

While Rodriguez looked at unemployed individuals in his research, certain points carry over to the academic world. Those who have a high depressive affect will generally attribute their failure to stable external factors (324). This is similar to Attribution Theory.

Cocks and Watt explain Expectancy-Value Theory as competency beliefs and values being the greatest predictors of achievement outcomes (83). They explain perceived competence as subjective judgments regarding one's ability to perform. They state that this perceived competence is the same thing as self-concept of ability and this self-concept predicts not only academic achievement, but also choice of coursework. Students with higher self-concepts would choose the higher-level courses and theoretically be able to achieve their goals in said coursework. Those with higher self-concept usually demonstrate higher intrinsic value.

Intrinsic value is defined as enjoyment obtained from performing a task. Intrinsic value is equated with intrinsic motivation, which is much discussed in Attribution Theory. Perceived competence influences intrinsic value (84). Ultimately, both intrinsic value and perceived competence predict achievement. For instance, if a child believes he possesses high ability in a certain subject matter, then he is more likely to take more difficult classes and more likely to obtain higher academic achievement in that subject matter because he wants to learn more. If a child believes he has low ability, he is less likely to want to take the class and less likely to demonstrate academic achievement.

The research also explains that students who have high perceptions of competence are more likely to find ways to enhance their abilities (87). Students with low perceptions are less likely to try to discover ways in which to raise their academic achievement. The authors go on to state that students who had mastery goals in one subject area were likely to have them in another subject area (99). This led them to believe that students who have mastery goals are likely to carry them into all aspects of their academic areas.

After looking at the aforementioned items, Cooks and Watt arrived at five implications for the classroom: students need constructive feedback regarding their competencies, individuals need to be focused, repetitive tasks can be disheartening for those who consistently fail, teachers should minimalize the humiliation a failing student feels, and parents need to be involved in their child's educational process (104).

Another group who looked at Expectancy-Value Theory was Borders, Earleywine and Huey. According to them, Expectancy-Value Theory focuses on behaviors people choose in order to achieve an outcome and how people ascribe value to these

outcomes (539). Expectancies are the anticipations of likely consequences to an action. These anticipations result from past occurrences and affect future choices.

In regard to behaviors it was found that students with behavior problems behave in that manner because of expected outcomes for their behavior (547). When it seems that others are expecting a student to misbehave, then that student will generally conform to that expectation and misbehave. They also found that if students expect little positive reinforcement for their behaviors, they are more likely to misbehave.

This same type of student might misbehave, although they know that they will not expect the proper type of feedback from misbehaving (548). Instead, these students might misbehave simply because they lack the knowledge of other options. In essence, they misbehave because they do not know what else to do, regardless of the consequence. Therefore, the authors of this article recommended increasing students' perceived competence in order to help them become more successful.

Summary

This chapter has shown not only what Attribution Theory is today, but also has shown some of the supporting research for Attribution Theory. Learned Helplessness, Self-Efficacy, and Expectancy-Value Theory look at attributes, as well. All three of these theories reside under the umbrella of Attribution Theory. When a student incorrectly attributes failure, he may succumb to Learned Helplessness. On the other hand, if a student appropriately attributes causes, he has high Self-Efficacy. In the middle is Expectancy-Value Theory; if a student can see the value, he will achieve a successful

outcome. At this point, he does not demonstrate high Self-Efficacy, but he most definitely does not exhibit Learned Helplessness.

Chapter IV

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to look at various existing programs that can be incorporated into a Plan of Action at the author's school. This author has selected several programs related to the previously discussed concepts: the LINKS Program, the PLAN Program, the BrainPower Program, and the KYAC Program. These four programs have been chosen because within them are pieces that can easily be applied to the author's current teaching position. LINKS is a well-respected program within the attribution community, and it is a program that is ongoing, whereas the others were undertaken for only a brief amount of time. Therefore, LINKS has many strengths; the others have some strengths, but contain weaknesses, as well. While these programs all target different populations, they share many tenets and other similarities. Some of these programs focus on emotions; others focus on locus of causality, while others concentrate of Expectancy-Value Theory. These programs will form the basis for the author's Plan of Action in chapter five.

LINKS Program

The LINKS program was created to assist students in appropriately attributing their successes and failures. The goal of LINKS is to discontinue the Learned Helplessness demonstrated by the student. The program's goal is to break the cycle of low-expectations (Alderman 127). In her article "Motivation for At-Risk Students," Alderman explains that there must be a "link" between what the student did and the

outcome in order for the student to get the most out of the success (28). There are four steps to this process: proximal goals, learning strategies, successful experience, and attribution for success.

The teacher starts the first step. A teacher must create a baseline for the student's performance. This baseline is generally based upon formal or informal pretesting, observation, and analysis of errors. After the baseline is created, the teacher and student may decide together the proximal goal (Alderman 127). In "Motivation for At-Risk Students," Alderman explains that goal setting will lead to self-monitoring. In fact, she states that if one starts with one of the aforementioned activities, it will inevitably lead to the other. This step can assist students with locus of causality. Alderman also gives some key points about how to create a goal. Goals should be specific, difficult, and short term. Proximal goals are of utmost importance for the at-risk learner because he or she has succumbed to a great deal of failure in the past due to being overwhelmed (28).

Step two involves the learning of strategies that will assist the student in overcoming his or her "inefficient learner" status. An inefficient learner is one who does not know when and where to apply appropriate learning strategies (128). Strategies might involve memory and metacognitive knowledge (129). These strategies could also include reading comprehension, such as summarizing, questioning, predicting, and clarifying (29).

Step three is called a learning goal, as opposed to a performance goal. The proximal goal is the criterion for the successful experience. The focus at this stage is to

show growth; the goal is never to focus on how intelligent or unintelligent a student may be (129).

The final step is where students learn to appropriately attribute their success with the assistance of the teacher. For this attribution process to work effectively, students must look at each step of their process and state what they did to make that task successful this time. If this four-step process is successful, students will increase their Self-Efficacy, which will increase their confidence and increase their view of teacher efficacy (129).

The proponents of this method strongly believe that students must learn to attribute their successes to controllable factors such as ability or effort. If they merely achieve the success without attributing the success to controllable factors, the success does not matter (127). Once the student has properly attributed the success, then expectations and confidence should increase; therefore, they should be able to achieve more success in different venues.

For difficult tasks, it is important that students look at their effort before they look at their ability (29). Effort is not viewed as highly as ability, and therefore if effort is looked at first, students will pay more attention to that aspect. When a student fails, it is important to not attribute the failure to lack of ability unless it is obviously true. Students will generally shut down if their failure is attributed to this cause. If a student arrives at this conclusion, it is the teacher's job to reattribute the cause. In this case, Expectancy-Value Theory is put to the test.

PLAN Program

PLAN is a program that makes great use of the locus of causality facet of Attribution Theory. This program also targets some emotions and Learned Helplessness, to a smaller degree. PLAN stands for Programa: Latinos Adelantan De Nuevo (Alderman 141). In English, this program is called Program: Learning According to Needs (Abi-Nader 546). This program was created for inner city Latinos, but could be used by any young people who believe they have no future. Students in this program made use of mentors, discussions about the future, and appropriate literature. Mentors had been PLAN participants who learned to attribute their successes to the appropriate causes.

When talking about the future, students discussed preparing for college and all of the various processes it takes to enroll. They also role-played and listened to stories told by PLAN graduates about their college experiences (Alderman 142). The last key ingredient to the PLAN program was giving rationales for exercises they performed. The facilitators wanted their students to understand why they needed to learn various skills. They understood that for many of these students they were not given a reason why they should learn something; they were merely told they must learn it. Students, when given reasons why they need to learn something are much more open to the experience. All talk focused on indicative mode, as opposed to conditional mode. Teachers did not want students to think about the chance they would not make it to college. The adults wanted students to see no other option – the students were going to college.

Throughout this program, students worked on attributing both their current and their future successes. Through the role playing, guest speakers, and mentors, students found a positive method for attributing their success. Theoretically, if the PLAN graduates/mentors had not learned how to appropriately attribute their success, they would not be a part of the program today.

This program is similar to the LINKS Program in that it involves some type of older person talking with the students about how to succeed. They both instructed the student in how to learn better; the LINKS program instructed through learning strategies and the PLAN Program through role playing and focusing on rationales for the "why" portion of the instruction. Both of these programs can focus on Learned Helplessness by showing how it can cause failure. They can also look at emotions by demonstrating how emotions can hold one back or get in the way.

However, the PLAN Program did not consist of a pre-ordained amount of steps. The LINKS Program focused on effort and students discussing attributions, whereas the PLAN Program looked at attributions from a more nebulous sense; they did not come directly out and mention "attributions." Locus of causality is looked at in both, but in a much more straightforward manner in LINKS.

BrainPower and KYAC Programs

Both the BrainPower and KYAC programs dealt with socialization. BrainPower looked at socialization through the lens of aggression and KYAC through the lens of social cues. At-risk youths tend to be more aggressive when compared to the norm. Because of this, a group or researchers investigated a group of upper elementary

students from urban public schools in Southern California (Hudley 273). This program used the curriculum of the BrainPower Program (273). Although this program consisted of elementary students, one could see how it would be able cross the age barrier and have a positive effect on older students, as well. This group worked with the premise that excessively aggressive students believe that accidental behavior is generally done on purpose (272). The authors give the example of being bumped in the hall. A less aggressive student would view the incident as an accident; however, the more aggressive youth would believe that the incident was purposeful. In this case, aggressive males generally become retaliatory.

The researchers believed that biased attributions were at fault for the boys' behavior (273). Generally, aggressive boys had some history with aggressive behavior and therefore attributed the incidents to malice. This belief would then exacerbate the issue, which would cause retaliation that would yet again exacerbate the situation.

Via the BrainPower Program, boys were subjected to a series of lessons in which they learned to better attribute social cues (274). The boys were taught when they should associate social situations with "uncontrollable" or "accidental" causes. The study proved that when students underwent the attributional intervention, they were much more likely to appropriately attribute questionable social cues (279).

A program that focuses on social cues, as opposed to aggression, is the Knowledge for Youth About Career (KYAC) program in Canada (Bradshaw 2). This program used videos and CD-ROMs to teach aspects of careers. One of the main components of KYAC was that it used the computer and a touch screen. A mouse could be used, but at-risk students tended to prefer the touch screen, according to the

authors. Throughout this program, students saw various characters, both as they appeared then and in the future (3). Often, the student was allowed to choose between two scenarios so he could see what would happen to the character during the next stage of life.

During the video, the action was paused while "thought balloons" appeared. These balloons allowed the students to see what a character was thinking and the students therefore learned what appropriate thought processes occurred on the road to appropriately attributing success or failure (3).

The KYAC and PLAN Programs were similar because they both dealt with the future of students – one through a multimedia presentation and one via graduates of the program. The BrainPower, KYAC, and PLAN Programs all dealt with attributions in an indirect manner. They never sat down and directly spoke about attributions with the students. BrainPower focused on emotions, which is something that none of the other programs focused on. This is a key because of Weiner's most recent research. All of these programs look at Learned Helplessness, as well as Self-Efficacy, through an indirect method. They all desired students to look at themselves and be efficacious. All of these programs could be performed in a high school setting.

All four of the programs were targeting different populations. LINKS and KYAC were the only programs focusing on a broad range of student. The PLAN focused on only those destined to drop out of high school. BrainPower was geared toward highly aggressive young people. PLAN and BrainPower could be used in large groups of students at once. KYAC and especially LINKS needs to be performed in a more individual setting.

Evaluation

Although Attribution Theory is first and foremost a concept or belief, it can be incorporated into various programs as shown above. All of the aforementioned programs claimed success. Each consists of beneficial components, such as strategies to handle failure. If students are not taught, either directly or indirectly, how to handle failure, they will discontinue their learning process. Another key component is discussion. As the literature states, if students can trust and have faith in their teacher they will be more likely to continue trying. The LINKS program is the most complete and is the only program that can be used in entirety. The others, while not feasible to be used as complete programs; include points that can factor greatly into a program that uses Attribution Theory. Many of these programs have points that can be used together in order to create a stronger program. BrainPower was used in an elementary school, but could be used in a high school situation. In the next chapter, this author will look at incorporating many of these aspects into one program to be used in a high school situation.

The LINKS Program can be taken as developed and used. However, it is not enough. The students and teachers need to know how to handle aggression, as well as other inappropriate emotions, as shown in the BrainPower Program. Students also need to understand how to demonstrate appropriate socialization, as in KYAC. Chapter five will look at portions of these.

Chapter V

Introduction

The earlier chapters have focused on the history of Attribution Theory and the key components of Attribution Theory today. This chapter will demonstrate how it can be used in a traditional high school situation. The preceding chapter demonstrated how some programs have used Attribution Theory successfully; this chapter will show how it can be used in a school today. Some of the concepts it will focus on are emotions, locus of causality and overcoming Learned Helplessness. This chapter will not only have suggestions for the classroom teacher, but will also have suggestions for the English Department and the entire school to incorporate Attribution Theory. In such a large school, it is important to look at suggestions on all three levels. This will be helpful in creating a more fluid and individualized program. The chapter will begin with a summary of findings to reacquaint the audience with important concepts about Attribution Theory.

Summary of Findings

Weiner is the current expert in Attribution Theory and as such has come to many pertinent conclusions on attributions. He has shown that not only are perceptions as important as actuality when it comes to ascribing results, but that there are multiple causes for the result. He also believes that a person can overcome a negative attribute when he discovers the appropriate cause. Humans want to know what the consequence of their actions will be and that facilitates their desire to change. People who have high

perceived abilities desire to overcome obstacles and not make attributions for failure, unless there is the opportunity for public failure.

There are internal and external attributions. Internal attributions are ability and effort that promote pride, confidence, and satisfaction. People with internal attributions possess high self-efficacy and will succeed. External attributions are luck and task difficulty; these attributes promote guilt, resignation, mental defect, and low self-esteem that lead people with external attributions to believe that they will always fail and so they give up. Therefore, they tend to avoid difficult situations. Learned Helplessness is caused by internal attributions.

If a cause is believed to be stable, then the outcome will be expected the next time, with increasing frequency each time. This also makes people want to perform the task more, the higher the return the more likely the task completion. Also, success breeds success. However, when someone is failing, it is difficult to teach him to reattribute the causal factors in his failure.

If a person appears to be capable, but does not try, he will not be given assistance because effort is controllable. Blame, anger, and neglect are considered controllable. If an outsider sees someone performing poorly and it appears to be controllable, the outsider will become angry and punitive. Pity and unsolicited help infer uncontrollability. Students need to attribute success to controllable factors, such as effort or ability. They should look at effort first and then ability because effort is not viewed as highly; if effort it is looked at first, students will pay more attention to it.

Rewards are better at controlling behavior than is punishment, unless there is little effort or motivation. In this case, punishment is better. Some students see

punishment as being caused by a lack of effort. Some see rewards as a result of high effort, regardless of their low ability. Nonetheless, retributive punishment needs to be negated because it is not a causal agent.

Also, students are given feedback in the same manner criminals are sentenced. Teachers hold less capable students to a lower standard, just like when criminals are guilty by reason of mental defect. Similarly, students must make retribution for their failures, just as criminals must do for their crimes. Also, neither one wants to be held personally responsible for their failures.

If people alter attributes, they will alter their response to failure. If students are confused, they will perform poorly unless they have a positive attributional style. It is also important to be extremely academic oriented so students are better able to ascertain their true academic ability.

During adolescence, negative results are less positive, less stable, and more internal because at this point people start to see ability as a stable attribute. When asked by a peer, boys attribute failure to inability, whereas girls attribute failure to inability when asked by an adult. Teachers are more critical of boys, particularly regarding form, and so boys see teachers contributing to their failure. Therefore, boys do not correlate ability and failure. With girls, teachers are more specific as to causes of failure. Girls, not boys, see task specificity in regard to failure.

Learned Helplessness can be caused by uncontrollable situations, which lead people to believe they cannot affect change. When a person learns that an outcome is independent of a response, it is more difficult to learn that responses produce an outcome. With Learned Helplessness, students ignore effort and see failures as

insurmountable. This type of student only wants performance goals because he has negative self-cognitions, a negative affect, and impaired performance when he fails. He has lower academic expectations, lower self-esteem, and is more likely to be depressed.

Self-Efficacy is denoted by appropriately attributing successes and failures. People are capable of watching themselves and changing their behaviors; therefore, if they are efficacious, they will put forth effort and become resilient. Self-Efficacy is greatly impacted by intensity - the more intense, whether positive or negative, the greater the impact on Self-Efficacy. Those with high Self-Efficacy are able to overcome any obstacles and generally choose to surround themselves with others of similar Self-Efficacy and varied high-level career choices because they can visualize themselves as successful. They then tend to go on to great success. Those with low Self-Efficacy see failure as insurmountable, thereby reinforcing their low Self-Efficacy. In turn, they choose to surround themselves with others of low Self-Efficacy. Ultimately, if a child sees himself as inept, he will be inept. Parents who are more efficacious promote their child's education, which can also promote a teacher's commitment to that child. Teachers with low Self-Efficacy tend to discourage parents from involvement at school.

Teachers can assist students in retraining their attributions. When students go through attribution retraining, they are much more successful, both in and out of school. Low, as well as high, conscientiousness is contagious. Attribution retraining is a method that will alleviate the contagion, especially in low conscientiousness. In order for students to focus on attributions, teachers need to stay focused and not allow their negative emotions to get in the way.

Attribution Theory, at its most basic level, consists of learning how to give credit where credit is due. If a student can appropriately and accurately learn how to state the cause of a failure or a success, he will become far more successful in the future. When students learn how to attribute their progress they will not give up, they will continue to persevere even in the face of a setback.

Learned Helplessness works directly off of Attribution Theory because if a student fails and does not attribute the failure appropriately, he will believe that he can never succeed and will simply give up. Self-Efficacy is the opposite of that; if a student is efficacious, he is appropriately attributing success. In this case, success breeds success because he knows that he succeeded once and therefore will be able to succeed again. This is the desired outcome of Attribution Theory. Expectancy Value Theory works along with Attribution Theory because if a student sees enough value in completing a task, he will complete it. In turn, if a student holds the appropriate attributions, he will see the value in completing the desired task.

Attribution Theory and the retraining of attributions can assist students in becoming more motivated and therefore more successful in the diverse and confusing world of today. Before retraining attributions, one must understand better how they work. There are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. If students are able to attribute their successes and failures to the appropriate causes they will be much more likely to achieve long-term success. "Better" students are more likely to attribute their failures appropriately and therefore are able to learn from them. These students are less likely to blame others or items that they have no control over. Also, if students realize that even items such as ability are not a constant, then they will be more successful.

Attributions, which lead to success in school, are those that are under a student's control, those that are internal, and those that are stable. Conversely, the factors that lead to failure in school are when items are viewed as unstable, external, and out of a student's control. For instance, ability and effort are both internal, whereas task difficulty and luck are external. Ability and task difficulty are both considered relatively stable while luck and effort are unstable. Controllability has to do with to what degree a student sees himself in control.

If a teacher can show a student that with effort anything is possible, that student will achieve. The concept of luck/chance and uncontrollability are perhaps two of the highest contributing factors to failure. If a student relies solely on luck, he has no desire to put forth effort. Also, if a student sees he has no control over his learning, not only will he not care, but he will also see no point in continuing to work.

Therefore, it is imperative that an educator demonstrates to students that some degree of control always exists. Rarely is there a time when a student does not possess a modicum of control in a situation, even in a classroom. Students always have at least some ability. Even the lowest of students can succeed. Lastly, students need to know that effort will always help. Teachers need to demonstrate that the most intelligent of students will fail if they do not put forth the effort.

From many of the existing programs, it is shown that talking is a key. Students do not want to be merely told what to do; they want and need to know why they are doing something. As shown, there are some key points from programs that have already been established which will make for an effective high school program.

None of the aforementioned programs discussed what did not work. They merely chose to report on the positive aspects of their programs. Although it would have been helpful to gain insights from failures, this author assumes that if one stays close to the key points of the earlier programs, her program can be successful.

Proposal for Waterloo West High School

This author is an English teacher of grades ten through twelve at West High School in Waterloo, Iowa. As a product of the Waterloo Community Schools, she has noticed a change in atmosphere and make up of the student body. Today, there is a greater instance of at-risk youth who attend the Waterloo Schools and therefore a greater need to reach these students is obvious. Over the past fifteen years, a multitude of programs have been started to assist these learners. Some have been met with great success, some with very little, and some with mediocre success. All of these programs have required some type of monetary assistance.

With the arrival of No Child Left Behind and the 4-Rs of rigor, relevance, relationships, and reflection, the teaching community has decided that the current high school needs to change. While many initiatives are in place, Attribution Theory is one that could easily fit into existing initiatives with minimal, if any, monetary output.

After researching Attribution Theory, this author has discovered that there is no current model of attribution retraining that could be directly implemented into the Waterloo Schools, and more specifically West High School. However, there are key tenets of many that will easily fit into existing programs. Therefore, this Plan of Action will focus on portions of models, as were discussed in chapter four.

Entire School

Professional Development Days   A way in which Attribution Theory can be used

school wide is during Professional Development Days. One of the keys for teachers to

focus on is negative behavior on the part of the teacher. When teachers are insulting,

hostile, or are yelling, that behavior negatively impacts student learning (357). These

students also believe that this anger is internal to the teacher (363). Generally, these

students understand that either their misbehavior or lack of effort is in some part

responsible for their failure, but they still hold their teachers ultimately responsible for

the display of anger.

     With this in mind, teachers will need to be taught ways to control their anger

while in the classroom. While there will always be a time when anger can rise to an

unacceptable level, teachers should be able to better handle adverse situations with the

proper instruction. Anger management personnel should come in to give in-services on

proper methods for controlling tempers. There are people in AEA 267 who are specially

trained to assist educators in this endeavor. They can speak to the teachers about

warning signs of anger and how to handle situations when they get a little out of control.

     Not only would this be beneficial for the teachers, but it would also give them one

more avenue in order to learn how to handle their emotions. This, in turn, will assist

them in aiding the students' containment of their emotions. One last facet to this phase

of training would be to teach the instructors that when students perform poorly, they are

more likely to blame teachers who become angry (McPherson 363). This can easily be

conveyed by some role playing or reading scenarios. Once the teachers understand

what their anger and improper attributions can create in the classroom, they will be more receptive to the training. This will make great use of the BrainPower program, as well as LINKS.

SPA According to Weiner, in his article entitled "Attribution Theory and Attribution Therapy," the purpose of attributional therapy is "to substitute adaptive causal ascriptions for those that are dysfunctional, with the anticipation that this alteration will produce changes in behavior" (99). This is basically what can be accomplished at West High School. Teachers will be able to train students in the way of attributions during their SPA (Student's Personal Advisory) time. This time is generally used for life skills training, in which attributions fit perfectly. During this time, the entire faculty can take their groups of fifteen to eighteen and discuss, via a set of questions, how students attribute their success and failure. Once some students are forced to look at their attributions, this may be enough for some students to start to make a change. This will also be an opportunity for the teachers to practice this particular method of thinking. Then, they will be more successful in carrying it over into other more spontaneous ways in their classroom.

Prior to SPA time, at the weekly faculty meeting, the SPA facilitator will explain the lesson and the appropriate responses to each scenario on the discussion sheet. I will give a brief explanation of Attribution Theory for those educators who are unclear of its tenets. During SPA, the teachers will read scenarios and students will determine what led to success or failure. If the students are incorrect, the teacher will guide them into seeing the scenario in the correct manner. These scenarios will function as a

starting point in students' work with attributions; this can serve as the first step in attribution retraining.

Each week a meeting is held which discusses upcoming SPA lessons. Any faculty member can attend these meetings at any time. This author will attend meetings in order to facilitate this particular lesson. During these meetings, the teachers will have already had some training with attributions via the Professional Development and can therefore help create scenarios for various circumstances. All SPA lessons are typed out, in detail, and put in teacher's mailboxes two days before the lesson is to be given. They give all the instruction one would find necessary in order to facilitate the lesson. The lessons all state objectives, and give detailed notes, if necessary on how to implement the day's work.

The following could be one of many appropriate scenarios to be given to SPA instructors. This scenario will focus on positive attributions with the failure of the test, as well as internal versus external attributions with the placement of blame because these are a simple manner in which to start discussions on attributions. It will also look at the role of the teacher, both within the scenario and the teacher as facilitator because teachers can play key roles in determining appropriate attributions.

Billy has failed a three history exams in a row. He had an out of town basketball game the night before two of them and last night he went to a movie with his girlfriend. However, Billy did get up an hour earlier than usual to study on the morning of the test. When Billy got his test back, he complained to his friends about how the teacher never tells them what to study for the test. The teacher would then ask the following questions

to address attributions: *Why did Billy fail these tests? Why did Billy blame his teacher? Does the teacher hold some of the blame?*

The teacher should look for ownership of the failure; failing the test is the student's fault. Billy's use of external attributions causes him to lash out at the teacher. The teacher will need to be aware that boys and girls tend to see things differently and that the students who will benefit the most from this activity will generally have the most difficulty with the questions. This discussion will open the doors to more discussion about attributions in their other classes, both directly and indirectly.

Emotions Yet another lesson that can be implemented during SPA time is that on emotions. Weiner, as well as others, have determined the importance of emotions in attributing success and failure. With a set of scenarios, similar to the ones described above, students will role-play and have a discussion on emotions. These scenarios will not only be based on failures at school, but disturbances outside of school, as well. Then, the students will not only be better equipped to handle them, but they will be more able to appropriately attribute them. As emotions are in the forefront of Attribution Theory today, it is imperative that educators focus on them.

The following could be one of many appropriate scenarios to be given to SPA instructors. This innovation will focus on positive attributions both inside the school arena, as well as outside the school through the use of a school setting as well as an extra-curricular activity. This is important because attributions are not necessary solely in school. It will also look at the role of emotions with how Billy treats those around him and how others can influence attributions when he speaks with the coach. These are

important because interpersonal relationships and perceptions can be just as important to attributions as inner thoughts.

Billy failed the last three history exams. After school, he attends basketball practice. During practice he is particularly rough on his fellow teammates, becoming physical on the court and using offensive language. The coach later pulls Billy aside and shows concern for Billy by asking him if there is a problem. At this point, Billy throws the ball he is holding across the court and stomps away. The teacher would then ask the following questions to address attributions: *Why was Billy angry? What could he have done before basketball practice to make it more positive? How should Billy have dealt with the coach's questions?*

The teacher should assist the students in showing the students that Billy is, or should be, really angry with himself, as well as show them appropriate outlets for his anger such as speaking with the history teacher or coach before practice. The teacher will also need to assist the students in addressing the role of raw emotion on others. The teacher will yet again need to be aware that boys and girls see things differently and that the students who will benefit the most from this activity will generally have the most difficulty with the questions. Teachers will also need to be aware that the talk of sports might disengage some students while truly engaging others. This activity will allow sponsors and coaches of various activities to carry this concept into after school activities.

English Department

In the English Department, the teachers can take a more focused approach to teaching attributions. As students are required to take eight English courses and all freshmen and sophomores are required to take English I, II, III, and IV, this is the perfect opportunity to teach students more about their attributions – both directly and indirectly. Weiner explains that people are judges and as such, students discover what it takes to be successful in a school atmosphere. They judge and are judged on a daily basis. Students need to better understand how they are being judged, both academically and culturally. Short writing prompts can assist this learning.

Students in America equate high ability with low effort (Tollefson 72). Just as with Expectancy Value Theory, students need to learn to highly value effort. This is a concept that can be looked at while learning to write. It is important to look at writing as a process. Through this process, it is important to look at the great amount of time that is involved. While one could look at professional authors and see how much time goes into their work, this is often ineffective with adolescents. Adolescents would look at these older writers and not see any correlation between the two. A more feasible plan, perhaps, would be to have a discussion about differing topics of writing. It is important to allow students to choose their own topics; however, not all students will choose similar topics. It is important to explain that more detailed research would be needed on the national debt, as opposed to writing a biography of a single person. Therefore, it would take more time to write about the national debt. However, if a student is interested in that topic, he should not shy away from it. Another component of this discussion might have to do with alleviating the fallacies students equate with the "less

time means I'm smarter" mentality. The subject matter might change, but the discussion would generally take the same path.

Students need to know that when they expend effort, they will succeed (51). It is imperative that teachers, particularly teachers of writing, keep this in mind. Teachers at West High will make certain that when students exert themselves and actually complete a writing assignment they will be considered successful, at least in some regard. At the very least, if they did complete the assignment, it is finished, and one would assume the assignment would meet the minimal standards. Ultimately, these teachers will follow a student's progress so that when the student is entirely finished with the writing and it meets minimal standards for completion, he will not receive a failing grade.

The last proposal for the English Department of West High School deals with grading procedures. Students need to demonstrate the intrinsic motivation for the desire to write. If teachers allow students to solely focus on grades, students will not attribute their success and failures to the appropriate sources (Swanson 44). It will be important for teachers to not only grade on the end product, but also give points for the process. Teachers want to emphasize the process, as opposed to just the finished product. This will give students a sense of success if they have expended the effort to follow the proper procedures.

Author's Classroom

One thing that this author can do in her classroom is when writing her tests put the simpler questions first. If she does this, her students should feel more successful. She can also assist the students in creating mastery, as opposed to performance goals.

If the students learn to have mastery goals they will be more successful in life since they will want to learn simply for learning's sake.

The last step is a modified LINKS program. This author can assess a student's writing and then create proximal goals. Afterward, some learning strategies can be taught. Then, the author will allow each student to have a successful experience with writing via a simple writing prompt. Lastly, the author will sit down with each student and have a private conference where they will work on attributing the success of the student. If the student can appropriately attribute the success, then all is well and one will assume that the success will continue. If the student does not attribute the success appropriately, then the process will begin again. For a detailed lesson plan, see the Appendix. This lesson will be focusing on attribution retraining; it will focus on attitudes and attributing success. The first section will focus on diagnosing Learned Helplessness and faulty attributions with the teacher looking at where students are working currently with attributions. The second section will focus on learning strategies to retrain students' attributes. The third step focuses on internal and external attributions by setting goals with the students. The final step focuses on perceptions, and causes of success by having individual discussions with the student.

Conclusion

In an increasingly complex society, students need to learn how to appropriately attribute both their successes and their failures. With the push for students to become stronger and more adaptable, it is becoming more important for adolescents to handle themselves in a proper fashion. Attribution Theory can help accomplish this. While

working together, teachers and students can learn how to better use their attributes. Through Attribution Theory, students can learn more about their abilities and effort in the academic setting, as well as the world at large. This program could allow students at Waterloo West High a common terminology and common ground with which to work in order to become more successful.

Appendix

LESSON PLAN
Ellen M. Shay
West High School

I. Subject of lesson to be taught
      A. English IV
      B. Writing a research paper
II. Standard/Benchmark
      A. Written language
      B. Oral language
III. Specific Objectives
      A. The student will appropriately attribute his/her success and failure
      B. The student will, given a research paper checklist, track completion of each
          section of research paper
      C. The student will, during an oral post-paper conference, list items completed
          and therefore appropriately attribute success
IV. Procedure
      A. Introduction
          1. Introduce research paper
          2. Set up meetings with individuals
      B. Teaching Procedures
          1. Discuss baseline
          2. Learn strategies
          3. Set goals
          4. Attribute success
V. Materials
      A. Teacher
      B. LINKS program
      C. Research paper checklist
VI. Follow-up or Assignment
      A. Given checklists for all remaining multi-part assignments
      B. Track own completion of assignments
VII. Adaptations/Modifications for Diverse Learners
      A. ELL students - have interpreter at post-conference
      B. Special Education students
          1. Extended time for assignments as outlined in their IEP
          2. Roster teacher attend post-conference.
          3. Roster teachers given copy of research paper
VIII. Assessment of Student Learning/Performance
      A. Completion of parts of paper
      B. Quality of parts of paper

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