Exploring Causes of the Self-serving Bias

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Abstract

The self-serving bias refers to a tendency for people to take personal responsibility for their desirable outcomes yet externalize responsibility for their undesirable outcomes. We review a variety of explanations for this attribution bias. Although researchers have historically pitted cognitive and motivational explanations for the self-serving bias against one another, cognitive and motivation processes often work in tandem to lead people to conclude that they are responsible for the desirable but not the undesirable outcomes.

Several decades of research document a consistent asymmetry in the attributions people make for their personal outcomes. In general, people make internal attributions for desired outcomes and external attributions for undesired outcomes. Although researchers at times have labeled this asymmetry *benefectance* (Greenwald, 1980) and *egotistical attributions* (Stephan, Rosenfield, & Stephan, 1976), the most common name is the *self-serving bias* (Miller & Ross, 1975). The self-serving bias occurs for a variety of events and in a variety of settings. It is evident in workers who attribute receiving promotions to hard work and exceptional skill, yet attribute denial of promotions to unfair bosses. It is evident among athletes who are more likely to assume personal responsibility when they perform well in the sports arena than when they perform poorly (De Michele, Gansneder, & Solomon, 1998). It is even evident in drivers who attribute accidents to external factors – the weather, the condition of their car, other drivers – yet attribute the narrow avoidance of an accident to their alertness and finely honed driving skills (e.g., Stewart, 2005).

The common thread in these examples is that people view their positive outcomes as primarily internally caused, yet view their negative outcomes as primarily externally caused. Internal causes generally refer to abilities, skills, personal traits, or effort, whereas external causes generally refer to the actions or inactions of others, luck, and circumstances such as the weather or economy. We are quick to note that this internal–external distinction in some sense reflects a difference in controllability or foreseeability. People likely perceive the causes of their desired outcomes as more under their personal control or at least as foreseeable, yet perceive the causes of

their undesired outcomes as outside their personal control or as unforeseeable. Moreover, this difference in sense of control and foreseeability is sensible. If people could have foreseen or controlled the occurrence of an undesired outcome, they would have taken actions to avoid it.

We review reasons why people display the self-serving bias. A number of researchers have debated this question, with the greatest debate addressing whether the self-serving bias reflects a motivated process or merely reflects the way people process information and make judgments (e.g., Anderson & Slusher, 1986; Miller & Ross, 1975; Tetlock & Levy, 1982; Weary Bradley, 1978). In the last two decades, researchers have come to view this motivation vs. cognition debate as a false dichotomy, concluding that motivation and cognition are inextricable intertwined. For example, underlying motives can influence the information people seek, encode, and recall, as well as how diligently people scrutinize and process information available to them (Kunda, 1990; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). In this article, we assemble and review explanations for the self-serving bias proposed in various papers over the years. Importantly, we do not view these explanations as necessarily competing, but rather view the self-serving bias as having multiple causes. Thus, we do not view one cause or one group of causes as best characterizing truth. Instead, we regard all of the causes we describe as contributing to the self-serving bias.

From the larger perspective, it is worth keeping in mind that attributions about the self, like other attributions, are largely driven by the need to make sense of one's outcomes. With personal attributions about the self, people seek to understand the degree to which they are or are not the causal agent of surrounding events. The fact that attributions often appear self-serving reflects the difficulty of this task, illustrating that personal motivations as well as limitations in the mind's ability to process information can taint the attribution process.

Motivation-Driven Explanations for the Self-serving Bias

The first two explanations for the self-serving bias focus on two distinct motives: self-enhancement and self-presentation.

Self-enhancement

Self-enhancement refers to the motivation to sustain or enhance one's sense of self-worth (Snyder, Stephan, & Rosenfield, 1976; Stephan, Rosenfield, & Stephan, 1976). Accordingly, people make self-serving attributions because of the benefits to self-worth. Perceiving oneself as responsible for desired outcomes enhances personal self-worth, whereas perceiving oneself as responsible for undesired outcomes diminishes self-worth. A number of studies provide evidence consistent with the self-enhancement explanation. For example, according to the self-enhancement explanation, people should

display the self-serving bias only for outcomes that are important (i.e., that have implications for self-worth). In line with this reasoning, people show greater self-serving bias for important outcomes than for unimportant outcomes. For instance, participants in one study were more inclined to be self-serving in their attributions when the test was described as having well-established validity than when it was described as new and of undetermined validity (Miller, 1976).

Additional evidence for the role of self-enhancement in the self-serving bias comes from cross-cultural research. Research finds cultural differences in the extent to which self-worth is linked to personal accomplishments and outcomes. In Western cultures, identity and self-esteem are closely linked to individual accomplishments (Felson, 1984; Marsh & Young, 1997). People from Western cultures experience increases in self-worth in response to personal successes and decreases in self-worth in response to personal failures. By contrast, in Eastern cultures, there is no strong link between individual success and self-worth (see Heine & Hamamura, 2007). Consistent with these findings regarding culture and self-worth are results indicating cultural differences in the self-serving bias. People from Western cultures display a stronger self-serving bias than do people from Eastern cultures (Heine & Hamamura, 2007; Yan & Gaier, 1994). This is not to say that people from Eastern cultures show no self-enhancement. Quite the contrary, meta-analytic research, which pools the results from many studies, finds that people from Eastern cultures merely display a weaker self-serving bias for their successes and failures than people from Western cultures (Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde, & Hankin, 2004). In addition, some research reveals that people from Eastern cultures appear more inclined to exhibit a group-serving bias (Muramoto & Yamaguchi, 1997). The group-serving bias reflects a tendency to attribute group successes to something internal to the group (e.g., 'we really work well together') and a tendency to attribute group failures to something external the group (e.g., 'it was impossible for us to reach our deadlines'; Leary & Forsyth, 1987).

Finally, recent evidence suggests that, whereas people from Western cultures are particularly likely to show self-enhancement on traits and behaviors that are valued within individualistic cultures, people from Eastern cultures are particularly likely to show self-enhancement on traits and behaviors that are valued within collectivistic cultures (Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005). For example, people from Western cultures are more likely than people from Eastern cultures to rate themselves better than average on traits such as *independent*, *original*, *self-reliant*, and *unique*. Conversely, people from Eastern cultures are more likely than people from Western cultures to rate themselves better than average on traits such as *agreeable*, *compromising*, *cooperative*, and *loyal* (Sedikides et al., 2003). Although not tested directly, the implication is that people from Eastern cultures will display the self-serving bias for personal successes and failures that implicate abilities that are particularly valued in Eastern cultures.

Self-presentation

The self-presentation motivation refers to the drive to convey a desired image to others (Schlenker, 1980). People are keenly sensitive to how they are regarded by others and often act in ways to gain approval and avoid embarrassment (Arkin, Appelman, & Burger, 1980; Weary Bradley, 1978; Tetlock & Levy, 1982). Accordingly, people make self-serving attributions to manage impressions. They claim personal responsibility for successes but not failures in an attempt to influence how others perceive them. Of course, conveying a desired image can be a tricky business. Although taking credit for success can potentially enhance one's image (Forsyth & Schlenker, 1977), claiming too much responsibility can create the perception of being a braggart, leading to disapproval from others (Miller & Schlenker, 1985; Weary Bradley, 1978). Indeed, the negative consequences of self-promotion can lead people to present themselves quite modestly. For example, participants in one study claimed more credit for group success when they believed their claims would be private than when they believed their claims would be revealed to the entire group (Miller & Schlenker, 1985). Likewise, in Eastern cultures, which value modesty, participants show less self-serving bias when attributions are made publicly than when they are made privately (Kudo & Numazaki, 2003).

Further support for the self-presentational underpinnings of the self-serving bias comes from research on people who are socially anxious. Researchers have proposed that people who are low vs. high in social anxiety differ in self-presentational style. People with low social anxiety have an acquisitive style directed toward garnering approval and enhancing identity. By contrast, people with high social anxiety have a cautious, protective style directed toward avoiding social disapproval and protecting identity (Arkin, Appelman, & Burger, 1980; Shepperd & Arkin, 1990). From a self-presentational standpoint, self-serving attributions carry an element of risk because audiences may challenge the self-serving claims. Thus, self-serving attributions should be less appealing to people who are high in social anxiety. Consistent with this reasoning, compared with participants low in social anxiety, participants high in social anxiety assumed more responsibility for failure and denied credit for success particularly when they believed they would be immediately evaluated by experts (Arkin et al., 1980) or when they anticipated a retest (Shepperd, Arkin, & Slaughter, 1995).

Cognitive-Driven Explanations for the Self-serving Bias

Although it is tempting to interpret the self-serving bias as merely a reflection of the motive to self-enhance or the motive to manage audience impressions, these motives tell only part of the story. In fact, most people who make self-serving attributions would likely argue that their attributions arise from an objective evaluation of the evidence at hand and not from

self-enhancement or self-presentational concerns. Considerable evidence suggests that there is merit in this argument – people typically weigh the available evidence and explore competing explanations when making attributions (Miller & Ross, 1975). Importantly, people often stop well short of examining all possible explanations for an outcome, accepting instead the first logical explanation that comes to mind, a search strategy that is *satisfying* (Simon, 1956) in that it requires the least amount of effort. In addition, the process of examining evidence can lead to an *illusion of objectivity* (Kunda, 1990) in the attribution process rather than actual objectivity. Indeed, there are several reasons why an evaluation of available evidence might lead people, more often than not, to make self-serving attributions. The various cognitively–driven explanations are in many ways overlapping and may operate in tandem to influence attributions.

Outcomes inconsistent with expectations

Prior to a performance or action, people generally have some idea of the likely outcome. For example, students who take exams typically have some sense how they will do. A man who asks a woman for a date generally has some sense of what the woman's answer will be. People even have implicit predictions about events such as taking a car trip and the likelihood of arriving at a destination uninjured. Moreover, for several reasons, these predictions are likely to be positive. Expectations are often grounded in experience (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Tetlock & Levi, 1982), and people possess a variety of cognitive mechanisms (e.g., biased retrieval, inconsistent scrutiny) that serve to dampen, mute, and even erase prior negative experiences, but not prior positive experiences (Taylor, 1991). As a result, memory for positive experiences is often better than memory for negative experiences (Linton, 1986; Matlin & Strang, 1978).

Even when people have no prior experience, they may nevertheless have positive expectations based on their plans and intentions. People typically plan for success, not failure. Moreover, expectations tend to conform to what people are striving to achieve, not what they are striving to avoid, because it is easier to construct and think about a single plausible route to success than the many plausible ways one could fail (Buehler, Griffin, & Ross, 1994). Thus, for example, students who wish to do well in a class might have plans to attend class and read the text, and their expectations for how they will do in the class should generally correspond to their plans and strivings.

In general, an outcome either confirms or disconfirms people's positive expectations. When outcomes confirm a positive expectation, people do not search for an explanation for why the outcome occurred. Rather, they generally fall back on the explanation that gave rise to the positive explanation. When outcomes disconfirm a positive expectation, people initiate a search for the cause of the failure. Moreover, they are disinclined

to look to their (lack of) ability and effort as a possible cause because their ability and effort were often the reason for the positive expectations in the first place.

In sum, people often have expectations of what will happen and those expectations are typically positive. Of course, the reasons for positive expectations may reflect a motivated process. However, once in place, only outcomes that disconfirm expectations elicit a search for a cause and that cause is typically external.

Several studies illustrate the crucial role expectations play in the self-serving bias by showing that different expectations prompt different attributions (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). When people have positive expectations, they show a strong tendency to make internal attributions for success and external attributions for failure. By contrast, when people have negative expectations, they are less inclined to show the self-serving bias and may in fact show the reversal. Indeed, differences in expectations explain a finding that emerged in several initial studies that found that men were more likely than women to display the self-serving bias. Some investigators have suggested that the tasks were sex-typed and tended to favor men over women (e.g., Deaux, 1984). That is, men likely expected to perform well on the tasks (e.g., tasks such as a dart game), whereas women likely expected to perform poorly (Deaux, 1984). Moreover, when researchers selected tasks on which women expected to excel and men expected to do poorly, women showed the self-serving bias to a greater extent than did men (Deaux & Farris, 1977; Rosenfield & Stephan, 1978). And the link between expectations and attributions generalizes beyond sex differences. Other studies show that people who chronically expect to perform poorly on tasks (e.g., people who are depressed or low in self-esteem) are less likely to show the self-serving bias (see Blaine & Crocker, 1993; Tennen, & Herzberger, 1987).

Outcomes inconsistent with self-schema

Another reason people may take responsibility for positive but not negative outcomes is that positive outcomes are consistent with their self-view, whereas negative outcomes are not (Tetlock & Levi, 1982). Most people have ideas about who they are and where their skills, strengths and abilities lie. Yet, evidence suggests that these self-views or self-schemata are overly positive (see Taylor & Brown, 1988 for a review). People generally view themselves as intelligent, attractive, and socially skilled, or at least as possessing more of these attributes than the average person (Alicke, 1985). They also likely view themselves as the kind of people who produce positive outcomes and not the kind of people who produce negative outcomes.

Positive outcomes are consistent with people's positive self-schemata, and thus, people are likely to see themselves as responsible for positive outcomes when they occur. Moreover, negative outcomes prompt two possible

conclusions: the negative outcome was internally caused, and the positive self-schema is false, or the negative outcome was externally caused and the positive self-schema remains accurate. For example, a poor exam perform–ance may lead a co-ed to question whether her positive self-schema of being smart and studious is accurate. Yet, people are loathed to change their self-schemata (McGuire, 1968). Given a choice between internalizing responsibility for the negative outcome and rejecting the self-schema, and externalizing responsibility for the negative outcome and retaining the self-schema, people opt to retain their self-schema. Thus, the student is more likely to conclude that something outside herself (e.g., an unfair test or teacher) is responsible for the poor grade than to discard her self-schema of being smart.

Of course, not everyone has a positive self-schema, and evidence suggests that people with negative self-views (e.g., people who are socially anxious, low in self-esteem, or depressed or dysphoric) are less inclined to show the self-serving bias than people with positive self-views (Mezulis et al., 2004). According to Swann (1990), people embrace information consistent with their self-views and resist information inconsistent with their self-views. For people with negative self-views, this often means rejecting flattering feedback in favor of unflattering feedback. It noteworthy, however, that even people with negative self-schemata want flattering feedback, at least on an affective level. Moreover, evidence suggests that people with negative schemata generally do not show a reversal of the self-serving bias. Instead, they show a weaker self-serving bias than do people with positive self-schema (Mezulis et al., 2004). It seems that, on a cognitive level, people with negative self-schemata have difficulty finding highly positive feedback credible and thus are more likely than people with positive self-schemata to reject positive feedback (Swann, 1990).

Outcomes inconsistent with actions

Positive expectations are typically accompanied by goal-directed behavior. That is, people engage in goal-directed actions and expect that those actions will produce desired outcomes (Miller & Ross, 1975). A boy who asks a girl for a date may prepare by rehearsing what he will say, wearing his best shirt and trousers, and trying to be charming. If she accepts, he is most likely to assume that his efforts were the cause of her acceptance. As noted earlier, accepting the first logical explanation for his outcomes is satisfying in that it requires the least effort (Simon, 1956). If she declines, he is likely to view his goal-directed actions as evidence against personal responsibility for failure. Indeed, following a 'no' response, the boy may take a shower and brush his teeth, then ask the girl for a date a second time. If she declines again, he may make further changes such as getting a new haircut, trying new clothes, and buying flowers for the girl. If her answer is still no, he may reasonably conclude that the problem is

not with him; rather, the cause is something external. After all, he took the appropriate actions and was still rejected. In short, people may internalize responsibility for positive outcomes and externalize responsibility for negative outcomes because the positive outcomes are consistent with their actions (i.e., their attempts to achieve desired outcomes and reach goals), whereas their negative outcomes are not.

Biased hypothesis-testing

One reason people make external attributions for unexpected negative outcomes gets at the very heart of how people search for information. Unexpected experiences, such as failure when one expected success, prompt a question – why did this happen? When answering this question people act like naïve scientists (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). When addressing scientific questions, scientists form a hypothesis and then collect data to test the hypothesis. The mark of a good scientist is collecting data that provide a rigorous test of the hypothesis – data that can potentially disconfirm the hypothesis. People are like scientists in that they also form hypotheses when they experience unexpected outcomes and then collect data to test their hypotheses. For example, a coed who fails an exam may form a question – 'Am I smart?' – then dutifully seeks data to test her hypothesis – 'I am smart.'

A problem arises, however, in the simple fact that most people are not very good scientists. They show a penchant for engaging in the confirmation bias, collecting data that confirm rather than disconfirm their hypotheses. Thus, our student searches her memory for instances in which she performed well in classes rather than instances in which she performed poorly (Kunda, 1990; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). Furthermore, unlike the way scientists approach questions, people generally find case–positive information more diagnostic than case–negative information (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987; Snyder, 1984; Snyder & Gangestead, 1981). In other words, if people are presented with information that confirms their hypothesis (in the case of the self-serving bias, that external causes led to failure), they are more likely to perceive this information as more useful than if the information suggests their hypothesis might be false. Finally, people often display inconsistent scrutiny of the information they accumulate. Hypothesis-inconsistent information is scrutinized more closely for holes and flaws than is hypothesis-consistent information (see Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987 for a review).

Support for the biased hypothesis-testing explanation comes from evidence revealing that people induced to form a different hypothesis reach a different conclusion (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). For example, if our student is induced to form the hypothesis, 'Am I stupid?' she likely will seek different information than if induced to form the hypothesis, 'Am I smart?' She will search her memories for instances in which she

performed poorly in classes rather than instances in which she performed well. The different information will prompt a very different conclusion.

Different standards of proof

A final reason people make self-serving attributions arises from the different questions people ask when confronting information that suggests a desired conclusion vs. information that suggest an undesired conclusion (Gilovich, 1991). When confronting information that suggests a desired conclusion people likely ask themselves, 'Can I believe this conclusion?' This question prompts an inquiry of whether there is adequate evidence available to reach the desired conclusion. For example, a woman who is invited to an upcoming dance may ponder the question, 'Can I believe that I am desirable; that I am responsible for this positive outcome?' This question prompts a search for evidence that would allow the desired conclusion. The evidence need not be indisputable or overwhelming. It merely needs to be adequate to support the desired conclusion.

In the case of an outcome that suggests an undesired conclusion, people often ask a different question. Rather than asking 'Can I believe this conclusion?' people ask, 'Must I believe this conclusion?' This difference between 'can' and 'must' is subtle, but extremely important. 'Must' sets the bar for reaching the conclusion considerably higher than does 'can.' The question prompts an inquiry of whether the evidence is so overwhelming that there is no choice but to believe the undesired conclusion. For example, a woman who is not invited to an upcoming dance might ponder the question, 'Must I believe that I am undesirable; that I am responsible for this negative outcome?' The evidence needs to be so overwhelming and unambiguous that the person has no choice but to reach the undesired conclusion. In short, the more desirable the conclusion, the less hypothesis–consistent information people require to accept it and the more hypothesis–inconsistent information people require to reject it. Conversely, the more undesirable the conclusion, the more hypothesis–consistent information people require to accept it and the less hypothesis–inconsistent information people require to reject it (Gilovich, 1991).

In many ways, the *different standards of proof* explanation is similar to the *biased hypothesis testing* explanation. With both explanations people consider a proposition or hypothesis and then evaluate evidence bearing on the hypothesis. However, with biased hypothesis testing, the hypothesis under consideration prompts a search for specific, hypothesis confirming information to the neglect of hypothesis disconfirming information. In contrast, with different standards of proof, people do not necessarily search for some information to the neglect of other information. Rather, they vary in the quantity of information required to accept or reject their hypothesis. People require more information to accept an undesired hypothesis than they require to accept a desired hypothesis. Importantly,

the two explanations likely work hand in hand. In line with the biased hypothesis testing explanation, the hypothesis tested (e.g., 'Am I smart?' vs. 'Am I stupid?') determines which information people seek. However, in line with the different standards of proof explanation, the hypothesis tested also determines the quantity of information required to reach a conclusion. People require more proof to accept the hypothesis 'I am stupid' than to accept the hypothesis 'I am smart'.

Finally, recall that people with negative self-views are less likely than people with positive self-views to show the self-serving bias. This finding can be explained by both the *biased hypothesis testing* explanation and the *different standards of proof* explanation. First, having a negative self-view may prompt people to generate and thus test the unfavorable hypothesis ('Am I stupid?') instead of the favorable hypothesis ('Am I smart?'). Moreover, the negative self-views may facilitate the availability of negative self-information (e.g., instances of past academic failures) but not the availability of positive self-information (e.g., instances of past academic successes). As such, although the bar is lower when people ask, 'Can I believe this about myself?', people with negative self-views may struggle with finding information that supports this conclusion. Conversely, although the bar is higher when people ask, 'Must I believe this about myself?', people with negative self-views may perceive that the evidence backing this conclusion is sadly overwhelming.

We noted earlier that people often seek information that is consistent with or verifying of their self-views (Swann, 1990). This self-verification motivation should not be interpreted as suggesting that people with negative self-views somehow display a reversal in the questions they ask when contemplating self-relevant beliefs. That is, we think it unlikely that people with negative self-views ask themselves 'Must I believe this about myself?' when entertaining a positive self-belief, or 'Can I believe this about myself?' when entertaining a negative self-belief. As Swann (1990) has noted, all people desire to nourish their sense of self-worth. However, people with negative self-views find themselves caught in a cognitive–affective crossfire in that they have difficulty accepting what they want to believe about themselves. The ironic result is that people with negative self-views may actually set a lower standard for accepting negative conclusions about themselves and a higher standard for accepting positive standards about themselves.

The Interplay of Motivation and Cognition: Motivated Reasoning

Although we have distinguished the more motivation-driven explanations for the self-serving bias from the more cognition-driven explanations, we are quick to repeat that the self-serving bias is neither wholly motivated nor wholly cognitive. Examining first the case of motivation, people

cannot believe whatever they want about themselves. They can only believe something insofar as they can marshal evidence to support the belief (Kunda, 1990). Thus, wanting to believe that one is responsible for positive but not negative outcomes or wanting to convey such an image to others is unlikely in itself to prompt the self-serving bias. People will claim responsibility for their positive outcomes and disclaim personal responsibility for negative outcomes only to the extent that they can muster evidence to support those claims.

Examining next the case of cognition, the various cognition-oriented explanations described earlier leave ample room for motivation to influence the process. For example, the first cognition-oriented explanation (outcomes are inconsistent with expectations) cites a number of sources of positive expectations. Common to many of these sources is motivation – people may be motivated to expect positive outcomes more than negative outcomes. That is, self-presentational and self-enhancement concerns can color the expectations people have prior to a performance or outcome. In a similar vein, people may be motivated to have a positive self-schema rather than a negative self-schema. In addition, they may be motivated to form and test a positively worded hypothesis ('Am I smart?') rather than a negative worded hypothesis ('Am I stupid?'). Once the self-schema, positive expectations, and hypotheses are in place, they affect the information people seek and, ultimately, the attributions people make.

The final cognition-oriented explanation (different standards of proof) perhaps most clearly illustrates the interplay of cognition and motivation in perceptions and judgment. We can think of no other explanation other than motivation for why people would erect different standards of proof for desired conclusions and undesired conclusions. Once those different standards are in place, the cognitive processes of information-search and evaluation take over, giving people the sense or illusion that they are being objective in their reasoning and judgments. People then fail to realize that using different standards of proof (or different expectations, different hypotheses, etc.) stacks the deck in favor of concluding that they are responsible for desired and not undesired outcomes.

Conclusions

It is worth repeating that attributions bearing on the self, like all attributions, are largely motivated by the goal of making sense of one's world. Although self-serving attributions occasionally reflect a calculated attempt influence audience perceptions or a desperate attempt to defend a desirable self-view, in many instances, they are not calculated, not deliberate, not intentional, and probably not even conscious. Rather, they reflect a sincere attempt to understand why things happened as they did. In such instances the benefits to self-esteem, public identity, affect, and motivation are by–products rather than the driving force behind self-serving attributions.

Short Biographies

James A. Shepperd is an experimental social psychologist. He has authored or co-authored papers on self-handicapping, social loafing, optimism, bracing, and methodology. His research explores the self, expectations and judgments, and their implications for health and behavior. He is a former Fulbright Fellow who has received research funding from the National Institute of Health and the National Science Foundation. He is the Dave Thomas Professor of Psychology at the University of Florida and holds a BA in Psychology from Southwestern University, an MA in Educational Psychology at the University of Texas, and a PhD in Psychology from the University of Missouri.

Wendi Malone's research examines how people's attitudes, beliefs, and expectations influence their health behaviors. She received her BA in Psychology from William Penn University, her MA in experimental psychology from Augusta State University, and is now pursuing her doctoral degree in Social Psychology at the University of Florida.

Kate Sweeny's research encompasses interests in both social and health psychology, with a focus on preparing for, giving, and responding to bad news. She has authored and co-authored papers on these topics in several peer-reviewed journals in social and general psychology in addition to several book chapters. She also has received funding from the National Institute of Mental Health to support her research on bad news communication. She received her BS in Psychology from Furman University, an MA in social psychology from the University of Florida, and is now in the final stages of her doctoral degree in social psychology at the University of Florida.

Endnote

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