Contents

Preface ix

List of figures xi

List of tables xii

Acknowledgements xiii

1 Introduction 1
Explanations in science, history and common sense 1
Explanations in terms of cause 2
The study of explanations in philosophy and psychology 5
Attribution theory: an acknowledgement of ancestors 6
Overview of the book 9

2 Classic Theories of Causal Attribution 11
Introduction 11
'Phenomenal causality' and the 'naive analysis of action' 12
Correspondent Inference Theory 15
Covariation and configuration 21
Covariation and configuration: an integration 28
Theories of causal attribution: a summary 28

3 Attribution Theory and Research: Fundamental Questions 30
Introduction 30
The nature of causal attribution 30
The measurement of causal attributions 38
The instigation of causal attribution 43
Biases in the attribution process 49
Functions and consequences of causal attribution 60
Conclusion 70

4 Intra-personal Attribution: Causal Logic, Cognitive Processes and Knowledge Structures 71

Introduction 71
Causal logic 72
Cognitive processes 94
Knowledge structures 103
Causal attribution from a cognitive perspective 110
Conclusion 115

5 Interpersonal Attribution: From Social Interaction to Close Relationships 116
Introduction 116
Social interaction 118
Close relationships 136
Conclusion 161

6 Intergroup Attribution: Social Categorization and its Consequences 164
Introduction 164
Theoretical contributions to intergroup attribution 166
Empirical evidence for intergroup attribution 174
Foundations and consequences of intergroup attribution 191
Implications for the reduction of intergroup conflict 199
Conclusion 203

7 Societal Attribution: Collective Beliefs and the Explanation of Societal Events 205
Introduction 205
Societal beliefs and causal explanations 206
From the 'thinking' to the 'attributing' society? 211
Explanations for societal events 217
Culture and attribution 231
Conclusion 235

8 Conclusion 237

Notes 243

References 248

Index of Subjects 301

Index of Names 304