

# Blame the Skilled

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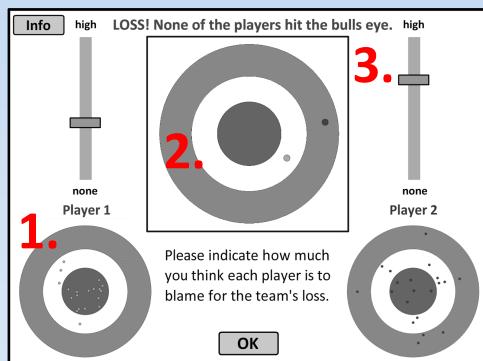
**Skill** & **Performance**

**Responsibility?**

## Research Questions

- To what extent are people's blame attributions influenced by a person's skill and their performance?
- How do the skill and performance of one teammate influence another teammate's responsibility for an outcome?

## Experiment



Experiment Screenshot

### 1. Skill Manipulation

- performance on 10 practice trials (manipulation check: good:  $M = 6.1$ , medium:  $M = 1.4$ , poor:  $M = -3.1$ )

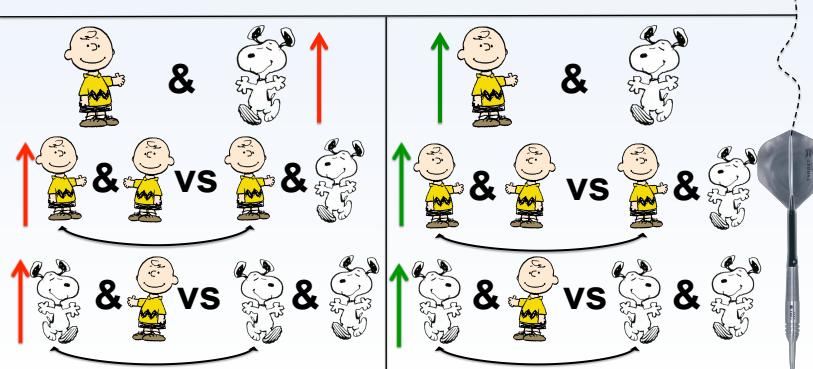
### 2. Performance Manipulation

- crucial test shot: full permutation of center – middle ring – outside ring ( $2^3$  patterns)
- disjunctive combination function → at least one player needs to hit the center for the team to win

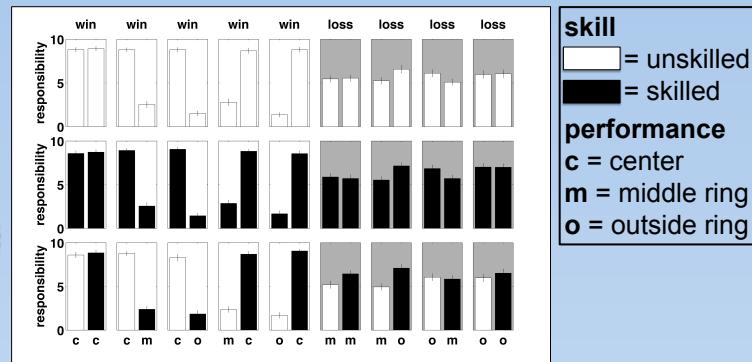
### 3. Responsibility Attribution

- for each player separately: blame for team's loss, credit for team's win

**Predictions**<sup>1</sup> unskilled = skilled  
Blame for losses Credit for wins



## Results

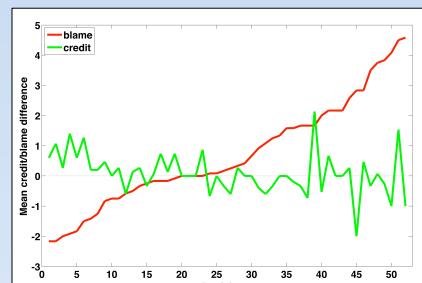


### Mean Credit/Blame Attributions

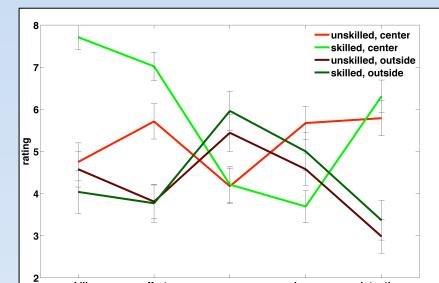
- skilled player receives more blame ( $M = 6.4$ ) than unskilled player ( $M = 5.7$ )
- unskilled player does not receive more credit ( $M = 6.05$ ) than skilled player ( $M = 6.13$ )
- moderate negative correlation between blame/credit as a function of skill ( $r = -0.34$ )

### Attributions in Mixed Challenge

	identical	unskilled	skilled
center	34	9	9
middle	17	9	26
outside	18	12	22



Individual differences in the effect of skill on blame/credit attributions



Estimated contribution of different factors for performance

### Mean Blame/Credit Attributions as a Function of Skill

player	skilled	unskilled
partner	skilled	unskilled
blame	5.76	6.48
credit	6.10	6.06

- only weak effects of one player's skill level on the other player's responsibility

## Discussion

- skilled players receive more blame than unskilled players; credit attributions do not differ
- only small effects of the (other player's) skill manipulation
  - factorial design → dissociation between performance in practice trials vs. test trials
  - attributions affected players individually
- Future research → expectation of making a difference to the outcome important:
  - stronger skill manipulation
  - enhance team factor

## References

Gerstenberg, T., Ejova, A. & Lagnado, D. A. (2011). Blame the skilled. In L. Carlson, C. Hölscher, & T. Shipley (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*. Austin, TX: Cognitive Science Society.

<sup>1</sup>Gerstenberg, T. & Lagnado, D. A. (2010). Spreading the blame: The allocation of responsibility amongst multiple agents. *Cognition*, 115, 166-171.