Suspicion and Dispositional Inference

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The role of suspicion in the dispositional inference process is examined. Perceivers who are led to become suspicious of the motives underlying a target's behavior appear to engage in more active and thoughtful attributional analyses than nonsuspicious perceivers. Suspicious perceivers resist drawing inferences from a target's behavior that reflect the correspondence bias (or fundamental attribution error), and they consciously deliberate about questions of plausible causes and categorizations of the target's behavior. They are, however, quite willing to make strong correspondent inferences about the target if they learn additional contextual information that renders alternative explanations for the target's behavior less plausible. Implications of these findings for current multiple-stage models of the dispositional inference process are discussed, and the need for these and other models to give more consideration to the social nature of social perception is asserted.

For more than two decades, social cognition and attribution theory have exerted a hegemonic influence over social psychology. Why this has been so is open to debate, as is the ultimate significance of this influence. What is surely beyond dispute, however, is that this influence would not have been possible without a general acceptance of the assumption that individuals process social and nonsocial information similarly. This assumption, more than any other, has emboldened social psychologists to borrow extensively and usefully from both the theory and methods of cognitive psychology. Yet it is important to remember that there may be significant differences between the processing of social and nonsocial stimuli. One such difference is the focus of this article.

To introduce this difference, consider the dilemmas that confronted subjects in two classic experiments in social psychology: Bem's (1967) interpersonal simulation of Festinger and Carlsmith's (1959) forced-compliance study, and Jones and Harris's (1967) attitude attribution study. In both studies the subjects' task was to decide what the true attitude of another person was, and in both studies the person's behavior was sometimes ambiguous. In Bem's study, subjects had to decide whether a person really liked a task after learning that the person had been offered a $20 inducement to say that the task was enjoyable. In Jones and Harris's study, subjects had to decide whether a person really endorsed an attitude after learning that the person had been told by the experimenter or a teacher what attitude to express.

In certain respects, perceivers who learn that a person has been offered $20 to express an attitude and perceivers who learn that a person has been given no choice about expressing an attitude are in similar predicaments. In both cases the meaning of the behavior confronting them is ambiguous because there are multiple plausible causes of the behavior, and in both cases there is reason to believe that the person's true attitude is misrepresented. However, in the first case, there is also the possibility that the person is motivated to deceive: He or she may be advocating the position only in order to gain the money. Deception is not a possibility in the second case. A person's behavior in the no-choice condition reflects no more agency or deceit than a student's poor perfor-

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mance on a difficult exam, a race horse's slow time on a muddy track, or a punter's short kick against a strong wind.

In everyday language, the distinction between the two cases is captured by the term *suspicion*. We would say that someone is suspicious of a person who is paid to say something, but we would not say that someone is suspicious of a person who lacked freedom—such as a student who does poorly on an exam because the exam was very difficult or a debater who argues for a particular position because of the requirements of the debate. To be suspicious, one has to doubt the sincerity of the actor's motives, not just the representativeness of the actor's behavior.

But what significance can be attached to the distinction between these two kinds of attributional ambiguity? That is, even if one can distinguish between the two classes of plausible alternatives, does the distinction have any significance for the attribution process generally or the dispositional inference process in particular? Kelley's (1972) seminal work on discounting and augmentation clearly assumed not. Among the studies Kelley cited, two involved the meaning of a seemingly altruistic act performed under varying conditions. First, Thibaut and Riecken (1955) manipulated the relative status of the helper and the recipient and found that the helper was liked less when he was of lower status than the recipient. Second, Pruitt (1968) manipulated the resources available to the helper and found that the person who received help was less grateful when the help represented a relatively small proportion of the helper's resources. Although neither study measured dispositional inferences directly, the results from both were taken as evidence for discounting. In both cases, the presence of multiple causes (i.e., altruism and relatively low status in the case of Thibaut and Riecken; altruism and the availability of abundant resources in the case of Pruitt) led to less extreme inferences.

With respect to the potential for suspicion, however, the two studies are very different. Whereas it seems reasonable to assume that subjects in Thibaut and Riecken's study were suspicious of the helper's motives when the helper was of relatively low status (i.e., they were suspicious that the helper's motive was ingratiation), it would be strange to assume that subjects in the Pruitt study were suspicious of the helper's motives when the helper had many resources available. The contextual information in the latter study did not suggest any plausible ulterior motives for the helper's behavior. The subjects may have used the information about the donor's resources to question the significance of the act and to assess the degree of altruism that was characteristic of this individual, but it is less likely that they wondered whether the donor's behavior reflected some other motivation.

At the broadest level, our goal in the current article is to re-examine the inference process from the standpoint of suspicion. It is our belief that, in conflating situational causation and motivational causation, the field has lost sight of some of the uniquely social aspects of social perception and has prematurely foreclosed the investigation of the psychology of suspicion. We begin with a brief analysis of suspicion and show how this analysis suggests that suspicious perceivers concern themselves with a different set of questions than nonsuspicious perceivers. We then review the effects of suspicion on the inferences that perceivers are willing to draw from an actor's behavior and discuss the relationship between suspicion and inferential accuracy. Finally, we examine recent models of the inference process and discuss the implications that our work has for these models.

SUSPICION

To be suspicious is to question the motives that underlie a person's behavior or to question the genuineness of that behavior. When Richard Nixon threatened to invoke executive privilege and to refuse to turn over the White House tapes to the Justice Department, people were suspicious of his actions because it was unclear whether he was motivated by his stated desire to protect the office of the presidency, by an unstated desire to protect himself, or by some combination of these motives. Similarly, when a job candidate praises the research of a member of the search committee, the suspicious observer wonders whether the praise is motivated by the candidate's true belief, the candidate's desire to ingratiate, or some combination of the two motives (e.g., see Jones, 1964). More than simply wondering about the motives for or meaning of another person's behavior, however, the suspicious observer is concerned with whether the behavior may be counterfeit or whether the motives underlying the behavior are ulterior. To be suspicious, then, is to entertain a particular kind of explanation. Suspicious perceivers entertain the notion that the target is trying to hide something that has the potential to discredit the meaning of the target's behavior. If it were known, for example, that an employee's compliments about a supervisor's plans were motivated solely by his or her desire to gain early promotion, few would conclude that the gist of the compliment would argue unambiguously for adoption of the plan.

To be suspicious is also to be in a state of suspended judgment. It is a dynamic state in which the individual entertains multiple, plausibly rival hypotheses about the motives or genuineness of a behavior. For example, the perceiver who is sure that he or she knows that an employee's compliments of a supervisor's plans were motivated solely by the employee's desire to gain early promotion is not, according to our conceptualization, suspicious. Similarly, a wealthy individual who believes that his or her paramour's intentions are noble is not in a state of suspicion. And probably most of us are no longer suspicious of Richard Nixon—by now we have decided either that he was or that he was not a crook.

In sum, we have characterized suspicion as a psychological state in which perceivers actively weigh the possibility that a target's behavior is genuine against the possibility that it is contrived—either because the behavior itself is counterfeit or because the motives that underlie the behavior are ulterior.

SUSPICION AND THE CORRESPONDENCE BIAS

To the extent that our analysis of suspicion is correct, one consequence of being in a state of suspicion is that suspicious perceivers should be reluctant to draw inferences that correspond to a target's behavior. That is, because suspicious perceivers entertain multiple, plausibly rival explanations concerning the meaning of a target's behavior, suspicious perceivers should refrain from taking behavior at face value, at least until their suspicions have been resolved. One problem with this prediction is that virtually all the evidence in the literature on dispositional inference indicates that people rarely refrain from making inferences that correspond to the behaviors they have observed. The pervasiveness of this tendency has been illustrated in the numerous studies that have found support for the bias called the fundamental attribution error by Ross (1977) and the correspondence bias by Gilbert and Jones (1986).

How can we reconcile the prediction that suspicious perceivers will be inclined to suspend their judgments of targets with the robust finding that perceivers are inclined to draw correspondent inferences from a target's behavior even when they should suspend judgment? To begin this task, we note that the numerous studies that demonstrate the correspondence bias (e.g., Gilbert, Pelham, & Krull, 1988; Jones, 1979; Jones & Harris, 1967; Ross, Amabile, & Steinmetz, 1977; Snyder & Jones, 1974) typically manipulate the potential role of situational constraints rather than the potential role of ulterior motivation. Under situational constraint the target's motives for behaving in the constrained manner are not an issue. Subjects in the typical assigned-essay paradigm may wonder whether the author really holds the expressed attitude, but it is unlikely that they question why the attitude was expressed. After all, it is generally perfectly clear that the author took the position because the experimenter told him or her to do so (e.g., Miller, Schmidt, Meyer, & Colella, 1984).

In situations like this, subjects are more likely to be concerned with determining *how much* of the implicated trait or attitude is reflected in the target's behavior than with determining *which* trait or goal is reflected in the target's behavior. Therefore, subjects should very quickly identify the author's behavior and initially infer that the author holds an attitude that corresponds to the attitude expressed in the essay. Then they should begin to correct this inference in light of the information about situational constraint. However, because perceivers often have too few cognitive resources to devote to the relatively arduous process of correction, the outcome of this process will tend to reflect the correspondence bias (e.g., Gilbert et al., 1988; Jones, 1979; Quattrone, 1982; Trope, 1986; Trope & Liberman, this issue).

The case just described can be contrasted with one in which subjects read an essay whose author was given free choice to argue either side of the issue but may have been influenced by an ulterior motive such as ingratiation. Perceivers here are likely to be concerned primarily with the question of why the author wrote the essay in the direction that he or she did. They are likely to consider whether the author adopted a particular position because he or she believed the position to be correct or whether the author was trying to ingratiate by choosing a position that would be looked on favorably by others. Until the perceivers are able to resolve this ambiguity and determine whether the motives underlying the behavior reflect the author's true attitude, the desire to ingratiate, or some combination of these factors, they should suspend their judgments and thereby avoid the correspondence bias.

Consistent with this analysis are two studies that stand out in the literature as rare instances of failures to find the correspondence bias. The first is Jones, Davis, and Gergen's (1961) study in which subjects listened to actors allegedly being interviewed for a job that required a particular interpersonal style (i.e., introversion or extraversion). The actors presented themselves as having a personality that was either consistent or inconsistent with the job description, and the subjects' task was simply to guess what the actor's true personality was. The results showed that subjects' trait descriptions of the actors corresponded most closely to the actor's self-descriptions when those descriptions were inconsistent with the job description. However, when the self-descriptions were consistent with the job description, and therefore possibly given in order to get the job, subjects' ratings did not differ from neutral ratings (see also Reeder & Brewer, 1979; Reeder, Messick, & Van Avermaet, 1977).

The second study is Bem's (1967) interpersonal simulation of Festinger and Carlsmith's (1959) dissonance study cited earlier. Recall that, in this study, subjects witnessed targets informing another that they liked a dull task following the receipt of either a $1 or a $20 experimental inducement. Not only did the subjects in the low-incentive condition infer a more positive "real" attitude toward the task than the other subjects, but the subjects in the high-incentive condition made inferences that did not differ from those of control subjects who did not hear the target express any attitude toward the task. Apparently, when subjects recognized the possibility that the target may have been expressing the positive attitude in order to receive $20, they reacted as if they had not seen any diagnostic behavioral information—a finding that is elusive when the inducement involves constraint rather than ulterior motivation.

SUSPICION: AN ANTIDOTE TO THE CORRESPONDENCE BIAS

A more direct test of the prediction that suspicious perceivers are likely to suspend their judgments and refrain from falling prey to the correspondence bias is found in a series of studies by Fein, Hilton, and Miller (1990). In the first two of these studies, subjects read a speech that argued either strongly in favor of or in opposition to a set of propositions that would render all student athletes who do not meet particular academic requirements ineligible during their first year of college. In half the conditions, subjects were told that the author of the speech had no choice in deciding which side of the debate to argue in the speech—the position was assigned to him by a committee (*no-choice conditions*). These conditions were designed to replicate the conditions typically used in the assigned-essay paradigm, where there is no ambiguity concerning why the author wrote the essay in the direction that he or she did. In the remaining half of the conditions, subjects were told that the author of the speech had been free to choose which side of the debate to argue, but they were given contextual information designed to suggest that he *may* have chosen the side he argued in order to ingratiate himself with a superior (Study 1) or to avoid an unwanted job (Study 2) (*ulterior motives conditions*). In other words, in these conditions, subjects learned that there were multiple, plausibly rival motives underlying the author's decision to write the speech in the direction that he did. Consistent with previous research, in both studies subjects in the no-choice conditions inferred that the author's true attitudes about the proposition were consistent with the position argued in the speech. A very different pattern emerged in the ulterior motives conditions of the two experiments: Here subjects drew no person inferences about the target from the speeches he wrote. Thus, even though the targets described in the no-choice conditions had much less freedom to choose how to act than the targets described in the ulterior motives conditions, perceivers in the former conditions tended to draw dispositional inferences that corresponded to the targets' behavior, whereas perceivers in the latter conditions refrained from drawing these inferences.

Finally, it warrants noting that subjects in the ulterior motives conditions did not infer that the author's true motive was to ingratiate. Rather, their open-ended responses indicated that these subjects merely recognized the possibility that his behavior *may have been* influenced by ulterior motives and perceived that they therefore could not make a confident inference about his true attitude. Furthermore, and perhaps most interesting, despite their inclination to draw more correspondent inferences from the target's behavior, subjects in the no-choice conditions saw the target's behavior as more normative (expected) than subjects in the ulterior motives conditions.

CHARACTERIZING THE STATE OF SUSPICION

We have asserted that suspicion leads perceivers to suspend their judgments until they are able to determine which of several plausible motives is reflected in a target's behavior. Suspicious perceivers, we have argued, recognize that the target's behavior is meaningful, but they also recognize that it is ambiguous. One alternative account to ours is that the reaction perceivers have to the prospect of ulterior motivation may simply be one of increasing conservatism: a reluctance to make *any* strong dispositional inferences. That is, rather than suspending their judgments and actively searching for information that could clear up the meaning of the target's behavior, perhaps suspicious perceivers simply conclude that nothing is to be gained from determining the motivation behind the target's behavior and cease paying attention to it.

Several arguments can be offered against characterizing suspicion as a state in which perceivers simply refuse to believe that they have learned anything about the suspect. First, when we (Fein et al., 1990, Study 1) asked subjects to indicate why the author behaved as he did, subjects in the suspicion conditions wrote significantly more than subjects in the no-choice conditions. These subjects tended to mention the attributional ambiguity with which they were faced: Did the author's behavior reflect a sincere attitude toward the issue discussed in the speech or a desire to ingratiate? This result is consistent with the idea that suspicious perceivers entertain multiple explanations for the suspect's behavior rather than simply inferring a neutral attitude or refusing to believe that they have learned anything about the suspect. More important, when subjects in other studies (Fein, 1991, Studies 1 and 2) have been asked to complete a thought-listing task, suspicious subjects were significantly more likely to indicate attribution-relevant thoughts about the target than subjects who were not led to be suspicious. For example, subjects in Fein (1991, Study 1) read about a target and his essay under conditions of no choice, free choice, or free choice with the possibility of ulterior motives (i.e., suspicion). Before being asked to answer any attribution-relevant questions, the subjects were asked to record all their thoughts. Subjects in the condition designed to arouse suspicion tended to indicate the most numerous and rich attributional thoughts. Their responses indicated that these subjects did not tend to conclude that the target *was* influenced by ulterior motives but, rather, that the target *may* have been influenced by ulterior motives. It is also worth noting that although one could think of any of a large number of reasons that the target in the free-choice condition may have chosen to write the essay as he did, there was no compelling reason for the subjects in this condition to be particularly suspicious of the author, and these subjects did not indicate being concerned with attribution-relevant questions.

Second, although suspicious perceivers do refrain from drawing inferences about the meaning of the target's behavior once they have become suspicious of the target's motives, they do so selectively, as a study conducted by Fein, Hilton, and Miller (1989) indicates. Subjects read about the activities of a man of modest means courting an older, and quite wealthy, widow. The man sent flowers and candy often, wrote poems for her, and eventually told her that he wanted desperately to marry her. Despite all these loving behaviors, the subjects were unwilling to infer either that the man was truly in love with the woman or that he was simply after her money. When asked how much they thought he wanted to marry the woman, however, these subjects responded that his desire to marry her was quite strong. Whether or not they suspected ulterior motives, subjects inferred that the more the man tried to win the woman's favor, the more he wanted to marry her. Again, the point is that suspicious perceivers do take into account what the target does; it is just that they use this behavioral information selectively.

Perhaps the most convincing line of argument against the characterization of suspicion as a state in which perceivers simply become unwilling to make strong dispositional inferences comes from a series of studies in which the ambiguity caused by suspicion was reduced by subsequent contextual information. These studies demonstrate that even when suspicious perceivers initially refrain from drawing dispositional inferences from the target's behavior, they do not hesitate to make correspondent inferences if information is subsequently obtained that makes the meaning of the behavior clearer. This point was demonstrated in the assigned-essay paradigm by Fein et al. (1990, Study 3). In this study, half the subjects who were given reason to suspect the motives underlying the author's behavior were given additional information about the target, and the other half were not exposed to this additional information. Those who did receive this information read about an occasion on which the target had the opportunity to act in an ingratiating manner with his superior but did not. Whereas the subjects who did not read this additional information were unwilling to make a correspondent inference about the target's true attitude toward the issue discussed in his essay, the subjects who read this information did tend to make strong correspondent inferences about his attitude. It appears that the information about the target's act of sincerity rendered less plausible the explanation that the target could have written his essay because of a desire to ingratiate, and, therefore, subjects were willing to infer that his true attitude corresponded to that expressed in his essay.

Fein et al. (1989) reported similar findings in studies using somewhat different paradigms. For example, subjects in one study read the story discussed above of the man who was ardently courting a wealthy widow. Recall that subjects who read this scenario tended to be unwilling to conclude either that he loved her or that he was greedy. In the present study, however, subjects read some additional information about this man's behavior in some other contexts. All these subjects read some information about some mundane tasks that this man performed during the course of a day. Embedded in this information was an account of the man's visit to a grocery store, where he bought a few items and the clerk inadvertently gave him too much change. One group of subjects then learned that the suitor pointed this out to the clerk and returned the extra change. The other group learned that the suitor pocketed the change and scurried toward his car.

In the grand scheme of things, regardless of whether the suitor kept or returned the money, his behavior was not very extraordinary. Giving back the change is no great testament to honesty, and pocketing the change is not a terribly strong indictment of greed. And yet, in combination with the knowledge that the man was dating a wealthy widow, these otherwise trivial acts helped disambiguate the suitor's behavior. Subjects concluded that the suitor who returned the change was in love with the woman, whereas subjects inferred that the suitor who pocketed the change was motivated by greed.

In sum, subjects who are suspicious do not behave as if they had gained no information from the target's behavior. Instead, they behave as if they had received important information whose meaning remains ambiguous, and they suspend their judgments only until the meaning of the behavior can be made clear.

SUSPICION AND ACCURACY

In many ways, the image of the suspicious perceiver that has emerged from our research is quite different from the image of the perceiver that emerges from the typical social cognition experiment. Suspicious perceivers appear to entertain multiple, often quite complex, explanations for a target's behavior. As they attempt to determine which traits or motives underlie a target's behavior, they are sensitive to subsequent information that can help them disambiguate the meaning of the target's behavior, and they resist falling prey to the correspondence bias. In short, they look much more sophisticated and mindful than the perceiver depicted in most models of the inference process. But do suspicious perceivers always look more thoughtful or more accurate than nonsuspicious perceivers?

In part, of course, it depends on what we mean by *thoughtful* or *accurate*, but in at least one respect the answer is no. Although suspicious perceivers do not commit the correspondence bias, there is a sense in which they may sometimes commit an opposite error. Specifically, suspicious perceivers may often respond more to the plausibility of an ulterior motive than to its probability (e.g., Miller, Turnbull, & McFarland, 1989). Consider again the ardent suitor of a wealthy woman. The wealth of the woman he is pursuing is assumed to render ambiguous his true feelings for her. But why is this so? Is it because we think most men who pursue wealthy women do so for materialistic motives? This seems improbable. Instead, what seems to be happening here is that the wealth of the woman presents a very plausible, though not necessarily the most probable, alternative explanation for the behavior, and this plausibility is sufficient to lead the perceiver to suspend judgment.

The results of Fein et al. (1990) are consistent with the idea that perceivers who are confronted with a plausible ulterior motive explanation for a target's behavior may respond to more than the perceived normativeness of the behavior when making their judgments. Recall that subjects in the ulterior motives conditions tended to infer that it was less probable that anyone in the target's position—that is, independent of his or her true attitude—would have behaved similarly to the target than subjects in the no-choice conditions, and yet they were more unwilling to make an inference about the target's true attitude. One implication of this finding is that perceivers may be relatively insensitive to the probabilities of various alternative explanations once they decide that there is a possibility that an ulterior motive might exist. The latter possibility makes them cynical and leads them to be conservative in their inferences.

SUSPICION AND EXPECTANCY DISCONFIRMATION

This cynicism can be particularly problematic in certain kinds of interactions. One such set of interactions includes those concerning stereotypes. It is clear that the negative aspects of stereotypes are often extremely difficult to disconfirm. A number of reasons for this have been put forward, but one of the most important may have to do with the public nature of many stereotypes and the opening that this provides for suspicion.

Consider a perceiver who expects a particular student to be lazy. If the perceiver decides to watch the student closely for some period of time and observes the student behaving in a hard-working manner, will he or she conclude that the expectation was wrong? If the perceiver's expectation stemmed from a conversation he or she had with someone who once knew this student, it is likely that the perceiver would conclude that the expectation was unwarranted or that the student had turned over a new leaf. If, however, this student is African-American and the perceiver is a bigot who believes that African-Americans are known to be lazy, then the prospects for disconfirmation become more bleak. This perceiver may be likely to be suspicious of the student's motives for working so hard when he is being observed. On the one hand, he may be working hard because he is a hard worker—he is driven to it by his dispositional nature. On the other hand, he may be working hard simply to dispel a negative stereotype. Notice that what separates the two examples is that the perceiver in the latter scenario assumes that the target is aware of the stereotype. This awareness leads to suspicion, which, in turn, leads to a rejection of the expectancy-disconfirming behavior. More generally, because stereotypes are often both public and negative, whenever stereotype-inconsistent behavior is observed, the possibility that the person may be behaving in stereotype-inconsistent ways merely to disconfirm the stereotype may lead perceivers to be suspicious and refrain from taking the behavior at face value.

A recent series of studies (Fein, 1991, Studies 6 and 7) began to address the issue of expectancy disconfirmation under conditions designed to breed suspicion. In the first of these studies, subjects read about a college student who applied for a prestigious fellowship that would allow him to study abroad for a semester. The subjects were told that an important part of the application process involved an interview with a member of the board that oversees the fellowship. Before learning about the content of this interview, all subjects were first told that all the letters of reference received by the interviewer about this student were, in general, quite positive. Half the subjects read that one of the letter writers did mention, however, that he or she was concerned that the student might be weak in his knowledge and appreciation of the arts, such as classical music and drama. This concern was based only on indirect information, however, and it was embedded in a letter that was, in all other respects, quite positive. The other half of the subjects did not read this information. Orthogonal to this manipulation, half the subjects read that the student had access to all his letters of recommendation and did indeed read them before his interview. The other half read that the student did not have access to the letters of recommendation.

All subjects next read an excerpt from the interview, including the student's answer to the question "What activities do you enjoy when you're not doing schoolwork?" They read that the student mentioned a number of activities, including his enjoyment of museums, plays, and concerts. He also mentioned by name an opera and a Shakespearean play that were in town. Consistent with predictions, subjects who knew of both the negative expectancy about the student's cultural interests and the student's awareness that the interviewer would have this expectancy rated the student's true attitude toward theater, opera, and art significantly more negatively than subjects in any of the other conditions. In contrast, the ratings made by subjects who knew of the expectancy but who knew the student was unaware of it did not differ significantly from the ratings made by subjects who were never informed of this expectancy.

These results were conceptually replicated in a second study which used a category-based expectancy and in which the behavior in question concerned an individual's act of honesty. In this study, subjects read about a man who applied for a job and who, during a break in his job interview, had the opportunity to pocket some money that the interviewer had dropped on his way out of the room. The job candidate picked up the money and returned it to the interviewer. Subjects were assigned randomly to one of three conditions. Some read that the target was an ex-convict who was aware before the interview that the interviewer had learned about his prison record. Other subjects read that the target was an ex-convict who was not aware that the interviewer had found out about his prison record. Finally, some subjects read nothing about the candidate's being an ex-convict. After reading about the candidate and about his return of the found money, subjects were asked how trustworthy they felt the candidate would be. Consistent with predictions, subjects who read that the candidate knew that the interviewer was aware of his status as an ex-convict rated him as significantly less trustworthy than subjects in any of the other conditions.

Taken together, these studies suggest that suspicion leads perceivers to react cynically in the face of expectancy-disconfirming behavior when it is plausible, if not necessarily probable, that the target's behavior was caused by ulterior motives. Even if the negative expectancy is rather weak, suspicious perceivers are hesitant to take the behavior as evidence that the expectancy was wrong.

It should also be noted, however, that perceivers who suspect that a target is motivated to try to disconfirm a negative expectancy are not always unwilling to take the target's expectancy-inconsistent behavior at face value. If the behavior in question cannot easily be explained away by an ulterior motive explanation, then even perceivers who are given reason to suspect that the target was motivated to act in an ungenuine or unrepresentative way are likely to revise their negative expectation in the face of this behavior. Whereas virtually anyone who is motivated to deceive another by appearing to be culturally literate, for example, could act in a culturally literate manner during a brief interaction (if given some time to prepare), it is much less plausible that someone who is not athletic but is motivated to appear to be a good athlete could behave in a very athletic fashion for any length of time (e.g., Reeder & Brewer, 1979; Reeder & Fulks, 1980; Reeder et al., 1977; Rothbart & Park, 1986).

Consistent with this line of reasoning, subjects in another study (Fein, 1991, Study 8) who were given reason to suspect that a job candidate was motivated to try to dispel a negative expectancy were quite willing to take her expectancy-inconsistent behavior at face value when that behavior concerned her superior performance on a difficult test of analytical reasoning. Subjects in this condition appeared to recognize that the motivation to disconfirm the expectancy could not serve as a plausible and sufficient cause of the behavior. When the expectation and the behavior in question concerned the candidate's interpersonal style, in contrast, subjects who had reason to suspect that the candidate might want to appear to disconfirm the negative expectancy were not as willing to revise their expectation. These subjects appeared to recognize that the explanation that the candidate's behavior was ungenuine was quite plausible.

SUSPICIOUS PERCEIVERS AND COGNITIVE MISERS

Early work in attribution theory emphasize the thoughtful, deliberative nature of the processes involved in dispositional inference. Underlying much of this work was a model of the perceiver as naive scientist, carefully applying sophisticated rules of inference to the behaviors of others (e.g., Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967). It quickly became apparent, however, that the scientific skills of the perceiver were deficient (e.g., Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Perceivers do not give sufficient weight to various forms of relevant information (e.g., base-rate and consensus information), their inferences tend to be unduly contextually dependent (e.g., changes in visual perspective lead to changed inferences), and, perhaps most important, their inferences and predictions about a target overestimate the significance of his or her behavior and underestimate the significance of situational factors.

As the list of biases and inferential shortcomings grew, the image of the perceiver as naive scientist gave way to an image of the perceiver as cognitive miser—always trying to simplify the decision-making process. Reflecting this shift, models of the dispositional inference process (e.g., Gilbert, 1989; Gilbert et al., 1988; Jones, 1979; Quattrone, 1982) began to emphasize the quick, semiautomatic way in which inferences are drawn. These models suggest that the inference process is divided into multiple stages that vary in the degree to which perceivers must devote cognitive resources.

Quattrone (1982), for example, has argued that perceivers first draw inferences that correspond to whichever is more salient—the actor's behavior or the context in which the behavior occurs. These inferences then serve as anchors from which perceivers attempt to adjust in light of other relevant information (e.g., information about the actor's previous behavior or information about other actors' responses to the situation). More recently, Gilbert et al. (1988) have divided the process into three stages: (a) categorization, in which perceivers identify a target's behavior in disposition-related categories; (b) characterization, in which the perceiver draws a dispositional inference that corresponds to the categorization; and (c) correction, in which the perceiver corrects the initial characterization to take situational factors into account.

Despite a number of differences among these and related models (e.g., whether they tend to focus more on the early or the later stages of the dispositional inference process), common to all of them is the image of a perceiver who initially accepts behavior at face value and then corrects that inference for any extenuating circumstances. To the extent that conscious, deliberative thought is implicated in the inference process, it is implicated primarily during the later stages, occurs only when perceivers have sufficient cognitive resources, and is usually limited to a consideration of situational factors (e.g., constraint, strong situational press) that modify the initial inference.

Contrast this image of the perceiver with the image of the suspicious perceiver. When perceivers are suspicious, they find themselves actively trying to determine which dispositions are implicated in a behavior very early in the process. Subjects in our studies who have been induced to become suspicious tend to take situational factors into sufficient account, to become actively concerned with questions of causality, to distinguish between information that can and cannot be explained by particular causal explanations, and to use subtle cues that can help them determine which among several dispositional inferences is most appropriate.

At the broadest level, the research on suspicion that we have discussed in the present article suggests that it may be time to re-examine the assumptions behind the asocial, cognitively limited perceiver that currently permeates social perception theory. What is needed is models of the inference process that both embrace the social nature of social perception and recognize the capabilities, along with the limitations, of the perceiver. At a more specific level, the behavior of suspicious perceivers raises questions about how the current multiple-stage models of the dispositional inference process would account for the attributional thinking that seems characteristic of suspicious perceivers. Although many of these models can account well for the strong tendency of the typical perceiver to draw inappropriately correspondent inferences, they do not offer as clear an account for the role of suspicion in the dispositional inference process. In the following paragraphs, we discuss some of the tensions between the behavior of suspicious perceivers and current accounts of the inference process.

What are the possible routes by which suspicion could preempt the correspondence bias? Because suspicion involves active, deliberative attributional thinking concerning the multiple and potentially rival explanations for a target's behavior, and because the multiple-stage models that are based on anchoring-and-adjustment principles assert that controlled, higher-order reasoning typically occurs at the later "adjustment" stage, one possibility is that suspicion primarily affects the process of adjustment or inferential correction. Perceivers may be better able or more motivated to correct their initially correspondent inferences if they recognize that the contextual information contains cues suggesting the possibility that the target's behavior was influenced by ulterior motives.

The problem for this account is why increased attention to correction should result in the kinds of deliberations that seem characteristic of suspicious perceivers. After all, it is not simply that considerations of ulterior motives cause perceivers to adjust away from an extreme and/or very confident dispositional inference toward a less extreme and/or less confident inference. Rather, suspicious perceivers entertain multiple inferences, and these inferences sometimes implicate very different dispositions or characterizations (e.g., greed vs. love). Current models do not specify how the correction stage would lead to a consideration of a variety of dispositions. For example, if perceivers become aware during this adjustment stage that alternative dispositions may be implicated in the target's behavior, does the entire anchoring and adjustment process begin anew, with the alternative dispositions serving as new anchors?

A different possibility is that suspicion primarily affects the stage(s) that precede correction. Suspicious perceivers may consider multiple identifications or categorizations of the behavior itself, and/or they may entertain multiple characterizations of the target. A gift of flowers presented to a wealthy widow, for example, can be categorized either as an act of love or as an act of greed. But how are the categorizations made? According to the anchor/adjustment models, perceivers often make their behavioral identifications automatically, and they are typically unaware that information about situational factors had any impact on these identifications. Indeed, an important reason that perceivers tend to fall prey to the correspondence bias is that they may be unaware of the impact of these situational cues on their behavioral identifications (e.g., Trope, Cohen, & Maoz, 1988). When subjects in our research learned of contextual information suggesting the possibility of ulterior motives, however, they seemed to become very sensitive to the role played by situational factors in making their identifications. Although it is doubtful that they can appreciate completely the role of contextual information in their construal of the target's behavior, suspicious perceivers consciously consider competing identifications, and they seek additional cues that can reduce the ambiguity created by this competition. Moreover, the deliberations in which they engage do not appear to rob them of the cognitive resources needed for the rest of the dispositional inference process. This again serves to distinguish the image of the perceiver that has emerged from our work on suspicion from that which has emerged from the multiple-stage models that emphasize perceivers' cognitive miserliness.

Gilbert, McNulty, Giuliano, and Benson (1992), for example, have found that when perceivers are presented with perceptually obscured behavioral stimuli concerning a target person, the cognitive effort they must devote to deciphering the proper categorization reduces their ability to engage in the cognitively effortful process of correction, thereby increasing the likelihood of succumbing to the correspondence bias in the inferences they make about the target. Contemplation of the proper categorization of a target's behavior in our research, in contrast, results in subjects' becoming much *more* resistant to the correspondence bias. Of course, the categorization-relevant ambiguity faced by the subjects in the Gilbert et al. (1992) studies is qualitatively different from that faced by subjects in the research on suspicion. The point is that the extra cognitive effort that may be needed to address the issue of categorizing the behavior correctly does not necessarily come with the cost of insufficient processing at the later stages of the dispositional inference process.

If we assume that suspicion interferes primarily with the largely automatic nature of the early stages of the dispositional inference process, additional problems are raised for current models. For example, if the characterization process can involve much conscious deliberation, then the distinction between this process and the later processes becomes blurred. After all, in order to become suspicious in the first place, the perceiver must recognize the situational factors that suggest that ulterior motives may offer a plausible explanation for the target's behavior. Thus it would appear that controlled processing and considerations of situational factors would be evident at both the early anchoring stage(s) and the later adjustment stage.

SUSPICIOUS PERCEIVERS AND THOUGHTFUL PERCEIVERS

Although many recent models have emphasized the quick, rather automatic nature of the inference process, Trope (e.g., 1986, 1989; Trope et al., 1988; Trope & Liberman, this issue) has proposed a model of the inference process that allows for a more thoughtful perceiver. According to this model (e.g., Trope, 1989), perceivers make inferences that move along causal chains from behaviors through tendencies (i.e., behavior-specific internal states) to causes (i.e., dispositions and situational inducements). Some of the chains lead to correspondent inferences, and others lead to noncorrespondent inferences. In a correspondent chain, a perceiver who is confronted with a friendly act may infer a correspondingly friendly tendency (e.g., a desire to do something nice for the recipient of the act) and from there make inferences about the corresponding disposition (e.g., the person's general friendliness) and the corresponding situational inducement (e.g., the likability of the recipient of the act). In a noncorrespondent chain, a perceiver who is confronted with the same friendly act may infer a noncorrespondent tendency (e.g., a desire to go along with the group) and from there make inferences about noncorrespondent dispositions (e.g., dispositional conformity) and situational inducements (e.g., group pressure). Trope's model further distinguishes between two kinds of situational inducement—intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic inducements are situational factors that affect inferences in correspondent chains. The likability of the recipient of a friendly act would be an example of an intrinsic inducement. Extrinsic inducements are situational inducements that affect inferences in noncorrespondent chains. Situational constraint in the assigned-essay paradigm would be an example of an extrinsic inducement. According to Trope's model, extrinsic inducements are subtracted from inferred tendencies, whereas intrinsic inducements are subtracted from inferred dispositions.

From the brief discussion, it is clear that the perceiver implicit in Trope's model is much more thoughtful and deliberative than the perceiver implicit in most anchor-and-adjustment models. Given that we have argued that the suspicious perceiver is likewise thoughtful and deliberative, is it possible to capture suspicion using Trope's model? The answer is possibly, but to do so requires accepting two assumptions, each of which is problematic.

The first assumption that Trope's model would require is that the midpoint ratings that our subjects typically give when they are suspicious really reflect *neutral* (i.e., moderate) dispositional inferences rather than suspended judgments. To assess this possibility, consider again the manipulations employed in Fein et al. (1990). According to Trope's model, the knowledge that a person had little choice in writing an essay should lead to a perception of extrinsic inducement, which should, in turn, lead to a more moderate inference concerning the author's true attitude. Similarly, the knowledge that the person may have written the essay to please a superior should also lead to a perception of extrinsic inducement, which should also, in turn, lead to a more moderate inference concerning the author's true attitude. In short, from the standpoint of Trope's model, there are no important differences between manipulations of constraint and manipulations of ulterior motivation. Ulterior motivation might be more salient than constraint and hence lead to ratings that are closer to the midpoint of the dispositional scales, but both are seen as extrinsic inducements and both are subtracted from the disposition.

According to our analysis, however, suspicion results in midpoint ratings because the subjects suspend their judgments, not because they conclude that the target has a moderate disposition. The discounting that occurs in the case of no-choice conditions may involve more moderate inferences, but the discounting that occurs in the case of ulterior motivation seems to reflect suspended judgment rather than moderate inferences. After all, the suspicious perceiver, unlike the no-choice perceiver, is aware that the behavior under scrutiny is highly meaningful. The suitor who daily professes his love for the wealthy widow is either seriously in love or seriously greedy. Similarly, the televangelist who cries buckets of tears while pleading for money to do "God's work" is either tremendously devout or tremendously manipulative.

The second assumption that Trope's model requires is that behavior has inherent meaning with regard to correspondence/noncorrespondence. Recall that intrinsic inducements are situational factors that lead to correspondent inferences. The friendliness of the recipient of a friendly act would be an example of an intrinsic inducement. Extrinsic inducements are situational factors that lead to noncorrespondent inferences. Group pressure to be friendly would be an example of an extrinsic inducement. The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic inducements makes sense as long as the corresponding disposition has already been identified. But how should we characterize suspicious acts? Does bringing flowers to a wealthy widow correspond to love or to greed? If it corresponds to love, then the widow's wealth is an extrinsic inducement. If it corresponds to greed, however, then her wealth is an intrinsic inducement.

One way in which we (Hilton, Miller, Fein, & Darley, 1990) have attempted to deal with this problem of meaning is to distinguish between two kinds of questions perceivers ask—questions concerning *diagnosis* and questions concerning *calibration* (for related discussions, see also Kelley, 1973; Reeder & Brewer, 1979). When perceivers ask questions related to diagnosis, they are concerned with establishing which particular trait or motive is implicated in the actor's behavior. When a professor decides to move to another university, for example, colleagues may wonder whether the move was motivated by a desire to teach smaller classes, a desire to find warmer climates, or some combination of the two. Similarly, suspicious perceivers will want to know whether an employee's compliment corresponds to ingratiation or admiration.

In contrast, when perceivers ask questions related to calibration, they are concerned with establishing how much of an identified trait or motive is reflected in an actor's behavior. To continue with the previous examples, if the move requires the professor to give up a wonderful house, her colleagues know either that she desperately wants to teach smaller classes, desperately wants to find warmer havens, or both. Similarly, if the employee's compliments are frequent rather than infrequent, suspicious perceivers who are able to diagnose the motive or trait involved may go on to conclude either that the person wants very much to impress or that the person is quite impressed.

Although questions concerned with diagnosing which motives or traits are implicated in a target's behavior are often quite interdependent with questions concerned with calibrating the extremity of the implicated traits (for a discussion of this interdependence, see Hilton et al., 1990; pp. 535-536), the distinction between diagnosis and calibration suggests that there are two distinct forms of discounting—calibrative discounting and diagnostic discounting (Hilton et al., 1990). For example, if a target performs well on a particular test, it is usually clear which traits underlay the performance. Although perceivers may therefore not be very concerned with questions of diagnosis, they may be very concerned with questions more relevant to calibration. They may, for example, wonder how difficult this test was or whether the student had been well rested prior to taking the test. If they learn that the student had been quite ill for several days leading up to the day of the test, they should discount the student's poor performance (or augment the student's superior performance) in light of this information. This kind of calibrative discounting is nicely illustrated by Weiner's research on attributions of ability (e.g., Weiner, 1979, 1986) and Anderson's research on information integration (e.g., Anderson, 1974), and the processes involved seem well captured by the multiple-stage models.

Imagine, however, that instead of learning that the student had little sleep, perceivers learn that the student may have been motivated to do poorly on the test—perhaps he was afraid of being labeled the class nerd. Here too, perceivers are likely to discount his poor performance, but the discounting will reflect the concerns they have about which trait or motive is reflected in the student's performance rather than how much of a given trait is reflected in the performance.

In the current article, we have discussed several examples of contextual information that lead to diagnostic discounting via suspicion (e.g., information suggesting the motive of winning the favor of a superior; the desire to dispel a stereotype; the desire to gain financial reward). It is clear, however, that suspicion is not the only thing that should lead to diagnostic discounting. Although suspicion may be especially likely to trigger thoughtful diagnostic discounting because people may be quite concerned about being duped or appearing to be a "sucker" in the face of an actor influenced by ulterior motives, diagnostic discounting should occur whenever the perceiver is uncertain which trait or motive is implicated in a behavior. In contrast, calibrative discounting should occur when the correspondent trait or motive has been identified but contextual information raises questions about the magnitude of the identified trait or motive. In terms of Trope's model, the current analysis suggests that the distinction between diagnosis and calibration is orthogonal to the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic inducement. It is important to note, however, that one implication of this analysis may be that although the process may at times be fairly cyclical, perceivers often must first diagnose which trait or motives correspond to the behavior before they can complete their adjustment for intrinsic and extrinsic inducements.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical and empirical considerations discussed in the present article suggest that it is time to again rethink the nature of social perception. Although it may often be useful, and even correct, to blur the distinction between social and nonsocial perception, in doing so we risk losing sight of some of the unique problems and processes involved in social perception. The psychology of suspicion raises one such set of problems. When perceiving nonsocial behavior, perceivers need not concern themselves with the motives underlying the behavior. In perceiving people, however, the plausibility of hidden, illicit motives is often great. The present article suggests that the attributional thinking exhibited in these two sets of circumstances may differ importantly. To come to a more complete understanding of the dispositional inference process, then, we need to recognize the interpersonal nature of social perception.

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