Accepted for publication in Haslam SA, Fransen K & Boen F (eds.) *The New Psychology of Sport and Exercise: The social identity approach.* London: SAGE Publications, pp. 129-146.

Chapter 8

Attribution

Pete Coffee, Patti C. Parker, Ross Murray, & Simon Kawycz

A lot of hard work goes in …. It's a massive team effort.

> Rory Best, the captain of the Irish Rugby Union team on winning the award of 2018 World Rugby Team of the Year. (Hanratty, 2018).

Introduction

Attributions are explanations about why particular behavioural or performance outcomes occurred, and these explanations enhance our ability to predict and control events in the future. Consider for a moment, whether it is even possible to experience sport and not consider attributions for behaviours and performances? How would young athletes develop and improve if they did not evaluate why a performance went well (to repeat that success) or why a performance went poorly (to correct behaviour in the future)? What would sport commentators comment on if they could not debate motives for behaviour and reasons for a team's success or demise?

As pondering such questions makes clear, attributions are front and centre of the experience of sport. Most obviously, attribution processes are extremely relevant in sporting contexts because these typically involve, and require, clear explanations for success and failure. In the above quote from Rory Best, for example, we see that he attributes his team's success to "a lot of hard work" and "a massive team effort." But equally he might have said, "we were very lucky" or "they made a lot of mistakes that we were able to capitalise on". Would this have mattered? And, if so, what would the consequences have been (e.g., for team dynamics, motivation, and future performance)?

These are the sorts of questions that the present chapter seeks to address, in exploring the ways in which attributions shape key sporting processes and outcomes. The chapter will review predominant theoretical approaches to attributions in sport and exercise psychology (Weiner, 1985, 2012, 2018; Rees, Ingledew, & Hardy, 2005). We will look at approaches to help athletes and exercisers think more positively (through attributional retraining) and consider why there are differences in the way that we explain our own and others' behaviours. The chapter will then move on to discuss how the social identity approach can enrich our understanding of attribution processes in sport and exercise settings.

Current Approaches to Attribution Research

Attribution theory

Bernard Weiner (1985) proposed that human behaviour can be motivated by the way individuals explain the causes of events or behavioural outcomes. Take, for example, the case of a golfer, Cathy, who fails to make the cut in a major tournament (see Figure 8.1). Weiner's (1985, 2012, 2018) attribution theory suggests that the way she explains this outcome to herself will have consequences not only for her well-being but also for her future behaviour — such as, her motivation to come back and try to make the cut in the next tournament. In particular, the theory predicts that she is going to be more motivated to do this if she convinces herself that she adopted the wrong strategy, did not practice enough or that she was simply unlucky this time, than if she believes her failure is a sign that she just doesn't have what it takes to succeed.

Figure 8.1 Attributions matter

Note: Attributions for success and failure have an impact not only on well-being but also on future behaviour and performance. For example, if a person attributes their failure at golf to poor strategy, to a lack of practice, or to bad luck, they are much less likely to give up than if their failure is attributed to a lack of ability.

Source: Stefan Waldvogel, Pixabay

Weiner argued that attributions for negative, important, or unexpected events occur quickly, often outside of awareness, and that these attributions can significantly impact an individual's subsequent cognitions, emotions, and motivated behaviour. In particular, he postulated that attributions (i.e., causal explanations of events) can be classified in terms of three dimensions or properties: *locus of causality*, *stability*, and *controllability*.

Locus of causality refers to whether an event (technically, an *explanandum*: a thing to be explained) is perceived to be caused by a factor internal or external to an individual (anchored by an internal or external pole; Weiner, 2014). In our golfing example, attributions to bad luck would be external while attributions to lack of ability are internal. These would play an important role in determining Cathy's emotional responses to her failure — not least, her self-esteem and sense of worth and her willingness to persevere rather than give up.

Stability refers to whether an event is perceived as transient or unchanging. This causal property is critical in determining expectancies of future success (or failure) and is tied to various emotions including (but not limited to) confidence, anxiety, hopelessness, and hope. If Cathy believes her failure to make the cut is a one-off event and something that can change (e.g., if she changes her strategy), she will feel more hopeful and be less likely to give up than if she thinks her performance is unlikely to improve in future.

Finally, the *controllability* dimension refers to whether an event is seen to be caused by factors that are under a person's control or beyond their control. This dimension is associated with judgments of responsibility so that the more controllable an outcome is, the more likely an individual is to take responsibility for it. If Cathy attributes her failure to bad luck then this is clearly beyond her control, and she does not need to feel responsible for it; however, if she sees it as a reflection of her (lack of) effort or selection of a poor strategy, then missing the cut is clearly down to her. In the latter cases, where failure is seen as controllable, this is likely to trigger a specific cluster of emotions in the person who experiences it — including guilt, anger, and regret. It may also invite criticism from onlookers (who might be more sympathetic if the outcome was uncontrollable; Weiner, Graham, & Chandler, 1982).

This analysis alerts us to the fact that there are myriad ways in which any particular sporting outcome can be explained. In Cathy's case, for example, failure to make the cut could be explained by her lack of ability (an internal, stable, uncontrollable attribution), by adopting the wrong strategy (internal, unstable, controllable), or by her coach's poor instruction (external, stable, uncontrollable). Here, a sense that it results from lack of ability is likely to produce lowered expectancy of success and feelings of shame and hopelessness since Cathy may view the cause as personal and unchanging. Using a wrong strategy, however, is more likely to increase her expectancy for success and produce feelings of guilt and a sense of responsibility because the cause is seen as something that can change and is within her personal control. By the same token, we can see that Rory Best's attribution of his

team's success to "a lot of hard work" (an internal and controllable attribution) is likely to produce pride and high levels of self-esteem, together with a positive sense of responsibility.

More generally, as Figure 8.2 conveys, Weiner (1985, 2012, 2018) argues that attributions are tied to behaviour change through a temporal sequence in which they first affect cognitions, emotions, and then in turn shape behaviour. A key idea here, then, is that making the 'right' attribution is an important way to produce desired forms of behaviour down the track. In Cathy's case, for example, if she is going to go on to greater things in golf, it will be important for her to see her failure as something more than simply a reflection of her lack of ability.

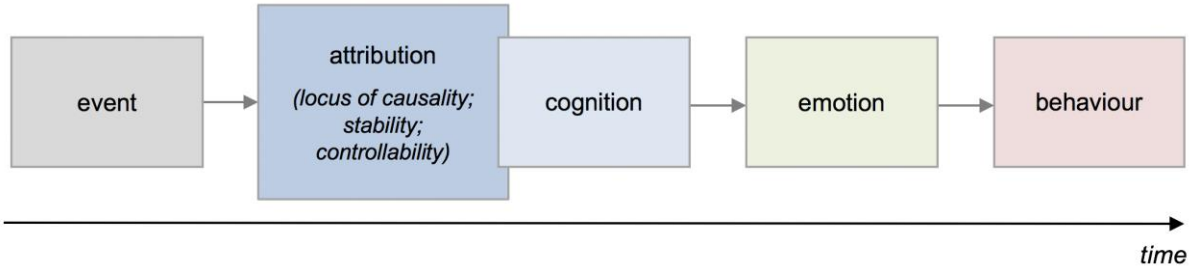

Figure 8.2 Attribution theory

Note: Weiner's (1985, 2012, 2018) attribution theory specifies a temporal sequence in which attributions — which involve seeing an event as having an internal or external locus of control, as being stable or unstable, and as being controllable or uncontrollable — first influence cognitions, emotions, and then in turn shape behaviour.

When it comes to efforts to promote positive outcomes in sport, the dominant line of theorising has placed particular emphasis on the importance of the controllability dimension (e.g., Biddle, 1993; Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996). In particular, Tim Rees and colleagues (2005) proposed that research in sport and exercise psychology should focus on the main effects of controllability as well as on the way that controllability interacts with *generalisability*. Generalisability relates to stability (as defined in Weiner's theory) and also globality and universality. *Globality* concerns the degree to which the cause of an event is seen as likely to affect a wide (vs. a narrow) range of situations; *universality* concerns the degree to which the cause of an event is seen to be common to all people (vs. unique to an individual; Rees et al., 2005).

The first author and his colleagues have examined the interactive effects of controllability and generalisability and have provided empirical evidence of the conditions

under which controllability is pertinent to future outcomes (e.g., Coffee, Greenlees, & Allen, 2015; Coffee & Rees, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). For example, in the case of our golfer Cathy, if her failure is seen as being due to something that is likely to affect a wide range of situations then it is important that she has control over these factors and can influence them (Coffee et al., 2015; Coffee & Rees, 2008b). Such attributions might include ineffective practice or using the wrong strategy. Indeed, as these are attributions that will affect a number of new future situations for Cathy, it is crucial that she has control over them. For this is likely to enhance her mental state following failure, by boosting expectations for success and positive emotions, and this should result in improved performance in the future.

But what if Cathy attributes her failure to a different global attribution such as, for example, her lack of ability? In this case, Cathy's attribution will again influence a number of new future situations but ones that she has little to no control over. This is likely to impair her mental state following failure, fuelling negative emotions and reducing expectations for success, and this will result in poorer performance in the future. Together, then, the interactive effects of controllability and generalisability suggest that whilst a sense of control over the causes of failure (and success) is always important, its impact on cognitions, emotions, and behaviour is dependent on the generalisability of causes (e.g., whether the cause affects a wide vs. narrow range of situations).

Attributional retraining

Building on the foregoing ideas, attributional retraining is a motivation intervention designed to encourage individuals to develop adaptive (e.g., controllable) rather than maladaptive (e.g., uncontrollable) explanations for poor performance (Perry, Chipperfield, Hladkyj, Pekrun, & Hamm, 2014). For example, the retraining may focus on helping an athlete understand the ways in which outcomes are controllable and unstable (e.g., a consequence of 'strategy'; adaptive) rather than uncontrollable and stable (e.g., due to 'low ability'; maladaptive). Speaking to the efficacy of this approach, a range of studies point to the capacity for attributional retraining to promote positive cognitive, emotional, and motivational outcomes as well as to stimulate improved performance and increased persistence across a range of sporting and educational contexts (Le Foll, Rascle, & Higgins, 2008; Perry et al., 2014; Rascle, Le Foll, Charrier, Higgins, Rees, & Coffee, 2015; Rees, Salvatore, Coffee, Haslam, Sargent & Dobson, 2013).

In sport, recent attributional retraining studies have looked at attributions used for individuals' golf-putting and dart-throwing performance. For example, in a study by Olivier

Rascle and colleagues (2015), students were randomly assigned to an adaptive (functional) attributional feedback group, a maladaptive (dysfunctional) attributional feedback group, and a no feedback group. Those in the adaptive attributional condition were told that the causes of their performance on the task (e.g., golf-putting) reflected mostly personally controllable and unstable factors (e.g., their effort or strategy). They were also reminded that they could take personal control over the effort they put into the task and that the intensity of effort might change over time. Students in the maladaptive attributional feedback condition were told that the causes of their performance on the task (golf-putting) reflected personally uncontrollable and stable factors (e.g., task difficulty). They were told these factors were not something they could control and that they would not change over time. Finally, students in the control condition were given general information about the task (e.g., that different skills are required to be a good golf player, the distance of the putt).

Going back to our original example, let's suppose Cathy was in the adaptive attributional feedback group, and her peer, Jack, was in the maladaptive feedback group. The findings of Rascle and colleagues' study suggest that after failing on the golf-putting task Cathy, who received the adaptive attributional feedback, would be more likely (a) to attribute her performance to controllable causes, (b) to believe she would be more successful in the future, and (c) to persist in practicing her putting. Being in the maladaptive feedback condition, Jack on the other hand would be more likely (a) to explain failure in terms of uncontrollable and stable causes, (b) to have lower expectations for future success, and (c) to stop practicing his putting. In this way we see that how Cathy and Jack explain their performance failure is likely to have a big impact both on their expectations of future success and on what they actually do to improve their skills (i.e., through practice) in ways that make success more likely. Aside from research on golf-putting and dart-throwing, research in sport has consistently shown attributional retraining techniques to have similar effects across other domains including college tennis and basketball at both beginner and recreational levels (Orbach, Singer, & Murphey, 1997; Orbach, Singer, & Price, 1999), and effects on important outcomes like objective performance (Rees et al., 2013).

While there is strong evidence for the efficacy of attributional retraining in sport, attribution-based treatment procedures vary considerably. Moreover, they are not as systematic as those that have been implemented in education contexts (e.g., Perry & Hamm, 2017). Education-based attributional retraining treatment protocols typically comprise three phases. Following the delivery of a questionnaire (to collect demographic and baseline data), Phase 1 (*causal search activation*) prompts participants to engage in attributional thinking by

considering the causes of failure on some achievement task (e.g., they are asked to think about the last time they did poorly on a course test and the reasons for it). Phase 2 (*attributional induction*) then asks participants to watch a video presentation that encourages them to make internal, controllable attributions and discourages internal, uncontrollable attributions for failure. Often the retraining focuses on only two attributional dimensions (internal and controllable attributions) in order to simplify the content delivery and help students retain the information. Attributional retraining videos have varied in format delivery, and include such things as a conversation between an undergraduate and graduate student, or a PowerPoint presentation in which a narrator explains the benefits of using internal and controllable attributions for poor academic performance (e.g., improved motivation and achievement). Finally, Phase 3 (*consolidation*) involves asking participants to summarise the treatment content and to reflect on its relevance to their own lives (see Haynes, Perry, Stupnisky, & Daniels, 2009). Depending on the study, participants in no-attributional retraining (control group) conditions either do not receive a treatment or are asked to complete a filler task in which they view a presentation of similar length on unrelated course content.

Across a range of educational studies, protocols of this form have been observed to improve students' academic performance (e.g., Parker, Perry, Hamm, Chipperfield, & Hladkyj, 2016; Parker, Perry, Hamm, Chipperfield, Hladkyj, & Leboe-McGowan, 2018). Indeed, integrating insights from sport and education contexts, researchers have used attributional retraining as part of efforts to improve the academic adjustment of competitive athletes at university. For example, research by the second author and her colleagues (Parker et al., 2016; Parker et al., 2018) found that encouraging competitive student athletes to make adaptive attributions when explaining negative events (e.g., poor performance on a course test) increased their subsequent performance and persistence on academic tasks. These attributional retraining treatments proved to be particularly useful for student-athletes who had perceived themselves to have limited control over their academic course. In an online learning environment, such treatments have also been found to benefit student athletes who are faced with a range of stressors at university. Evidence suggests they do this by enhancing cognitions (e.g., increasing perceived control) which, in line with Weiner's temporal model (see Figure 8.2), then go on to shape emotions and, through this, final grades (Parker et al., 2018).

Attribution biases

Within the attribution literature one prominent research focus since the early 1970s has been on the *biases* that lead perceivers to favour certain forms of explanation over others. In this tradition, one of the patterns that has received most attention is the *actor-observer bias* (Jones & Nisbett, 1972). This relates to the tendency for actors to attribute outcomes — particular negative ones — more to external (situational) causes than do observers. For example, a male footballer who misses a penalty may blame this on the booing of the crowd or the poor quality of the penalty spot, whereas onlookers might explain it in terms of his inherently poor penalty-taking skills. Likewise, if a basketball team loses an important game, team members might attribute their loss to the poor decisions of the referee, the luck of their opponent, or an injury of their own players, while neutral bystanders might simply observe that the team wasn't as good as its opponent.

One potential explanation for this asymmetric pattern of attribution is that actors and observers have access to very different contextual data (Jones & Nisbett, 1972). In line with this point it is clear that the viewpoint or perspective of actors during an action or performance is quite different to that of onlookers. For example, a penalty-taker may see the poor pitch surface, and the basketball team may see that a referee has missed a foul in a way that onlookers cannot. More generally, because actors are looking outward, the situation and environment are more likely to be salient in ways that lead them to make external, situational explanations for behaviour. However, for observers, the actor is more likely to be the focus of attention and hence to be salient in ways that lead them to make more internal, dispositional explanations for behaviour. Again, if we take our golfer Cathy as an example of an actor, she may attribute her missing of a putt to the strong wind blowing in her face. In contrast, observers may see the missed putt simply as evidence of her inability to read the green. Indeed, this failure of observers to take account of actors' perspective when explaining their behaviour led Ross (1977) to label this the *fundamental attribution error* (see Figure 8.3).

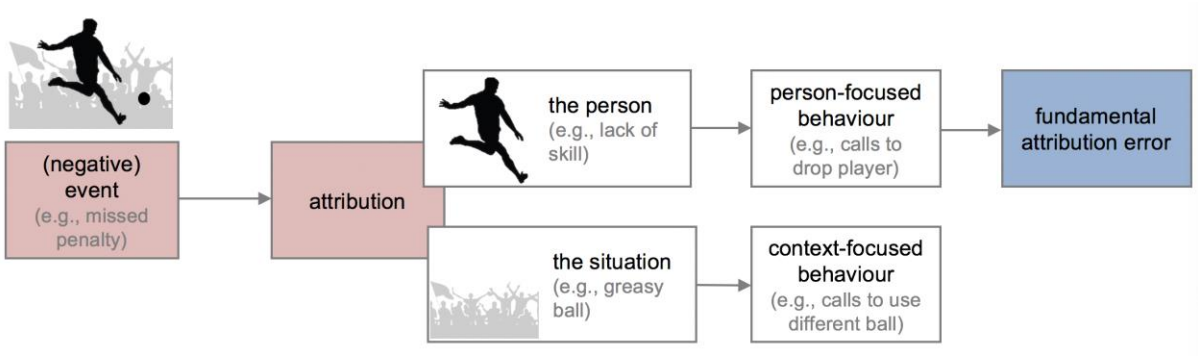

Figure 8.3 The actor-observer effect and the fundamental attribution error

Note: The fundamental attribution error relates to the tendency for observers to explain other people's behavior with reference to those people's personal characteristics (e.g., lack of skill), rather than situational factors (e.g., challenging circumstances). This can be seen to be a consequence of an actor-observer bias which leads actors to be more sensitive than observers to the situational determinants of behaviour.

Researchers have generally seen the actor-observer asymmetry to be both robust (Jones, 1976) and pervasive (Aronsen, 2002; Baron, Byrne, & Branscombe, 2006). Nevertheless, there is evidence that the effect is more nuanced than often supposed, for at least three reasons. First, it plays out differently in the context of intentional (i.e., a specific, deliberate reason for action by an actor, brought about by skill towards some form of outcome) and unintentional behaviours (i.e., an undeliberate action, brought about by luck that has led to some form of outcome), such that it applies only to unintentional behaviours (Malle,1999). Second, it operates differently in naturalistic settings (i.e., in competition/training environments, as opposed to the experimental settings where it has generally been studied; Lewis, 1995). And, third, it is more pronounced for negative events than for positive ones (Malle, Knobe, & Nelson, 2007). Indeed, while athletes may often be reluctant to take personal blame for their failures, they are typically much more willing to take personal credit for their success.

Taking stock of these issues, over the last two decades, Bertram Malle and his colleagues (2007) have developed an alternative approach—*the folk conceptual theory of behaviour explanations*. To understand this, imagine the scenario in which a football player, Lucy, attempts to make a difficult pass up the pitch to a teammate, but is unsuccessful. Within traditional actor-observer bias we might expect Lucy (the player; the actor) to see the failure of the pass to be a consequence of an opposition player getting the better of their teammate (a situational attribution), whereas her coach (Gareth, the observer) may explain the failure as a reflection of Lucy's lack of ability (a dispositional attribution). However,

Malle and colleagues argue that explanations of events go further than just situational-dispositional explanations. More specifically, they note that they entail not only internal or external attributions but also what they refer to as *modes of cause* and *reason explanations*.

Spelling this point out, Malle and colleagues' (2007) theory posits three actor-observer hypotheses. The first pertains to *reason asymmetry,* and implies that actors use more reasons and fewer causal history explanations than observers. In our football scenario, for example, Lucy (the player) is more able to recall the particular reasons for her actions (e.g., why she attempted a difficult pass in light of all the other options open to her), but for Gareth (the coach) these reasons are less observable. Gareth therefore has to rely more on stored knowledge and inferences (*causal history*) about Lucy to explain why she attempted the pass and why she was unsuccessful. As we will discuss further below, this asymmetry is also likely to be affected by, and affect, the relationship between the coach and the athlete — in particular, the extent of their shared social identity (e.g., as members of the same team).

The second hypothesis pertains to *belief asymmetry.* This predicts that actors use relatively more belief reasons and fewer desire reasons than observers. For example, Lucy's (the player) decision to attempt the difficult pass is influenced by her knowledge, assessment, and the potential outcome of the action at that moment in time. Accordingly, Lucy is more likely to explain her actions with reference to her *belief* that she saw her teammate and her *belief* that she could make the pass and that the pass would lead to a positive outcome for her team. However, for Gareth (the coach), the beliefs of Lucy are difficult to infer, and this may lead him to explain the action of Lucy with reference more to *desire*-based reasons, such as "Lucy panicked and wanted to get rid of the ball as quickly as possible to relieve the pressure she was under" (i.e., her *desire* was to protect herself). This type of explanation again has links to the fundamental attribution error highlighted in Figure 8.3.

The final hypothesis pertains to *marker asymmetry*. This asserts that actors are more likely than observers to leave their belief reasons *unmarked* (i.e., to take them as given; Malle, 1999, 2004; Malle et al., 2007). In our example, this means that Lucy (the player) is likely to focus directly on the content of her beliefs (e.g., my teammate was in a good position) rather than to say that she 'believed' that her teammate was in a good position. In contrast, Gareth (the coach) is more likely to make reference to Lucy's beliefs; for example, remarking that "she 'believed' that he could get out of trouble by kicking the ball up the pitch". In this way, observers (e.g., a coach) mark beliefs in order to make sense of aspects of actors' behaviour that they could not otherwise account for.

These three hypotheses anticipate a number of psychological processes which shape the explanations given by both actors and observers. These include how well an observer knows and understands not only the social context of performance but also the actor (or actors) and how motivated they are to influence the attribution in question. In this context, Malle and colleagues (2007) observed that close (intimate) observers generally portrayed an actor in a more positive light than distant (stranger) observers. Again, this attunes us to insights from the social identity approach in so far as the 'closeness' of observers can be understood to be a proxy for shared social identity — such that close observers see actors as ingroup members and distant observers see actors as outgroup members. Indeed, in what follows, we will expand on this observation to note that social identity processes are a latent feature of most attributional processes in sport (Coffee, 2017).

A Social Identity Approach to Attribution Processes

Chapter 2 drew attention to the five spheres of sports-related activity to which social identity theorizing has profound relevance (the 5Ps: Reicher, 2017): *participation* (what sport and exercise activities people engage in), *performance* (how well people do those activities), *psychological and physical health* (how well people feel because of doing those activities), *partisanship* (how people behave as supporters of sport activity) and *politics* (how people acquire and wield power in and through sporting activity). Attribution processes are integral to all five of these spheres of sports-related activity. Furthermore, we argue below that social identity and self-categorisation processes are themselves foundational to these attributions. Indeed, the social identity approach suggests that the groups to which people belong can be, and often are, incorporated into their sense of self and, through this, are powerful determinants of all cognitions — including attributions (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). In the remainder of this chapter, then, we look to explore how social identity-informed attributions determine participation, performance, psychological and physical health, partisanship, and politics.

Consider for a moment the sports and activities you engage in (or do not engage in). What are the reasons (attributions) for your *participation* and how do they affect your emotions and subsequent engagement? And how does your membership of particular social groups affect your reasons for participation? For example, you might say, "I play football because we — my football team — are really good at it so I'm going to keep playing". Or you might say, "I go to exercise classes because we — my CrossFit group — have a lot of

fun so I'm going to keep going." In both these examples, it is clear that attributions of ability and fun are intrinsically informed by group memberships in ways that affect your current and future participation in these activities (see also Stevens et al., chapter 12 below; Beauchamp & O'Rourke, Chapter 13 below).

As a second example, consider how *partisanship* — associated with distinct social identities — affects our explanations of the behaviour of those we observe. Here it is clear, for example, that a Liverpool fan and an Everton fan can watch exactly the same game of football between their two clubs but form very different explanations for the performances they observe (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954). The Liverpool fan might describe the excellent goal that Liverpool scored as a great piece of ingenuity and creativity by a Liverpool striker. An Everton fan, however, might describe exactly the same event as a lucky goal that Liverpool scored due to the deflection of the ball and the obstruction of the goalkeeper's view. Here, then, the social identity-informed partisanship of the fans results in very different explanations for the same observed event.

Yet despite the obvious relevance of social identity processes to attribution processes, at present, they are largely neglected within the attribution literature (not only in sport but also in social psychology more generally; Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991). In large part, this is because these theories position athletes and observers *as individuals* rather than as members of groups. In what follows, we attempt to correct this oversight by highlighting three key points which emerge from a social identity approach to attributions in sport.

Key Point 1: Attributions are shaped by social identities and are made to groups not just individuals

As we have seen, attribution research in sport typically focuses on athletes' explanations of why they have succeeded or failed. As we have also seen, much of this work has a focus on the individual *as an individual*, so that, for example, self-referent attributions centre on the causes for an athlete's personal performance (e.g., "what *I* did that made *me* fail"). In other words, the 'self' here is taken to be personal rather than collective. It is clear, though, that, like performance itself, this attribution process often has a very significant social dimension. This means that attributions are typically shaped by a range of social factors, not least the people around us. For example, after missing the cut, Cathy's coach might tell her she putted poorly, while her partner might inform her that she wasn't focused enough. This leads to the more general observation that attributions are never made in a

vacuum. Instead, they are made in the context of *others'* attributions, and those attributions have an important bearing on our own.

Consistent with this point, a range of attribution experiments have pointed to the profound influence that others can have on performance. In particular, in a range of contexts researchers have effectively manipulated how individuals explain their performance by *providing feedback* of a specified form (e.g., that their failure was due to controllable and unstable factors or else to uncontrollable and stable factors; e.g., Rascle, Le Foll, & Higgins, 2008). Although this feature of experiments is typically taken for granted (and hence is not part of the researchers theorising) it nevertheless shows how athletes' attributions can be shaped by others in ways that have significant consequences for their performance.

Of course, though, it also matters who provides the performance feedback. For example, when walking off the green after missing the cut in her golf tournament, Cathy might take no notice if a rival tells her she has lost her touch and that it is time for her to retire. However, if that feedback came from her caddy, she would likely take notice. Along these lines, researchers have observed that whether or not one shares social identity with those who provide performance feedback has an important bearing on athletes' perceptions of the feedback and, in turn, on their performance (Rascle, Charrier, Higgins, Rees, Coffee, Le Foll, & Cabagno, 2019; Rees et al., 2013). This means that in applied settings, athletes will often be most influenced by those 'insiders' who are close to them with whom they share social identity. So while an athlete's own attributions are likely to be sensitive to the attributions made by 'insiders' such as teammates, coaches, family, and friends (Rees & Hardy, 2000), the attributions of 'outsiders' (e.g., journalists, rivals) will often be ignored.

Up to this point, our discussion of attributions has focused very much on the personal self (i.e., individuals' explanations for their own individual performance). Clearly, though, athletes also make attributions that are relevant to the collective self (e.g., team members' explanations for their team's performance; Allen, Coffee, & Greenlees, 2012). Indeed, team-referent attributions are commonplace in sport (Gill, Ruder, & Gross, 1982; see appendix for a suitable scale from Coffee et al., 2015). It is common, for example, to hear people say things such as "Arsenal are lucky", "Germans are good at penalties", "referees always favour Manchester United". Indeed, the quote at the start of this chapter is a good example of one such team-referent attribution — where Rory Best presents the *team's* success as resulting from 'a lot of hard work' and 'a massive team effort'.

In this regard, a key prediction of social identity theorising is that in an array of social contexts — not least sporting ones — individuals internalise group memberships as part of

themselves. In particular, individuals who identify highly with a group (high-identifiers) are inclined to perceive events from the group perspective (Cruwys, South, Greenaway, & Haslam, 2015), and hence are more likely to make team-referent attributions. Amongst other things, this means that after a performance, these high identifiers are more likely than low identifiers (or people who identify with other groups) to use the collective pronouns 'we' and 'us' (vs. 'I' and 'me') when describing, and making attributions about, their performance.

As one illustration of these points, it is notable that when discussing his game with journalists the professional golfer Jordan Spieth invariably uses the collective pronoun "we", when referring to himself and other members of his team (e.g., his caddie, coach, and trainer; Wacker, 2016; see Figure 8.4). Including his team as part of his self-definition in this way has two distinct consequences. First, it clearly communicates his sense of shared social identity. Second, it means that he is more likely to make team-referent attributions to explain his performance — whether good or bad (e.g., attributing a win to *our* effort, rather than just *my* effort).

Figure 8.4 Team-referent attributions

Note: When an athlete — such as the professional golfer Jordan Spieth, pictured here — uses the collective pronouns 'we' and 'us' to describe themselves and their teammates this communicates a sense that they perceive themselves to share social identity with those other team members and is likely to be associated with a greater willingness to make team-referent attributions. These things in turn are likely to have important implications for well-being and performance.

Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Importantly, researchers have noted that the inclination to make team-based attributions tends to have implications for well-being and performance (Allen, Jones, & Sheffield, 2009; Coffee et al., 2015). Identification with a team also increases the likelihood

that adaptive team-referent attributions will have a positive impact on future outcomes (Murray, Coffee, Arthur, & Eklund, in press). For example, if a cricketer, Trevor identifies highly with his cricket team he is more likely to see his team's loss as a collective failure (rather than just as his own individual failure) and if his team makes an adaptive team-referent attribution for its loss (e.g., believing it is the result of a poor strategy that they can improve on in future) then he is likely to be more confident in his team's ability to succeed in future. In ways discussed by Cruwys and colleagues in Chapter 11 below, these team-based attributions are also likely to enhance his well-being by giving him a greater sense of control, support and agency, as well as a greater sense of *collective* self-efficacy (Haslam, Jetten, Cruwys, Dingle, & Haslam, 2018).

Social identity is also important when examining the effects of intra-team agreement in team-referent attributions. This is something that research by the third author and his colleagues has shown to be associated with positive performance outcomes (Murray, Coffee, Eklund, & Arthur, 2019). Specifically, when team members agreed with fellow team members about the cause of team failure, then this led to a significant improvement in their subsequent performance. This suggests that team performance is enhanced to the extent that team members are on the same attributional page, so to speak. Indeed, even though high levels of agreement and lack of divergent thinking (i.e., disagreement) can be implicated in negative outcomes such as groupthink (Cosier & Schwenk, 1990; Turner, Pratkanis, Probasco, & Leve, 2006), there is generally value in having — and seeking to develop — a shared understanding both of 'why we failed' or 'why we succeeded' (Haslam, 2001).

Indeed, even if team members have different ideas about the cause of a team performance, it seems reasonable to suppose that sharing these ideas would lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the causes behind a team performance. At the same time, though, an environment in which team members make different team-referent attributions also has the potential to create conflict within the group (Mitchell, 2016; Paradis, Carron, & Martin, 2014). For this reason, Tom Postmes and colleagues recommend that teams build norms attached to their social identities that encourage sharing of information (i.e., disagreement among team members; Postmes, Spears, & Cihangir, 2001). For if teammates feel they can openly discuss their attributions for team failure (and success) without fear of conflict, a more thorough causal search can take place, which will increase the likelihood of team performance improving in future. One reason for this is that the sharing of such information can itself help to build a sense of shared identity in ways that have positive

implications for performance and well-being (Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005; e.g., as discussed in Chapter 5 above and Chapter 11 below).

Key Point 2: Social identity has an important role to play in attributional retraining

As we have seen, current approaches to attributional retraining have focused on individual-level factors (e.g., "how can '*I*' control the cause of this outcome?"). However, the social identity approach offers a new perspective on the process of encouraging adaptive thinking (i.e., adaptive attributions) through attributional retraining. In particular, it raises the question of whether treatment protocols might be enhanced by providing individuals with a cognitive platform for accessing group-based resources (e.g., "How can '*we*' control the cause of this outcome?").

Two studies that speak to the potential of this line of thinking were conducted by Tegan Cruwys and colleagues (2015) and examined how social identity might reduce levels of depression by fostering positive attributions. This possibility relates to previous research which shows that depressed people often fail to display the self-serving attributional bias in which credit is taken for personal success and blame is denied for personal failure (e.g., Peterson & Seligman, 1984). That is, a depressed person is more likely to attribute negative events to causes like "I'm just not good enough in everything I do" — something that is about themselves (internal), something that is not going to change (stable), something that influences many areas of their life (global), and something that is unique to them (personal). In their studies, Cruwys and colleagues found that social identity was an important moderator of this trend. More specifically, they found that individuals with stronger social identities — that is, those who had a stronger sense of connection to meaningful groups in their lives (something that the researchers measured in one study and manipulated in another) — were less likely to perceive negative outcomes (e.g., when bad things happen) as internal, stable, and global, and, as a result of this, they reported lower levels of depression. Of interest to our suggestion above that collective attributions can provide a cognitive platform for accessing group-based resources, one of the mechanisms that Cruwys and colleagues identified as explaining their findings was a shift in attentional focus among participants with a stronger sense of social identity away from personally self-referent explanations for their behaviour towards explanations that were group-referent. In other words, social identity helped people to see failure as something which wasn't just down to themselves, and as a result helped them stave off depression.

To get a better understanding of this process, we can imagine a situation in which our golfer Cathy is part of a team that did not perform well in their most recent tournament. Social identity research suggests that if Cathy is able to shift away from thinking about this failure in personal terms (e.g., "how can '*I*' control the cause of the negative outcome?") towards thinking collectively in terms of her team (e.g., "how can '*we*' control the cause of the negative outcome?"), then this is likely to provide her with access to group-based resources that will facilitate opportunities for adaptive thinking.

The same approach can also be applied to encourage adaptive thinking around personal performance. For example, Cathy might feel that she let the team down due to her poor ability (a maladaptive attribution) and that it was this that led the team to defeat. But encouraging her to draw upon her social identity as a golfer and consider how other golfers might explain a poor performance could help to provide her with access to group-sourced, alternative explanations that are more adaptive. For example, if she has a salient, positive social identity as a golfer, Cathy might be more likely to ask herself, "How do other golfers explain a poor performance?" This process of critical distancing by looking at the world from the perspective of other ingroup members might also lead Cathy to consider alternative attributions for her poor performance, such as 'poor strategy', or 'inefficient practice' (all adaptive attributions). In sum, then, there are strong grounds for thinking that helping athletes reflect on events from the perspective of shared social identity (e.g., 'us swimmers', 'us athletes', 'us business executives', 'us students') can provide a cognitive platform for them to access more adaptive attributions for negative events.

It is also possible to apply these ideas directly to attributional retraining interventions in ways that might improve their effectiveness. Above we noted that such interventions typically help participants who tend to make maladaptive attributions to video feedback in which a peer or expert proposes alternative more adaptive attributions for an event (e.g., seeing poor strategy as the cause of a bad performance outcome; see Perry et al., 2014; Perry & Hamm, 2017). However, the social identity principles discussed above suggest that there are a number of ways that this intervention can be more forensically targeted. First, they suggest that such an intervention is likely to be more effective if participants see themselves as sharing a social identity with the person in the video (i.e., if the peer or expert is seen as an ingroup member; see Haslam, Jetten, O'Brien, & Jacobs, 2004). Second, they suggest that there is value in encouraging participants to make, where possible, team-referent (not just personal) attributions as these will give them more access to group-based resources for explaining and addressing negative outcomes. And third, they suggest that attributional

retraining can be more effective if participants are encouraged to understand events from the perspective of other ingroup members as this will help to facilitate critical distancing that increases their access to alternative, group-sourced adaptive explanations for events.

Key Point 3: Social identity shapes observer attributions

According to the social identity approach, to the extent that they define themselves in terms of shared social identity, group members are motivated to think and behave in ways that align them with fellow ingroup members while also differentiating themselves from outgroup members. This means that when they have a high degree of shared social identity, individuals come to see themselves and other ingroup members as functionally interchangeable (Turner, 1982). This in turns turn affects how they evaluate the actions and behaviour of members both of their ingroup and of other outgroups. In line with this point, a study by Michael Hogg and Elizabeth Hardie (1991) found that highly identified members of an Australian Rules football team in Melbourne had significantly more positive evaluations of prototypical group members (i.e., those who were highly representative of the group) than they did of non-prototypical group members (Hogg & Hardie, 1991). Moreover, this prototypicality was in turn a basis for their liking of different players — so that players liked other players more, the more they embodied the group's identity.

This analysis is also relevant to our understanding of observer attributions and the work of the fourth author (Kawycz, Coffee, & Eklund, 2017), where explanations of the behaviour and performance of an actor (e.g., an athlete) are also likely to be structured by perceptions of shared (and non-shared) social identity. In particular, within a sporting context, people are likely to offer positive explanations for the behaviour of athletes the more they see themselves as sharing social identity. This can anecdotally be seen in post-match interviews with players and coaches. For example, when questioned about a poor performance from their team, players and managers typically offer explanations that support their team or teammates, while at the same time attributing defeat to more situational and external factors (e.g., bad referee decisions or the opposition's good fortune).

Research on fan culture provides abundant evidence of ingroup favouring patterns in explanations of sport-related events or behaviour. As noted earlier, and in line with the fourth author's work (Kawycz & Coffee, 2019), researchers have observed that highly identified fans (observers) are more likely to attribute the success of 'their' athletes/teams (ingroup actors) to internal factors, and the failure of 'their' athletes/teams to external factors (Fink, Parker, Brett, & Higgins, 2009; Madrigal & Chen, 2008). In this sense, a positive 'self-

serving' bias is extended to members of the ingroup in the form of a 'team' or 'group-serving' bias. In self-categorisation terms, then, when social identity is salient, the 'team' becomes representative of their 'self'. Typically, then, fans are keen to ensure credit is given to their team for its successes, while also protecting it from blame in the event of failure. Furthermore, as social identity theory suggests, fans will generally strive to compare their team favourably to other teams, such that they root against rival teams and provide negative explanations for their behaviour. As noted in Chapter 2 above, this is particularly true for highly identified fans who need to recover threatened self-esteem in the face of group failure. These fans are particularly motivated to see 'us' as positively distinct from 'them' — and this applies not just to the way they describe outgroup (and ingroup) behaviour but also to the way they explain it.

This effect has also been observed when the behaviour of ingroup athletes (actors) is highly problematic or even criminal (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1998). As an example of this, consider the following analysis provided by a fan of Lance Armstrong after the cyclist had been found to have taken performance-enhancing drugs:

> Lance was operating at a very high level alongside competitors who were making the same sacrifices that he was. Take a look at any competitive sport or high-pressure career and there are conflicts of interest. It was against the rules to take performance-enhancing drugs; the fact large numbers of the pro peloton were using at the same time does not excuse Lance's behaviour, but in my eyes it does vindicate him slightly. (Warnakulasuriya, 2017)

Here the fan — a fellow American — clearly shows group-serving bias in seeking to explain Armstrong's actions (see Figure 8.5). More specifically, they seek to diminish the seriousness of the behaviour presenting it as having resulted from situational not dispositional factors. The suggestion that large numbers of other cyclists were taking performance-enhancing drugs also seeks to minimize the need to provide an explanation for the behaviour. This, then, alerts us to a collective dimension to Malle and colleagues (2007) notions of asymmetry that we discussed above: for when observers identify highly with actors they too will be motivated to see the world from their perspective and display the same reason, belief, and marker asymmetries. In this case, then, the fan's suggestion that there is 'nothing to explain here', mirrors the reason asymmetry that Armstrong himself displayed when pointing to a host of factors that contributed to his behaviour (notably the culture in cycling and the pressure to win; Rodgers, 2013).

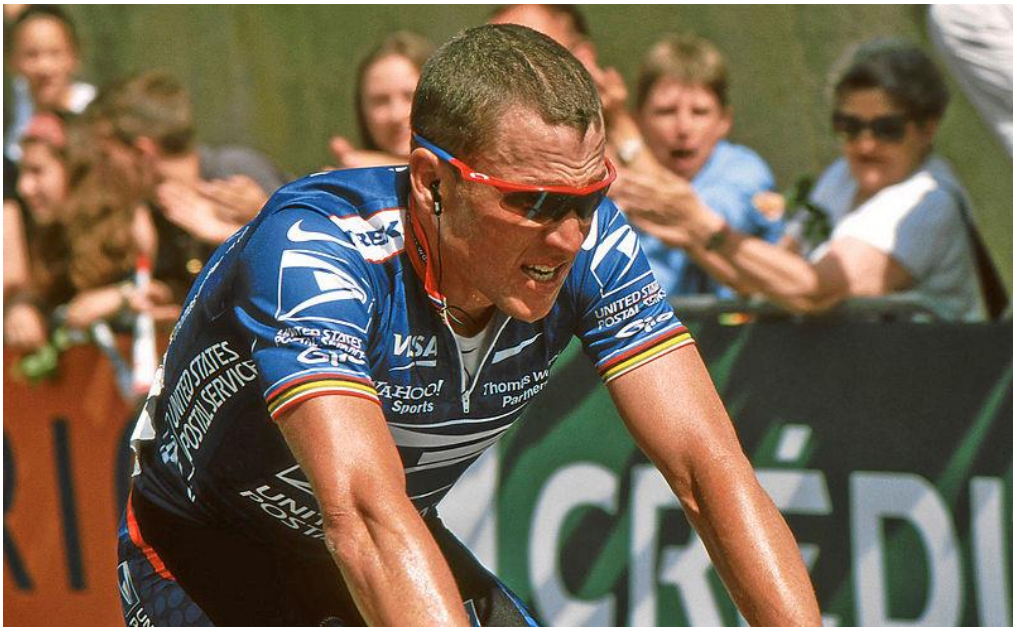

Figure 8.5 Group-serving bias amongst fans

Note: When an athlete — such as Lance Armstrong, pictured here — has been found guilty of illegal or illegitimate sporting behaviour, their supporters will often display group-serving bias in their explanations of the infringement. For example, they may downplay the significance of the behaviour (i.e., attributing it to non-dispositional factors) and/or suggest that it was more a consequence of the environment (i.e., attributing it to situational factors). They will also often display the same reason, belief, and marker asymmetries as the athlete themselves.

Source: Wikipedia

Drawing on these examples, future research in this area might do well to consider the way in which attributions are shaped by — and also themselves shape — the coach-athlete relationship. As we noted above, a coach (observer) is typically required to look at why an athlete was successful or unsuccessful and provide explanations for their performance. These explanations have an impact on cognitions towards the athlete such as attitudes (hard-working, lazy), emotions towards the athlete (happy, angry), and behaviours (kind and engaging, abrupt and disengaging). Furthermore, the explanations that the coach provides can impact both training plans and strategic training decisions in ways that can ultimately help to improve (or not) the athlete's performance. Importantly, though, as Peters notes in Chapter 4 above, effective communication between the coach and the athlete will be determined by levels of shared social identity *and so too will their attributions*. Indeed, under conditions where athlete and coach share the same social identity, their perspective on social reality — and hence their attributions — will become interchangeable, so that, in effect, *the coach is no longer an observer but instead becomes a co-actor*.

In line with ideas presented earlier in this chapter, in this way shared social identity can also help to facilitate effective communication of divergent explanations for behaviour between the coach and the athlete. In particular, this means that criticism or challenge to the athlete's performance is more likely to be seen as constructive and therefore promote growth rather than conflict (Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002). For example, if a coach and athlete perceive themselves to share (rather than not share) social identity, then when the coach tells the player that they are not training hard enough and that their technique needs improving, this message is more likely to be received and to lead to increases in motivation and effort (Haslam, 2017). At the same time, in line with ideas presented on the group-serving bias, there is also likely to be a tendency for highly identified coaches to 'protect' their athletes and 'explain away' their poor performance. Here the tendency to focus on situational and not relevant dispositional attributions for poor performance may lead to a masking of the real causes of poor performance and divert attention away from relevant issues that need to be addressed. Understanding the complex dynamics that are at play here thus provides a rich and important agenda for future research.

Conclusion

Attribution processes are fundamental to success. For without attributions, athletes cannot understand why they have succeeded or failed and hence cannot learn from experiences in ways that allow them to avoid future failure. This is true in all spheres of life — not only in sport but also in education, politics, business, and social relationships. The goal of this chapter has been to map out the theoretical underpinnings of attribution processes. That said, our review of the models that have dominated this field to date (not only in sport but also in general social psychology) have predominantly focused on attributions *about individuals* made by people who are acting *as individuals*. The role of groups and group processes is thus noticeably absent from these models.

Seeking to correct for this omission, the social identity approach to attributions that we set out in this chapter shows how attention to *group-sourced* and *group-focused* explanations can provide a fuller appreciation of the attribution process. It also provides greater insight into the nature of adaptive explanations for events and behaviours. More specifically, by elaborating three key points that can be derived from this approach, we underscored its relevance to four of the '5Ps' identified in Chapter 2: participation, performance, psychological and physical health, and partisanship.

Yet whilst it was not explicitly discussed in this chapter, it is clear too that a social identity approach to attributions in sport and exercise contexts also speaks to the fifth P: politics. Not least this is because identity-based politics is a key determinant of the big-picture issue of *what* we seek to explain in sport. So, amongst other things, it is social identity that determines whether we focus more on the causes of success in Australian Rules Football than in Snowboarding; or more on the causes of drug-taking in former East Germany or China than in Britain or the United States.

Without a proper appreciation of attribution processes, then, our understanding of sport and exercise psychology is quite limited. Our hope is that this chapter, serves to refresh readers' interest in this area and to stimulate a plethora of new research. For whilst we have explained the relevance of the social identity approach to the study of attributions in sport and exercise, clearly much more remains to be done to develop, test, and apply the ideas set out above. In closing, we therefore align ourselves — and hopefully readers — with the attributional discourse of Rory Best in noting that the success of this enterprise is going to require a lot of hard work and a massive team effort.

References

Allen, M. S., Coffee, P., & Greenlees, I. (2012). A theoretical framework and research agenda for studying team attributions in sport. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *5*, 121–144.

Allen, M. S., Jones, M. V., & Sheffield, D. (2009). Attribution, emotion, and collective efficacy in sports teams. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, *13*, 205–217.

Aronson, E. (2002). *The social animal* (8th ed.). New York: Worth Publishers.

Baron, R. A., Byrne, D., & Branscombe, N. R. (2006). *Social psychology* (11th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Biddle, S. (1993) Attribution research and sport psychology. In R. N. Murphey and L. K. Tennant (Eds.), *Handbook of research on sport psychology* (pp. 437–464). Macmillan, New York.

Coffee, P. (2017). *Social identity theory as framework to understand social support and attributions in sport.* Keynote presentation at the First International Conference on Social Identity in Sport. Leuven, Belgium: KU Leuven.

Coffee, P., Greenlees, I., & Allen, M. (2015). The TRAMS: The team-referent attributions measure in sport, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 16*, 150–159.

Coffee, P., & Rees, T. (2008a). The CSGU: A measure of controllability, stability, globality, and universality attributions. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, *30*, 611–641.

Coffee, P., & Rees, T. (2008b). Main and interactive effects of controllability and generalisability attributions upon self-efficacy. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 9*, 775–785.

Coffee, P., & Rees, T. (2009). The main and interactive effects of immediate and reflective attributions upon subsequent self-efficacy. *European Journal of Sport Science, 9*, 41–52.

Cosier, R., & Schwenk, C. (1990). Agreement and thinking alike: Ingredients for poor decisions. *The Executive*, *4*, 69–74.

Cruwys, T., South, E. I., Greenaway, K. H., & Haslam, S. A. (2015). Social identity reduces depression by fostering positive attributions. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *6*, 65–74.

Dietz-Uhler, B., & Murrell, A. (1998). Effects of social identity and threat on self-esteem and group attributions. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 2*, 24–35.

Fink, J. S., Parker, H. M., Brett, M., & Higgins, J. (2009). Off-field behavior of athletes and team identification: Using social identity theory and balance theory to explain fan reactions. *Journal of Sport Management*, *23*, 142–155.

Gill, D. L., Ruder, M. K., & Gross, J. B. (1982). Open-ended attributions in team competition. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, *4*, 159–169.

Hanratty, D. (2018). Johnny Sexton crowned World Player of the Year at World Rugby Awards. Retrieved from: www.joe.ie/sport/johnny-sexton-world-player-of-the-year-649305 (Accessed September 1, 2019)

Hardy, L., Jones, J. G., & Gould, D. (1996). *Understanding psychological preparation for sport: Theory and practice of elite performers*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Haslam, C., Jetten, J., Cruwys, T., Dingle, G., & Haslam, S. A. (2018). *The new psychology of health: Unlocking the social cure.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Haslam, S. A. (2001). *Psychology in organizations: The social identity approach*. London: Sage.

Haslam, S. A. (2017). The social identity approach to education and learning: Identification, ideation, interaction, influence and ideology. In K. Mavor, M. J. Platow, & B. Bizumic (Eds.), *Self and social identity in educational contexts* (pp. 19–35). London: Routledge.

Haslam, S. A., Jetten, J., O'Brien, A., & Jacobs, E. (2004). Social identity, social influence, and reactions to potentially stressful tasks: Support for the self-categorization model of stress. *Stress and Health, 20,* 3–9.

Hastorf, A. H., & Cantril, H. (1954). They saw a game; a case study. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *49,* 129–134.

Haynes, T. L., Perry, R. P., Stupnisky, R. H., & Daniels, L. M. (2009). A review of attributional retraining treatments: Fostering engagement and persistence in vulnerable college students. In M. B. Paulsen, *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 227–272). Dordrecht, NL: Springer.

Hogg, M. A., & Hardie, E. A. (1991). Social attraction, personal attraction and self-categorization: A field study. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 175–180.

Hornsey, M. J., Oppes, T., & Svensson, A. (2002). "It's OK if we say it, but you can't": Responses to intergroup and intragroup criticism. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *32*, 293–307.

Jones, E. E. (1976). How do people perceive the causes of behavior? *American Scientist, 64,* 300–305.

Jones, E. E., & Nisbett, R. E. (1972). The actor and the observer: Divergent perceptions of the causes of behavior. In E. E. Jones, D. Kanouse, H. H. Kelley, R. E. Nisbett, S. Valins, & B. Weiner (Eds.), *Attribution: Perceiving the causes of behavior* (pp. 79–94). Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press.

Kawycz, S., Coffee, P., & Eklund, R. C. (2017). *Drawing upon social identity theory to unpack the actor-observer asymmetry: Attributing actor behaviour.* Paper presented at the First International Conference on Social Identity in Sport. Leuven, Belguim: KU Leuven.

Kawycz, S., & Coffee, P., (2019). *Social identity and explanations for sports performance.* Paper presented at the Second International Conference on Social Identity in Sport. Stirling, UK: University of Stirling.

Le Foll, D., Rascle, O., & Higgins, N. C. (2008). Attributional feedback-induced changes in functional and dysfunctional attributions, expectations of success, hopefulness, and short-term persistence in a novel sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *9*, 77–101.

Lewis, P. T. (1995). A naturalistic test of two fundamental propositions: Correspondence bias and the actor–observer hypothesis. *Journal of Personality, 63,* 87–111.

Madrigal, R. & Chen, J. (2008). Moderating and mediating effects of team identification in regard to causal attributions and summary judgements following a game outcome. *Journal of Sport Management, 22,* 717–733.

Malle, B. F. (1999). How people explain behavior: A new theoretical framework. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 3,* 21–43.

Malle, B. F. (2004). *How the mind explains behavior: Folk explanations, meaning, and social interaction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Malle, B. F., Knobe, J. M., & Nelson, S. E. (2007). Actor-observer asymmetries in explanations of behavior: New answers to an old question. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *93,* 491–514.

Mitchell, D. E. (2016). Causes of Organizational Conflict. In A. Farazmand, *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance* (pp. 1–5). Basel, CH: Springer.

Murray, R. M., Coffee, P., Arthur, C. A., & Eklund, R. C. (in press). Social identity moderates the effects of team-referent attributions on collective efficacy but not emotions. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*.

Murray, R. M., Coffee, P., Eklund, R. C., & Arthur, C. A. (2019). Attributional consensus: The importance of agreement over causes for team performance to interpersonal outcomes and performance. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 43,* 219–225.

Oakes, P. J., Turner, J. C., & Haslam, S. A. (1991). Perceiving people as group members: The role of fit in the salience of social categorizations. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *30,* 125–144.

Orbach, I., Singer, R. N., & Murphey, M. (1997). Changing attributions with an attribution training technique related to basketball dribbling. *The Sport Psychologist*, *11*, 294–304.

Orbach, I., Singer, R., & Price, S. (1999). An attribution training program and achievement in sport. *The Sport Psychologist*, *13*, 69–82.

Paradis, K. F., Carron, A. V, & Martin, L. J. (2014). Athlete perceptions of intra-group conflict in sport teams. *Sport and Exercise Psychology Review*, *10*, 4–18.

Parker, P. C., Perry, R. P., Hamm, J. M., Chipperfield, J. G., & Hladkyj, S. (2016). Enhancing the academic success of competitive student athletes using a motivation treatment intervention (Attributional Retraining). *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *26*, 113–122.

Parker, P. C., Perry, R. P., Hamm, J. M., Chipperfield, J. G., Hladkyj, S., & Leboe-McGowan, L. (2018). Attribution-based motivation treatment efficacy in high-stress student athletes: A moderated-mediation analysis of cognitive, affective, and achievement processes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *35*, 189–197.

Perry, R. P., Chipperfield, J. G., Hladkyj, S., Pekrun, R., & Hamm, J. M. (2014). Attribution-based treatment interventions in some achievement settings. In S. Karabenick & T. Urdan (Eds.), *Advances in motivation and achievement* (Vol. 18, pp. 1–35). Bingley, UK: Emerald.

Perry, R. P., & Hamm, J. M. (2017). An attribution perspective on competence and motivation. In A. Elliot, C. Dweck, & D. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and applications (2nd ed)* (pp. 61–84). New York: Guilford Press.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (1984). Causal explanations as a risk factor for depression: Theory and evidence. *Psychological Review*, *91*, 347–374.

Postmes, T. & Haslam, S. A, & Swaab, R. (2005). Social influence in small groups: An interactive model of identity formation. *European Review of Social Psychology*, *16,* 1-42.

Postmes, T., Spears, R., & Cihangir, S. (2001). Quality of decision making and group norms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*, 918–930.

Rascle, O., Charrier, M., Higgins, N., Rees, T., Coffee, P., Le Foll, D., & Cabagno, G. (2019). Being one of us: Translating expertise into performance benefits following perceived failure. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, *43,* 105–113.

Rascle, O., Le Foll, D., Charrier, M., Higgins, N. C., Rees, T., & Coffee, P. (2015). Durability and generalization of attribution-based feedback following failure: Effects on expectations and behavioural persistence. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *18*, 68–74.

Rascle, O., Le Foll, D., & Higgins, N. C. (2008). Attributional retraining alters novice golfers' free practice behavior. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 20*, 157–164.

Rees, T., & Hardy, L. (2000). Social support of high-level sports performers: An investigation of the social support experiences of high-level sports performers. *The Sport Psychologist, 14*, 327–347.

Rees, T., Ingledew, D. K., & Hardy, L. (2005). Attribution in sport psychology: Seeking congruence between theory, research and practice. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 6*, 189–204.

Rees, T., Salvatore, J., Coffee, P., Haslam, S. A., Sargent, A., & Dobson, T. (2013). Reversing downward performance spirals. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 49*, 400–403.

Reicher, S. D. (2017). *"Some difficult away games": A close look at the fixture list for research on social identity and sport.* Keynote presentation at the First International Conference on Social Identity in Sport, Leuven, Belgium: KU Leuven.

Rodgers, L. (2013). Cancer in cycling: Armstrong 'blames' UCI for Illness. *Roar*. Retrieved from: www.theroar.com.au/2013/01/24/cancer-in-cycling-armstrong-blames-uci-for-illness/ (Accessed September 18, 2019).

Ross, L. (1977). The intuitive psychologist and his shortcomings: Distortions in the attribution process. In L. Berkowtiz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 10, pp. 174–221). New York: Academic Press.

Turner, J. C. (1982). Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group. In, H. Tajfel (Ed), *Social identity and intergroup relations* (pp. 15–40). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turner, J. C., Oakes, P. J., Haslam, S. A., & McGarty, C. (1994). Self and collective: Cognition and social context. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 20*, 454–463.

Turner, M. E., Pratkanis, A. R., Probasco, P., & Leve, C. (2006). Threat, cohesion, and group effectiveness: Testing a social identity maintenance perspective on groupthink. *Small Groups: Key Readings, 6*, 241–264.

Wacker, B. (2016). Inside the "We" of Jordan Spieth. Retrieved April 23, 2018, Retrieved from: www.pgatour.com/tourreport/2016/04/06/jordan-spieth-ad-we.html (Accessed September 1, 2019)

Warnakulasuriya, A. (2017) In search of Lance Armstrong's staunchest supporters. Retrieved from: www.vice.com/en_uk/article/a3dwjg/in-search-of-lance-armstrongs-staunchest-supporters (Accessed September 1, 2019)

Weiner, B. (1985). An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion. *Psychological Review*, *92*, 548–573.

Weiner, B. (2012). An attribution theory of motivation. In P. A. M. van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 135-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Weiner, B. (2014). The attribution approach to emotion and motivation: History, hypotheses, home runs, headaches/heartaches. *Emotion Review*, *6*, 353–361.

Weiner, B. (2018). The legacy of an attribution approach to motivation and emotion: A no-crisis zone. *Motivation Science*, *4*, 4–14.

Weiner, B., Graham, S., & Chandler, C. (1982). Pity, anger, and guilt: An attributional analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *8*, 226–232.