

Education 173
Cognition and Learning in
Educational Settings



Attribution Theories of Motivation
Fall Quarter 2007

Locus of Control



- **Rotter's Theory**
- **Self-Referent Beliefs**
 - *Where Is Control Located?*
 - **Internal Locus: Prince**
 - *Slay the dragon*
 - *"Origin"*
 - **External Locus: Princess**
 - *Wait to be rescued*
 - *"Pawn"*

Attribution Theory

- **Attributions are Explanations We Give For Our Success and Failure Experiences**
- **We Attribute Our Success or Failure To Such Causes As:**
 - *Luck*
 - *Effort*
 - *Ability*
 - *Task Difficulty*



Dimensions of Attributions

- ☀ **Internal or External**
 - *Self vs. others*
 - *I'm responsible/You're responsible*
- ☀ **Stable or Unstable**
 - *Typical effort vs. immediate effort*
- ☀ **Controllable or Uncontrollable**
 - *Effort vs. luck*



Learned Helplessness

- **Caused by a Perceived Disconnection Between Actions and Outcomes**
- **“There’s Nothing I Can Do.”**
- **Related to Attribution Theory**
 - External, uncontrollable, stable
- **Can Lead to Passivity, Self-blame, and Possibly Depression**



Learned Helplessness

- **Who is At Risk?**
 - *Students with*
 - *Learning problems*
 - *And other disabilities*
 - *Are vulnerable to learned helplessness*
- **Teachers Must Guard Against Learned Helplessness**

The Most Adaptive Attribution

- **What is Both Internal and Controllable?**
 - *Effort*
- **How Can You Encourage Effort Attributions?**
 - *“I think that if you had tried harder . . .”*
 - *Sends a message*
