The Dispositional Inference Strikes Back: Situational Focus and Dispositional Suppression in Causal Attribution

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The authors propose that correction of dispositional inferences involves the examination of situational constraints and the suppression of dispositional inferences. They hypothesized that suppression would result in dispositional rebound. In Study 1, participants saw a video of either a free or a forced speaker. Participants shown a forced speaker later made stronger dispositional inferences about a 2nd, free speaker than control participants did. Study 2 provided evidence for higher rebound among participants who reported trying harder to suppress dispositional inferences during the 1st video. In Study 3, participants were asked to focus on situational constraints or to avoid thinking about the speaker's characteristics. Only the latter instructions led to a dispositional rebound. These data support the view that the correction of dispositional inferences involves 2 processes that lead to distinct consequences in subsequent attribution work.

The correspondence bias (Gilbert & Malone, 1995), also called overattribution bias (Quattrone, 1982) or fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977), is one of the most celebrated findings of social psychology (for reviews, see Gilbert, 1998; Jones, 1990). This phenomenon corresponds to social perceivers' "inflated belief in the importance of personality traits and dispositions, together with their failure to recognize the importance of situational factors in affecting behavior" (Ross & Nisbett, 1991, p. 4). In the first study showing this effect, Jones and Harris (1967) had participants read an essay advocating a pro-Castro or an anti-Castro position and then had them evaluate the true attitude of the essay's author toward the Cuban leader. Whereas half of the participants were told that the author was free to express personal views (the free condition), the remaining participants learned that the author had been instructed to adopt a particular position (the forced condition). Results showed that participants attributed to the author attitudes consistent with the advocated position ("correspondent" attributions) not only in the free but also in the forced condition. This finding was unexpected because the situational constraints fully accounted for the author's behavior in the latter condition.

To solve this puzzle, Quattrone (1982) suggested that the correspondence bias was not a unique effect but instead was a special case of the anchoring-insufficient-adjustment heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974): People infer an attribution corresponding to what attracts their attention and then proceed to correct it. This idea turned out to be a wonderful source of inspiration for researchers (see Leyens, Yzerbyt, & Schadron, 1994). Subsequent work concentrated on the impact of cognitive (Gilbert, 1989; Gilbert, Pelham, & Krull, 1988; Trope, 1986), motivational (Kruglanski, 1990; Tetlock, 1985; Webster, 1993; Yost & Weary, 1996), and pragmatic (Corneille, Leyens, Yzerbyt, & Walther,

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1999; Leyens, Yzerbyt, & Corneille, 1996; Miller & Rorer, 1982; Miller, Schmidt, Meyer, & Colella, 1984; Wright & Wells, 1988) factors on the emergence of the bias. Current accounts of the correspondence bias can be found in a variety of stage models of attribution (Gilbert, 1989; Quattrone, 1982; Reeder, 1993; Trope, 1986; Trope & Liberman, 1996).

In this article, we examine some intriguing consequences of the anchoring-adjustment conception. Supposedly, when perceivers engage in the correction stage, they evaluate the impact of situational factors that may account for the actors' behavior. In line with the definition given by Ross and Nisbett (1991), we suspect that this is not the whole story. Indeed, given the spontaneity of the dispositional inference process (at least in situations providing a strong feeling of judgeability to the perceiver; see Corneille et al., 1999; Leyens et al., 1996; Yzerbyt, Leyens, & Corneille, 1998; Yzerbyt, Schadron, Leyens, & Rocher, 1994; for a review, see Yzerbyt, Dardenne, & Leyens, 1998), individuals may also actively try to suppress premature dispositional inferences about the constrained target as they examine various situational factors that may have played a role in the emergence of the behavior. Although both processes should contribute to reduce the likelihood of a correspondence bias, contemporary research on mental control indicates that the second process (suppression) may result in unwanted rebound effects in the perceiver's subsequent attribution work.

The Vicissitudes of Mental Control

According to Wegner and his colleagues (Wegner, 1992, 1994; Wegner & Erber, 1992; Wegner, Schneider, Carter, & White, 1987; Wegner & Wenzlaff, 1996), people's attempts to suppress unwanted thoughts may not only fail but also produce opposite effects. In a fascinating series of studies, Wegner et al. (1987) demonstrated the existence of postsuppressional rebound, that is, the tendency of the suppressed construct to become even more accessible than it would be without suppression attempts. Experimental participants were asked to try not to think about a white bear for a period of 5 min and to ring a bell each time the thought of a white bear would cross their mind. This initial suppression period was followed by a 5-min expression phase during which participants were allowed to think of anything they wanted, including a white bear, and continued to ring a bell each time the thought of a white bear surfaced. Control participants performed the expression phase without the initial suppression phase. The number of times the thought of a white bear was signaled during the expression phase was higher among experimental than among control participants.

The postsuppressional rebound effect evidenced by Wegner et al. (1987; Wegner, Schneider, Knutson, & McMahon, 1991; Wenzlaff, Wegner, & Klein, 1991) has also been reported with constructs such as thoughts about green rabbits (Clark, Ball, & Pape, 1991; Clark, Winton, & Thynn, 1993), cigarettes (Salkovskis & Reynolds, 1994), mood (Wegner, Erber, & Zanakos, 1993), a film showing fire in an office building (Davies & Clark, 1998), physical pain (Cioffi & Holloway, 1993), and former romantic relationships (Wegner & Gold, 1995).

To account for such postsuppressional rebound effects, Wegner and Erber (1992) proposed a model of thought suppression that relies on the simultaneous operation of both automatic and controlled mental processes (Wegner, 1994; Wegner & Wenzlaff, 1996). When perceivers want to banish a thought from their minds, they instigate a controlled operating process that attempts to replace the unwanted thought with an appropriate distractor. This process is intentional, flexible, and resource demanding. At the same time, an automatic monitoring process scans the contents of consciousness for any trace of the unwanted thought. If such a thought is detected, the controlled operating process is reinstated to expel the thought from mind. This automatic search process occurs outside of perceivers' awareness and is unconstrained by resource availability.

Concerns for the consequences of suppression have been particularly pronounced with regard to stereotyping (for reviews, see Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1998; Monteith, Sherman, & Devine, 1998). Indeed, several recent studies demonstrated that suppressing stereotype use produces more stereotypic descriptions of a member of the target category (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Jetten, 1994), modifies the answers on a later recognition test (Sherman, Stroessner, Loftus, & Deguzman, 1997) or recall test (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Wheeler, 1996) along the lines implied by the stereotype, enhances the accessibility of the stereotype (Macrae et al., 1994), and influences the subsequent evaluation of ambiguous behavior (Wyer, Sherman, & Stroessner, 1998, 2000). Even more striking, Macrae et al. (1994) showed that the initial suppression of a stereotype could also affect behavior toward a member of the target social category (see also Newman, Duff, & Baumeister, 1997).

Situational Correction and Active Suppression of Dispositional Inferences

Although research attests to the relevance of the postsuppressional rebound in everyday life, we are not aware of any efforts relating the question of mental control to the issue of dispositional inferences. This is the focus of the present studies. In line with modern perspectives on the attribution process in general and the correspondence bias in particular (for a review, see Gilbert, 1998), we think that people who try to form an impression about a forced actor generally first interpret the actor's behavior in terms of dispositions and then process available situational information. What our model adds to this general perspective is that the correction process not only involves the processing of situational factors but also carries with it some of the mental operations involved in the suppression of unwanted thoughts. Specifically, we think that people who are examining the various circumstantial factors that intervene in the production of a behavior may also try monitoring their thoughts to overcome the risk of reaching premature dispositional conclusions about the actor. Of course, suppression may be more or less prevalent depending on the specific people and the particular setting. Still, we expect perceivers who initially suppress a first dispositional inference to generally make stronger dispositional inferences when judging another instance of the same behavior.

As it happens, the present distinction between the situational correction and the dispositional suppression components of the correction process is highly reminiscent of some research on the various strategies people may adopt when confronted with unwanted thoughts (Cioffi & Holloway, 1993; Salkovskis & Reynolds, 1994; Wegner et al., 1987). People can either devote enor-

mous amounts of mental energy to expel critical thoughts from consciousness or focus on alternative thoughts. The differential impact of these two strategies was examined by Wegner et al. (1987, Experiment 2). These authors reasoned that suppression attempts may lead people to rely on a series of distractors that would then become individual cues to the unwanted thought during the expression phase. Therefore, one viable strategy to reduce subsequent rebound would be to encourage participants to focus on one specific distractor. Whereas some participants were instructed not to think about white bears, others were also encouraged to think about a red Volkswagen. Participants who thought about a red Volkswagen showed less rebound than participants given the standard suppression instructions did.

The lesson of these earlier efforts for the present line of work is straightforward. First, assuming that the correction stage involves both a suppression component and a situational correction component, then participants exposed to a forced target should generally fall prey to dispositional rebounds during subsequent judgments involving similar behaviors. Second, assuming people vary in their use of the suppression strategy, rebound effects should be more prevalent among those who relied more heavily on suppression.

Overview of the Studies and Hypotheses

The key innovation in our model is that perceivers are seen to correct initial dispositional inferences about a forced actor not only by considering the impact of situational factors but also by actively suppressing inferences about the actor's dispositions. Consistent with research on mental control, we propose that the latter process is likely to result in dispositional rebounds during subsequent judgments. To test these ideas, we presented participants in three studies with a video in which they were told that a first speaker had been forced to defend a particular position and that a second speaker freely defended a similar position. We predicted that when confronted with the first, forced speaker, participants would initiate both a situational correction and a dispositional suppression process, and we expected the latter process to cause increased dispositional inferences about the second, free speaker. We used video excerpts instead of written transcriptions of the essays to make sure that participants would be confronted with the actor during the entire duration of the behavior (for a similar procedure, see Gilbert et al., 1988, Experiment 1). Also, we selected a moderately counterattitudinal topic to ensure that participants would be motivated to attend to the speech.

In Study 1, we sought to collect preliminary support for our model. A first group of participants was confronted with two speakers in sequence, and participants were led to believe that each had been entirely free to choose the advocated position. A second group of participants was presented with the same pair of speakers but was told that the first speaker had been forced to take a particular stand. A third group of participants was confronted with only the second, free speaker allowing us to collect a baseline evaluation. We expected that participants initially exposed to a forced actor, but not participants initially exposed to a free actor, would make stronger correspondent inferences than control participants would.

In Study 2, we intended to advance our knowledge about the process of correction and postsuppressional rebound by relying on self-report data. We asked participants to indicate the extent to which they had suppressed dispositional thoughts when exposed to the first, forced speaker. We predicted higher postsuppressional rebound among participants who reported having exerted more dispositional suppression when initially confronted with the forced speaker.

In Study 3, we tested our model in a more direct manner. We instructed half of the participants to avoid evoking correspondent characteristics about a forced speaker. The remaining participants were asked to focus on the circumstances in which the behavior had been performed. We hypothesized that suppression participants would make stronger dispositional inferences than baseline participants when confronted with a second, free speaker.

Study 1

Study 1 presented participants with two videotaped speeches concerning a controversial issue. In the first videotape, participants saw a speaker arguing in favor of an unpopular new university policy. Depending on conditions, participants were informed that the speaker had been either free or forced to defend this position. All participants then watched a second videotape with another speaker arguing in favor of the same policy. This time, the speaker was always presented as having freely chosen to take a particular stance on the issue. For each speech, participants evaluated the true attitude of the speaker. Another group of participants served as a control group and watched and judged only the second videotape.

We expected correspondent inferences about the first speaker to be much stronger in the free than in the forced condition. Our crucial predictions, however, concerned the participants' perceptions of the second speaker. Indeed, we expected a postsuppression rebound effect to take place only after the initial confrontation with a forced speaker. Specifically, we predicted that participants first exposed to a forced speaker would draw stronger correspondent inferences about the second, free speaker than would participants in both the first-speaker-free and baseline conditions.

Method

Participants. A total of 48 first- and second-year psychology students enrolled at the University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve took part in an experiment on impression formation in exchange for course credit.

Materials. On the basis of extensive pretest work involving participants from the same population as the experimental participants, we selected one university policy that proved to be controversial and rather unpopular. The policy was the possible adoption of a new admission procedure after the 2nd year of psychology study. Specifically, only students who had reached an average of at least 14 out of 20 points at the end of their 2nd year would be accepted into the 3rd year of psychology study. A number of arguments in favor of the admission procedure were also collected and evaluated for persuasiveness. Eight arguments scoring higher than 6 on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all convincing*) to 9 (*very convincing*) were retained for inclusion in the speeches. Each speech was written to include three of the eight selected arguments. The speeches comprised an average of 500 words.

Two university colleagues, a man age 62 and a woman age 47, both unknown to the participants, were asked to read the speeches aloud in front of a video camera. Each videotape showed the speaker sitting at a table in a classroom and reading a paper placed on the table. A distance of 4 m separated the speaker from the camera. Both videotapes lasted approximately 3 min. Inspection of the two speeches revealed that the male

speaker seemed slightly more convincing than the female speaker. Because we wanted to ensure that participants would experience some difficulty taking the situational factors into account and because we wanted the rebound effect to emerge, the male speaker was chosen as our first speaker, and the female speaker was selected as our second speaker.

Procedure and dependent measures. Participants arrived in groups of 2 to 6 at the laboratory. A female experimenter informed them that the study concerned "people's capacity to form an impression of a person on the basis of a limited amount of information." The tasks of the participants were to form an impression of an unknown person and to answer a series of questions on the basis of short video excerpts.

Participants learned that they would be presented with two videotapes recorded from a training session to improve people's communication skills. The people who took part in that session, participants were informed, had been instructed to prepare a speech and to read it aloud in front of a videotape. The issue selected for the exercise was the possible adoption of an admission criterion for the 3rd year of psychology study. Specifically, only students who had reached an average of at least 14 out of 20 points at the end of their 2nd year in psychology would be accepted into the 3rd year of psychology.

Half of the experimental participants were told that people in the training session had not only been asked to write a speech on this particular policy but, as part of the exercise, had also been forced to find arguments favoring the adoption of the policy. In contrast, the remaining half of the experimental participants learned that, although the specific topic of the speech had been imposed, each person had been left free to choose a particular stance regarding the issue. All participants were then asked to pay close attention to the videotape because a number of questions would be asked about the speaker later on. Right before she started the videotape, the experimenter checked verbally to make sure that participants had correctly understood the pieces of information given to them.

Immediately after the end of the first speech, the videotape was stopped. Experimental participants were asked to answer questions about a series of dependent variables. First, participants were given an example of the way to answer the questions. They were then asked a series of questions about the speaker's personality. Participants indicated the extent to which they thought the speaker was unlikable or likable, inflexible or flexible, unstable or stable, and unbalanced or balanced on a series of bipolar scales ranging from 1 to 20.

Next, participants estimated the speaker's true attitude about the policy on a scale ranging from 1 (*totally against*) to 20 (*totally in favor*). They also indicated their level of confidence in their earlier judgment on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all confident*) to 20 (*totally confident*).

On completion of these various measures, the experimenter informed participants that the next videotape showed a person who had been in the same training session. As in the first video, the speech concerned the adoption of an admission criterion. All participants learned that the speaker had been free to choose a particular stance on the issue. After the experimenter had once again checked for possible misunderstandings, the tape was started allowing participants to watch the second speaker. At the end of the speech, the tape was stopped, and participants were asked to answer the same series of questions they had answered for the first speaker.

To check for the manipulation and to collect some information about the processes at work during the correction phase and their potential impact on the dispositional rebound, we gave participants a few lines in which to explain their answer to the attitude question. They were also asked to recall the three arguments presented by each speaker, the characteristics of each speaker (sex, age, profession), and the specific framing used in the video for both speakers. Using scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 20 (*very much*), participants also indicated the extent to which they thought that the arguments given by each speaker were persuasive and the extent to which the speakers themselves were persuasive. We also checked whether participants thought that the first and second speakers were free to choose a particular stand on the issue. Additional questions concerned the extent to which participants took into account a series of variables to answer the opinion-related question for the second speaker: These variables were level of freedom, quality of the arguments, characteristics of the speaker, specific framing of the video, and persuasiveness of the speaker. Participants reported their answers on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 20 (*very much*).

Compared with experimental participants, participants in the baseline condition were confronted with a simplified scenario. Specifically, they were immediately presented with the second portion of the instructions during which they were informed about the training session and learned about the imposition of the topic of the speech and the freedom regarding the particular stand taken by the speaker. Also, these participants watched only the second speech.

After the collection of participants' answers, the experimenter announced that the experiment was over. Participants were thoroughly debriefed, thanked for their help, and dismissed.

Results

General impression about the first speaker. The perceived freedom of choice of the first speaker was examined with a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using freedom of choice (free vs. forced) as the between-subjects variable. Confirming the success of our manipulation, the effect of freedom of choice was highly significant, $F(1, 31) = 81.52$, $p < .0001$. Participants confronted with a free speaker rated the speaker as being more free ($M = 15.06$, $SD = 4.07$) than did participants confronted with a forced speaker ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 3.28$).

The persuasiveness of the arguments used by the first speaker also proved to be somewhat sensitive to the assumed freedom of the speaker, $F(1, 31) = 4.88$, $p < .04$. Specifically, the speaker's arguments were perceived as being slightly less convincing ($M = 10.65$, $SD = 3.89$) when he was thought to be forced than when he was thought to be free ($M = 13.37$, $SD = 3.14$). Moreover, the persuasiveness of the speaker himself also depended on the freedom of choice of the speaker, $F(1, 31) = 8.93$, $p < .006$. Participants confronted with a forced speaker evaluated him as being less convincing ($M = 7.65$, $SD = 3.02$) than did those who thought that the speaker was free to take a particular stand ($M = 11.81$, $SD = 4.83$).

We also examined participants' evaluations of the first speaker on the four impression questions by using a one-way ANOVA with freedom of choice as the between-subjects variable. No significant differences emerged for any of these measures (all $Fs < 1$, *ns*).

Perceived attitude of the first speaker. Participants' ratings of the attitude of the first speaker were analyzed in a one-way ANOVA with freedom of choice (free vs. forced) as the between-subjects variable. The effect of freedom of choice was highly significant, $F(1, 31) = 24.20$, $p < .0001$. Participants confronted with a forced speech not surprisingly rated the speaker's true attitude to be less extreme ($M = 10.71$, $SD = 3.62$) than did participants confronted with a free speech ($M = 16.37$, $SD = 2.94$). The fact that the speaker was thought to be forced led participants to refrain from committing themselves to any particular position other than the scale's midpoint. Indeed, the difference between the forced speech condition and the scale's midpoint was far from being significant, $t(16) = 0.80$, *ns*.

For the confidence ratings, our data revealed the presence of a main effect of freedom of choice, $F(1, 31) = 6.54$, $p < .02$. Participants confronted with a free speaker were more confident

about their ratings concerning the speaker's attitude (M = 12.50, SD = 3.79) than were participants confronted with a forced speaker (M = 8.65, SD = 4.77).

General impression about the second speaker. The perceived freedom of choice of the second speaker was examined with a one-way ANOVA using condition (initial forced speaker vs. initial free speaker) as the between-subjects variable. Although the second speaker was always presented as free, the freedom of choice of the first speaker influenced the second speaker's perceived freedom of choice, $F(1, 31) = 7.60$, $p < .01$. Participants initially confronted with a forced speaker rated the second speaker as being more free (M = 17.71, SD = 3.04) than did participants initially confronted with a free speaker (M = 14.12, SD = 4.35). However, the arguments offered by the second speaker appeared to be slightly more convincing for participants initially confronted with a free speech (M = 13.31, SD = 2.82) than for participants initially confronted with a forced speech (M = 11.18, SD = 4.10), $F(1, 31) = 3.01$, $p < .10$. Also, we found no difference between the two groups of participants regarding the degree of persuasiveness of the second speaker, $F(1, 31) = 0.11$, $p > .74$.

As was done for the first speaker, we examined participants' evaluations of the second speaker on the four impression questions with a one-way ANOVA using freedom of choice as the between-subjects variable. Those participants initially confronted with a forced speaker tended to see the second speaker as being less likable than did participants initially confronted with a free speaker, $F(1, 31) = 3.47$, $p < .08$. No significant differences emerged for the remaining measures (all Fs < 2, $p > .15$).

Perceived attitude of the second speaker. Participants' ratings of the true attitude of the second speaker were analyzed with a one-way ANOVA using condition (initial forced speaker vs. initial free speaker vs. no speaker) as the between-subjects variable. In line with predictions, whether participants had first seen a forced speech, a free speech, or no speech made a difference in the evaluation of the attitude of the second speaker, $F(2, 45) = 4.68$, $p < .015$. Comparisons of the three means confirmed that participants' inferences were more extreme when the first speaker had expressed his views in the context of strong situational constraints (M = 16.65, SD = 2.26) than when the same speech was thought to be freely produced (M = 14.00, SD = 3.01) or when no first speech had been presented (M = 13.47, SD = 4.12). The latter two conditions did not differ significantly from each other, $t(29) < 1$, *ns*.

As far as the confidence ratings are concerned, the main effect of condition turned out to be nonsignificant. In fact, none of the remaining variables revealed the presence of a significant impact of experimental condition.

Discussion

The goal of Experiment 1 was to test the idea that people engaged in an impression formation about a forced target would fall prey to a rebound effect in their subsequent attributional work. Indeed, we argued that the correction process engaged by these participants on the occasion of their first judgment would involve both the consideration of situational factors accounting for the actor's behavior and the active suppression of premature dispositional inferences about this actor. Consistent with the recent literature on mental control, we predicted that the second process would result in a dispositional rebound when later judging a free actor. Results of this first experiment provide encouraging support for our model. Indeed, our data lend credence to the idea that dispositional correction can be seen as involving a dispositional suppression process in addition to the mere situational correction process.

Interestingly, the impression data, although admittedly weak, tend to confirm that the second speaker was seen as somewhat less likable when participants had initially been confronted with a forced rather than a free speaker. This makes perfect sense if one considers the content of the speech. Indeed, the position taken by the speakers had been selected to be moderately counterattitudinal. In fact, all speakers advocated in favor of the introduction of an admission criterion, a policy that was opposed by most students on the campus. It is not surprising, then, that the second speaker freely defending this unpopular position translated into seeing her as less likable when the first speaker was thought to have been forced to express his opinion.

According to our model, the rebound we observed on the second target occurred because the correction initiated on encountering the first speaker involved dispositional suppression. One intriguing question is whether the suppression strategy is totally confounded with a consideration of the situational constraints or if, as we argue, it constitutes an alternative strategy people may use for correcting their inferences. One way to examine the respective viability of these two possibilities is to compute the within-condition correlations for those participants who were initially confronted with the forced speaker. Indeed, if correction of an initial dispositional inference is strictly equivalent to dispositional suppression then we should observe a strong negative correlation between the perceived attitudes of the first and second speakers. In contrast, if the rebound is due to a partly independent suppression process then we should not expect this correlation to be particularly impressive. As far as the present data are concerned, the Bravais-Pearson correlation amounted to .13 ($p > .60$), a value that can hardly be seen as indicative that situational correction is strictly equivalent to dispositional suppression.[1] Admittedly, ruling out the possible role of the situational correction in the occurrence of rebound effects does not provide evidence for the role of

[1] The above reasoning builds on the idea that final evaluations of the first target are more indicative of the amount of situational correction than they are of the amount of dispositional suppression initiated by the participants. In line with current models of the dispositional inference process, final judgments about a constrained target are directly related to the processing of situational information (more moderate dispositional inferences reflect a better integration of the competing situational factors). As far as the suppression process is concerned, however, the situation is much more confused. Indeed, although suppression should generally result in lower biases, one should not expect this process to be perfectly reflected in the final evaluations of the constrained target. For instance, some participants who are well aware of the role of the situation may experience little difficulty in refraining from judging the target (see Corneille et al., 1999; Leyens et al., 1996). These participants would then reveal an absence of bias associated with low suppression. Conversely, some participants who end up experiencing a fairly high correspondence bias may be precisely some of those who had the hardest time not drawing dispositional inferences about the target. These participants would therefore show high suppression levels associated to moderate bias.

suppression per se. What is needed here is more direct support for the view that suppression indeed is associated with the dispositional rebound. To explore this possibility, we designed a second study in which we asked participants to report on the strategies they had used during their initial exposure to the forced speaker.

Study 2 was also conducted to address an alternative account of our data based on the idea of a contrast in the perceived freedom of the successive speakers. Indeed, in addition to showing that observers express stronger dispositional judgments after having first been confronted with a forced rather than a free speaker, our data also indicate that the second speaker came across as more free when the initial confrontation concerned a forced rather than a free speaker. To be sure, this finding is consistent with the view that correspondent inferences are only legitimate when the situational constraints offer no valid alternative explanation for the observed behavior: The more the second speaker was thought to be free, the more observers made correspondent inferences. From the present perspective, however, the finding that our participants saw the second speaker as more or less a free agent depending on the presence or the absence of constraints impinging on the first speaker should also be seen as yet another confirmation of the hypothesized postsuppressional rebound. Indeed, it seems reasonable to consider that the initial encounter with a forced speaker led participants to perceive the second speaker as being particularly free. As a result, participants might have felt even more tempted to make correspondent inferences. Although we do not exclude the possibility that a contrast effect plays a significant role in the emergence of the pattern observed in Experiment 1, we do not think that it is the whole story. By confronting all participants of Experiment 2 with an initial forced speaker, thereby limiting the impact of the contrast effect, we attempted to clearly disentangle these two influences.

Study 2

The main goal of Study 2 was to ascertain the effect of the suppression process on the dispositional rebound by asking participants to rate the extent to which they had attempted to suppress spontaneous correspondent inferences about the constrained author. In contrast, the fact that participants did or did not focus on the circumstances should not influence the postsuppressional dispositional rebound. Because we think that the suppression process involved in the correction stage has direct repercussions on the production of subsequent correspondent inferences, we predicted the emergence of an interaction pattern. Specifically, we expected that, compared with participants who declare that they were not much concerned about suppressing dispositional factors during their confrontation with the forced behavior, participants who declare that they did their very best to suppress would then display stronger correspondent inferences on encountering another instance of the behavior. We also expected the suppression process to remain largely unrelated to the perception of freedom of the two speakers. Globally, such a pattern would lend additional and strong credence to the idea that the dispositional suppression process involved in the correction stage results in subsequent dispositional rebounds.

Method

Participants and materials. A total of 50 first- and second-year psychology students enrolled at the University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve volunteered to take part in a study on impression formation in exchange of course credit. All participants were confronted with the same two videotapes used in Study 1.

Procedure. We used the same general scenario as in Study 1. This time, all participants were told that the first speaker had not only been asked to write a speech on a particular policy, but, as part of the exercise, had also been forced to find arguments favoring the adoption of the policy. After the collection of all participants' answers, the experimenter announced that the experiment was over. Participants were thoroughly debriefed, thanked for their help, and dismissed.

Dependent measures. We collected the same dependent variables as in Study 1 with one important addition. Right before the end of the study, participants answered a series of items pertaining to the processes at work during their confrontation with the first speaker. To investigate the degree of situational focus, we asked participants two questions: "When you were watching the first video, to what extent did you take into account the fact that the speaker was forced to argue in favor of the policy?" and "Did you experience difficulties taking into account the fact that the speaker was forced to argue in favor of the policy?" To tap the suppression process, we asked participants to answer the following question: "To what extent did you try not to think that the speaker was convinced about what he said?" These three questions were answered on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 20 (*very much*).

Results

Manipulation checks. Participants' evaluations of the level of freedom of each speaker were analyzed in a repeated measures ANOVA using speaker (first speaker vs. second speaker) as the within-subject variable. Not surprisingly, the effect of speaker was highly significant, $F(1, 49) = 390.57, p < .0001$. Whereas the first speaker was perceived to be very much forced ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 3.00$), the second speaker was indeed judged to be entirely free to express her own opinion ($M = 17.52$, $SD = 3.33$). This pattern confirms that our participants correctly noticed the information regarding the freedom enjoyed by each speaker.

Dispositional suppression. First, we computed correlations between the attitudinal judgments concerning the second speaker and the various processes that participants reported were at work during the confrontation with the first speaker, namely, the degree to which participants thought that they had focused on the situational constraints, their subjective difficulty to focus on the situational constraints, and the degree to which they thought suppression of correspondent inferences had been exerted. Not surprisingly, the first two questions were strongly correlated with each other ($r = -.45, p < .002$). More importantly, these questions were not correlated with the judgments of the second speaker's attitude about the policy ($r = .22, p > .13$, and $r = -.23, p > .11$, respectively). In sharp contrast, the subjective experience of dispositional suppression was positively related to the estimated attitude of the second speaker ($r = .45, p < .002$).

We then conducted a regression analysis using the three process questions along with the attitudinal estimate of the first speaker as predictors and the estimated attitude of the second speaker as the criterion. This analysis revealed that the subjective experience of suppression significantly predicted the attitudinal judgment made about the second speaker, $B = .27$, $t(1, 45) = 3.17, p < .003$. In contrast, none of the three other indicators predicted the second

attitudinal judgment, $B = .07$, $t(1, 45) = .61$, $p > .54$, for the attitudinal estimate of the first speaker, $B = -.03$, $t(1, 45) = -.31$, $p > .75$, for the use of the focus strategy, and $B = -.14$, $t(1, 45) = -1.43$, $p > .15$, for the difficulty of focusing on the situational constraints, respectively. In other words, the best and unique variable contributing to the prediction of the attribution made about the second speaker was the amount of dispositional suppression exerted during the presentation of the first speaker.[2]

Perceived freedom. We performed several additional analyses to evaluate the impact of the speakers' perceived level of freedom. First, we correlated the attitude ratings for the second speaker with the perceived level of freedom of the first speaker, the perceived level of freedom of the second speaker, and the differential level of freedom of the two speakers. All three correlations were significant ($r = -.37$, $p < .01$, $r = .36$, $p < .01$, and $r = .45$, $p < .001$, respectively). Apparently the perceived level of freedom of both speakers is related to the estimated attitude of the second speaker. It is important to note, however, that the estimated attitudes of the first and second speaker were not correlated ($r = -.05$, *ns*) thereby replicating the pattern observed in Experiment 1.

Next, we correlated the measure of suppression with the estimated attitude of the first speaker ($r = -.14$, $p > .34$), the estimated attitude of the second speaker ($r = .45$, $p < .002$), the perceived level of freedom of the first speaker ($r = -.21$, $p > .13$), the perceived level of freedom of the second speaker ($r = .14$, $p > .32$), and the differential level of freedom of the two speakers ($r = .22$, $p > .13$). As a set, these correlations reveal that the suppression process is not related to the perceived level of freedom and affects solely the attitude ratings concerning the second speaker.

Finally, we regressed the estimated attitude of the second speaker on both the differential level of freedom of the two speakers and the subjective amount of suppression. This analysis confirmed that both indicators significantly predicted the attitude estimate for the second speaker, $B = .23$, $t(47) = 3.06$, $p < .0004$, and $B = .22$, $t(47) = 3.03$, $p < .0004$, for the difference score and the suppression score, respectively.

Additional ratings. All other variables pertaining to the first or the second speaker were analyzed by using one-way ANOVAs with suppression (low suppressors vs. high suppressors) as the between-subjects variable. As far as the first speaker was concerned, we found that high suppressors tended to consider the arguments less persuasive ($M = 9.25$, $SD = 4.30$) than did low suppressors ($M = 11.64$, $SD = 4.53$), $F(1, 48) = 3.62$, $p < .07$. No other variables approached conventional levels of significance. Regarding the second speaker, only one question gave way to a significant difference between our two groups of participants. Indeed, high suppressors reported that they relied on the level of freedom of the second speaker to answer the attitude question more ($M = 17.68$, $SD = 3.77$) than did low suppressors ($M = 12.54$, $SD = 6.55$), $F(1, 48) = 12.12$, $p < .002$.

Discussion

Clearly, Study 2 provides strong supportive evidence for our proposed model. The way participants dealt with the first behavior had noticeable consequences on the kind of inferences made about a behavior that was shown immediately after. When participants indicated that they had tried to prevent the intrusion of thoughts related to the dispositions of the first speaker, they ended up making stronger correspondent inferences about the second speaker. Quite a different pattern emerged for those participants who reported having comparatively less concern for the intrusion of unwanted thoughts about the dispositions of the first speaker. These participants made significantly more moderate correspondent inferences. The fact that participants vary in the extent to which they initiate the suppression process proves to be an interesting message emerging from Study 2. Apparently, some social perceivers seem very intent on enforcing a suppression strategy and end up with postsuppressional rebounds of dispositional inferences. Other observers appear to be less bothered by the temptation to make dispositional inferences and do not seem to exaggerate the role of dispositions in subsequent encounters.

Another major asset of Study 2 is that it allowed us to examine the relative contributions of the suppression process on one hand and the difference in the perceived level of freedom of each speaker on the other in shaping the correspondent inference about the second speaker. According to the difference explanation, the attitude ratings for the second speaker are the consequence of the perceptual contrast between the perceived level of freedom of the first and second speaker. The present data show that the suppression process, at least as it is experienced by our participants, was simply unrelated to the attitudinal judgment concerning the first speaker yet very much influenced the attitude rating about the second speaker. Moreover, the suppression process also proved to be independent of both the perceived level of freedom of each speaker and the difference in perceived level of freedom of the two speakers. Although the differential level of freedom of the speakers, as it was perceived by participants, affected the attitude ratings concerning the second speaker, the suppression process also shaped the final estimates given by our participants. In line with our discussion of Study 1, the present set of data thus confirms that dispositional rebound results from the dispositional suppression process that takes place at the correction stage.

Quite interestingly, high suppressors reported relying more on the level of freedom of the second speaker to answer the attitude question. Thus, although low and high suppressors actually had similar impressions about the level of freedom of the second speaker, enhanced suppression led participants to think that they relied more on the freedom information in their judgment. This finding comes as no surprise if one considers that the subjective impression that the attitudinal judgment is based on the speaker's freedom could depend not only on the apparent difference in the perceived level of freedom of the two speakers but also on the amount of dispositional suppression work, a much less conscious influence indeed. To test this conjecture, we regressed the extent to

[2] Confidence ratings were also analyzed by way of a 2 × 2 mixed-model ANOVA using suppression (low suppressors vs. high suppressors) as the between-subjects variable and speaker (first speaker vs. second speaker) as the within-subjects variable. Besides a speaker main effect, $F(1, 48) = 12.10$, $p < .002$, confirming that participants were more confident about the second speaker ($M = 14.26$, $SD = 4.12$) than about the first one ($M = 11.14$, $SD = 5.09$), the interaction was also significant, $F(1, 48) = 5.83$, $p < .02$. Whereas low and high suppressors were similarly confident about the first speaker ($M = 12.18$, $SD = 4.99$, and $M = 10.11$, $SD = 5.19$, respectively), $t(48) = -1.43$, *ns*, this was not the case for the second one ($M = 13.14$, $SD = 4.74$, and $M = 15.39$, $SD = 3.50$, respectively), $t(48) = 1.94$, $p < .06$.

which participants thought that they had relied on the freedom information on both the difference in perceived level of freedom and the amount of suppression. In line with the present analysis, both predictors turned out to be significant, $B = .43$, $t(47) = 3.10$, $p < .004$, and $B = .32$, $t(47) = 2.34$, $p < .024$, for the difference score and the suppression score, respectively. In its own way, this pattern provides additional evidence of the impact of dispositional rebound on subsequent judgments. Additionally, these data suggest that participants may well remain unaware of the role of suppression in the determination of their second judgment.

One potential limitation of Study 2 is that we relied on self-report measures of the suppression process. Even more convincing support for the present line of reasoning would be to show that an explicit request to rely on the suppression strategy results in postsuppressional rebound. In contrast, asking people to concentrate on the situational forces impinging on the behavior would not influence subsequent judgments. We designed Experiment 3 to investigate the viability of this hypothesis.

Study 3

The specific goal of Study 3 was to demonstrate the sensitivity of the dispositional rebound to instructions designed to promote or limit its later occurrence. Building on the classic suppression recommendations (Wegner et al., 1987; Macrae et al, 1994), we reasoned that some instructions should encourage observers to engage in suppression by stressing the importance of monitoring their consciousness for a possible intrusion of dispositional factors, thereby making the thoughts related to dispositional factors highly accessible. In sharp contrast, other instructions should invite participants to concentrate on the situational factors that may contribute to the emergence of the behavior. Although the substance of the message given to the participants would be the same—namely that the personality of the speaker is not what matters when the situation is highly constraining—the expected impact on subsequent judgments is likely to be quite different. Indeed, whereas the suppression instructions should lead participants to be continuously busy with checking for any intrusion of unwanted thoughts, thereby increasing the chances that postsuppression rebound would take place, the situational focus instructions should help participants turn away from the obsession to fall prey to dispositional inferences with the consequence that less rebound should then be observed.

Method

Participants and design. Participants were 42 third-year psychology students of the Catholic University of Louvain at Louvain-la-Neuve. The experiment took place in sessions involving 1 to 7 participants randomly assigned to one of two conditions. The design was a 2 (speaker: first vs. second) × 2 (instructions: dispositional suppression vs. situational focus) mixed model with speaker as the within-subject variable and instructions as the between-subjects variable.

Procedure. The cover story, the instructions, and the dependent measures were the same as those for Study 2 with three exceptions. First, the instructions given before the presentation of the first speaker were altered to manipulate our independent variable. Second, participants in both conditions were instructed to pay close attention to the possible contamination of their thoughts by the intrusion of dispositional inferences. To provide an index of the occurrence of this phenomenon during the presentation of the first speaker, we asked participants to use a blank sheet of paper provided to them and mark down any intrusion of such unwanted thoughts. Third, we no longer included the various process measures at the end of the questionnaire.

Participants in the suppression condition were encouraged to monitor any intrusion of dispositional thoughts and asked to suppress them as effectively as possible. Specifically, the instructions read as follows:

> During the presentation of the video clip, you will probably try to form an impression about the person that you will see on the basis of his/her behaviors and opinions. What we are asking you to do here is to try and resist this natural and spontaneous tendency. In other words, your specific mission during the presentation of the video is to continuously avoid linking the person you will see and the attitude that is being expressed. Every time that you find yourself judging that person on the basis of what you are seeing and hearing, mark a trait on the blank sheet in front of you.

Participants in the situational focus condition were encouraged to process situational factors that may account for the actor's behavior. Specifically, the instructions were the following:

> During the presentation of the video, you will probably try to form an impression about the person you will see on the basis of his/her behaviors and opinions. What we are asking you to do here is to try and concentrate on the circumstances surrounding the person you will see. In other words, your specific mission during the presentation of the video is to continuously take into account the contextual factors that the person is confronted with and that could influence the attitude that is being expressed. Every time that you find yourself judging that person on the basis of what you are seeing and hearing, mark a trait on the blank sheet in front of you.

As in Study 2, all participants were informed that the speaker they were about to see in the first videotape had been forced to take a particular stand on the issue. After participants had finished reading the instructions, the experimenter started the videotape showing the male speaker expressing a series of arguments in favor of the adoption of an admission criterion for the 3rd year in psychology. The rest of the procedure was the same as in Study 2.

Results

Manipulation check. The extent to which the speaker was seen to be free to express personal opinions was submitted to a 2 (speaker: first vs. second) × 2 (instructions: dispositional suppression vs. situational focus) mixed-model ANOVA with speaker as the within-subject variable and instructions as the between-subjects variable. This analysis confirmed the presence of the speaker main effect, $F(1, 40) = 230.56$, $p < .0001$. In accordance with the instructions given to the participants, the first speaker was judged to be much less free to take a personal stand on the issue ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 3.18$) than the second speaker ($M = 17.26$, $SD = 3.26$). No other effects were significant.

Suppression measure. An important aspect of the present study concerns the extent to which participants complied with the instructions to suppress dispositional inferences during the presentation of the first speaker. According to Wegner's (1994; Wegner & Erber, 1992) theory, thought suppression usually leads to a preoccupation with the thoughts to be suppressed and to the intrusion of these thoughts in the stream of consciousness. To evaluate this aspect, we thus counted the number of marks each participant had written on the blank sheet of paper. A Student-*t* comparison revealed that, as expected, participants given the sup-

pression instructions had been confronted more often with the intrusion of unwanted dispositional thoughts (M = 1.48, SD = 1.60) than participants given the focus instructions had been (M = 0.67, SD = 1.01), $t(40) = 1.96$, $p < .03$, one-tailed.

Evaluation of the speakers. Our main hypothesis was that, compared with participants encouraged to focus on the situational factors that impinge on the behavior of the first speaker, participants led to suppress any reference to dispositional factors would be likely to display a postsuppressional rebound by making stronger dispositional inferences for the second speaker. To examine this issue, we submitted the inferred attitude of the two speakers to the same 2 × 2 mixed-model ANOVA as above. Not surprisingly, the main effect of speaker was highly significant, $F(1, 40) = 87.37$, $p < .0001$.

More importantly, the predicted interaction effect was also significant, $F(1, 40) = 4.71$, $p < .04$. As can be seen in Figure 1, the instructions had no influence on participants' conclusions regarding the attitude of the first speaker (M = 10.14, SD = 3.64 and M = 10.71, SD = 3.45, for the suppression and focus instructions, respectively), $t(40) < 1$, *ns*. In sharp contrast, the inferences made about the second speaker were in the predicted direction. Participants made more extreme attitudinal inferences about the second speaker when the instructions stressed the suppression of dispositional factors during the presentation of the first speaker (M = 16.71, SD = 2.39) than when the instructions insisted that participants focus on the situational constraints confronting the first speaker (M = 14.81, SD = 2.84), $t(40) = 2.35$, $p < .03$.

To further ascertain the relative standing of participants' judgments, we compared the attitude ratings collected in the dispositional suppression and the situational focus conditions with the judgments made by the participants of the baseline condition of Study 1, who were only presented with the second speaker. In line with expectations, the one-way ANOVA was highly significant, $F(2, 54) = 5.07$, $p < .01$. The data confirmed that the initial request to suppress dispositional factors led participants to make more extreme person attributions than the two other groups of participants did. A priori contrasts confirmed that the suppression

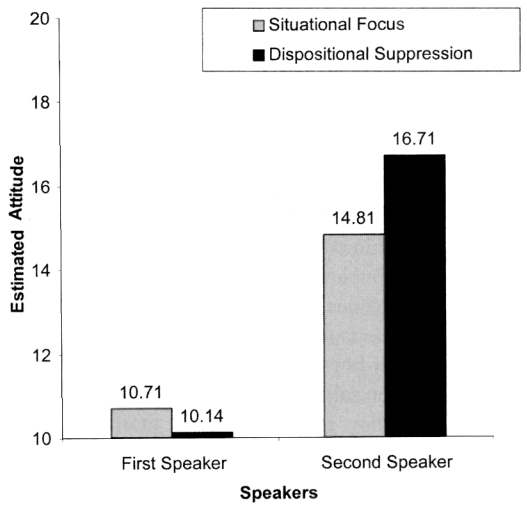

Figure 1. Estimated attitude for the first (constrained) speaker and second (free) speaker as a function of the instructions.

participants made stronger dispositional inferences (M = 16.71, SD = 2.39) than did both the control participants (M = 13.47, SD = 4.12), $t(56) = 3.12$, $p < .003$, and the situational focus participants (M = 14.81, SD = 2.84), $t(56) = 2.00$, $p = .05$. Also, the situational focus group did not differ from the control group, $t(56) = 1.29$, $p > .20$.

We also submitted participants' confidence ratings to the same 2 × 2 mixed-model ANOVA as above. Both the speaker and the instructions main effects were significant, $F(1, 40) = 13.52$, $p < .001$, and $F(1, 40) = 9.23$, $p < .005$, respectively. These two effects were qualified, however, by a significant Speaker × Instructions interaction, $F(1, 40) = 4.14$, $p < .05$. Closer inspection of the means revealed that participants expressed less confidence regarding their inferences about the first speaker when they were confronted with the situational focus instructions (M = 8.10, SD = 4.86) rather than with the suppression instructions (M = 13.10, SD = 4.64), $t(40) = 3.41$, $p < .002$. As for the second speaker, no difference emerged between those participants who initially focused on situational factors (M = 12.24, SD = 3.90) and the ones who initially suppressed dispositional factors (M = 14.29, SD = 4.28), $t(40) = 1.62$, *ns*.

Discussion

The pattern of data obtained in Study 3 unambiguously supports our hypothesis. Participants who were instructed to suppress any reference to personality factors in the emergence of the observed behavior made stronger dispositional inferences about a second speaker than did participants who had been instructed to focus on the situational forces impinging on the first speaker. This pattern indicates that postsuppressional rebound was indeed more prevalent among the former than among the latter group of participants. Interestingly, both kinds of instructions led participants to make similar ratings of the first speaker. This finding is congruent with the idea that the correction phase of the attribution process can take various forms. As it happens, whether observers fight against the intrusion of dispositional inferences or promote any thought related to the role of situational factors, both strategies allow perceivers to take some distance from the initial dispositional attribution that gives way to the correspondence bias. The important difference is that the suppression strategy has important consequences on subsequent judgments. Because people try very hard not to think about the role of the actor when elaborating their judgment, they end up being particularly prone to invoke personality factors when they later encounter another instance of the same behavior.

It is also worth noticing that the instruction to avoid thinking about dispositional factors during the presentation of the first speaker produced attitudinal ratings for the second speaker that were more extreme than those given by control participants who had never been confronted with the first speaker. This pattern was not observed for participants instructed to focus on the role of situational factors. This suggests that dispositional suppression participants were the only participants who fell prey to postsuppressional rebound. This finding further shows that those participants who were encouraged not to think about the dispositions of the speaker as a possible cause for the behavior of the first speaker later ended up evoking the dispositional factors even more than

what is generally the case when perceivers encounter a freely performed behavior.

Another message of Study 3 comes from the confidence measure. Indeed, those participants were who were asked to focus on situational factors were not as certain as the other participants when it came to making judgments about the speaker. In other words, their attention having been focused on the various circumstantial constraints that may have led to the emergence of the behavior, these participants were less confident when it came to answering the attitude question. This finding may be interpreted in light of earlier attempts to stress the impact of pragmatic aspects in the attitude attribution paradigm (Corneille et al., 1999; Leyens et al., 1996; Miller et al., 1984; Wright & Wells, 1988; for a review, see Leyens et al., 1994). By setting up the experiment exclusively in terms of the actor, the case for correspondence bias may have been somewhat exaggerated. When the experimental context is gentler to the participants, they may feel less certain or simply doubt the validity of their dispositional inferences. As far as the second speaker is concerned, the present data suggest that postsuppressional rebound is associated with, if anything, an increase rather than a decrease in participants' confidence. This combination of attitudinal inference and confidence makes the strength of the dispositional rebound all the more striking.

General Discussion

The goal of the present studies was to support our contention that the cognitive work that takes place during the correction stage of dispositional attribution involves two components: the processing of the situational forces impinging on the actor's behavior and an active dispositional suppression process. Because perceivers engaged in an impression-formation task generally start with the assumption that the actor rather than the situation is at the origin of the observed behavior, we reasoned that dispositional judgments should be especially likely to intrude in the stream of thoughts during the correction stage. This led us to the idea that people may be tempted to initiate a suppression process to achieve a better control of this intrusion. Consistent with recent work on mental control and suppression as initiated by Wegner et al. (1987; Wegner, 1992, 1994; Wegner & Wenzlaff, 1996), we hypothesized that this suppression process may result in a postsuppressional rebound likely to manifest itself under the form of dispositional inferences.

To test these ideas, we modeled our studies after the well-known attitude attribution paradigm (Jones & Harris, 1967). We reasoned that observers would have a hard time avoiding references to personality factors when shown videotapes on which a speaker advocated specific positions on a sensitive issue. In Study 1, we showed participants two videotapes. Compared with judgments collected in a control condition in which participants only watched the second videotape, participants' attitudinal inferences about the second speaker were more dispositional in tone when the first speaker was thought to be forced but not when the first speaker was thought to be free. In Study 2, all participants were first confronted with the forced speaker. After the ratings for the second speaker had been collected, we asked participants to tell us how much they had suppressed thoughts related to the first speaker. As predicted, the importance of suppression was directly related to the importance of dispositional rebound. Study 3 provided participants with one of two sets of instructions during the initial presentation of a forced speaker. Participants asked to try and avoid thinking about the role of personality factors in the emergence of the behavior made dispositional ratings of the second speaker that were more extreme than participants requested to focus on the impact of situational factors or control participants who had never seen the first speaker.

As a set, our three experiments confirm that perceivers confronted with a constrained actor may want to work against the tendency to infer the presence of a dispositional characteristic at the same time that they wish to examine the potential impact of the surrounding context. Ironically, the more people try not to evoke the existence of personality factors that may account for the observed behavior, the more they end up relying on a correspondent inference on a later occasion. It should be noted that the impact of postsuppression dispositional rebound was independent of the influence of the contrast in the perceived level of freedom of the actors. Of course, being initially confronted with a constrained target might well increase the impression that another person enjoys freedom of action. Not surprisingly then, the dispositional inference is likely to be particularly strong for the second person. This process notwithstanding, our data provide clear evidence that the suppression work initiated during the encounter with a first—constrained—actor leads perceivers to more readily infer the presence of a correspondent personality characteristic. Finally, the finding that high suppressors both polarized their dispositional inference and declared that they based their judgment on the level of freedom of the actor suggests the presence of a most interesting mechanism. Two factors, the perceived contrast in level of freedom and the dispositional rebound, contributed to shape the final evaluation of the actor. As we see it, perceivers remained largely unaware of the impact of rebound effect on their final judgment and on the way they rationalized it. Moreover, perceivers also accounted for their dispositional inference in terms of the only causal factor that they were conscious of; namely, the level of freedom of the actor. To put it otherwise, because the perceived level of freedom was the causal explanation that was most accessible to conscious examination, they attributed their judgment to that factor and neglected the potential impact of other factors in general and of the rebound effect in particular. This analysis, although somewhat speculative at this stage, is fully compatible with the extensive research showing people's limitations when it comes to introspection (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; for a collection, see Yzerbyt, Lories, & Dardenne, 1998). Future research should allow us to further test the implications of the above conclusions.

Another intriguing aspect of the present data is that they suggest that dispositional suppression can be spontaneously triggered. In other words, our participants did not need any specific instruction to engage in dispositional suppression. From a methodological point of view, the spontaneity of the suppression process is a real asset. Indeed, it precludes an interpretation of postsuppressional rebound in terms of demand characteristics or in terms of conversational norms. According to these accounts, the increased use of a concept that has been suppressed simply stems from participants' understanding that they are likely to be motivated to use the concept, otherwise the experimenter would not ask them to avoid thinking about it (Forster & Liberman, 2000). As a consequence, they show the rebound effect. Given the procedure used in Study 1 and Study 2, such an interpretation of the dispositional rebound is simply irrelevant.

From a theoretical point of view, the spontaneity of the suppression process informs us about the prevalence of a dispositional interpretation of human behavior. Of course, the present findings should not be taken to mean that the attribution-correction process and the accompanying postsuppressional rebound always results in more extreme dispositional ratings. In fact, as far as the adjustment of initial attribution inferences goes, postsuppression rebound is likely to concern any aspect that imposes itself during the early stages of the attribution process. Whatever pops into the mind of perceivers despite their repeated attempts at suppression should affect subsequent inferences. This conclusion is all the more important in light of the accumulating evidence that some behaviors, some contexts, and some people may favor the early adoption of a situational inference (Krull, 1993; Krull & Erickson, 1995; Quattrone, 1982; Webster, 1993). Imagine for a moment that, for some reason, perceivers start with an initial situational inference. During the correction phase, these perceivers should normally avoid thinking about the situation and try focusing on the role of personality factors in the emergence of the observed behavior. As a result of the postsuppressional rebound, new behavior should more readily be interpreted in terms of situational factors.

Conclusion

As Jones (1979) noted, "what is more reasonable, after all, than the brute, palpable fact that there can be no action without an actor? The notion that situations can cause an action is abstract and derivative, almost metaphorical in its implications" (p. 114). Somehow, the ubiquitous presence of dispositional inference should long have indicated to researchers the possibility that people are so tempted to incriminate the actor when it comes to explaining behavior that any disregard of the dispositional factors would backfire sooner or later. Even when some mitigating circumstances signal themselves, perceivers continue to be seduced by the possible dividends afforded by dispositional attribution. This is consistent with the fact that the value of dispositional attributions has been celebrated for half a century as being the royal path to control and prediction (Gilbert, 1998; Jones, 1990; Heider, 1958). Only seldom do observers find themselves in a context in which situational attributions appear to be the obvious choice. Clearly, personality is the causal factor "par excellence."

Our data show that perceivers fall prey to postsuppressional rebound in many more instances than may have been imagined. Perhaps because of the often unrecognized impact of lay dispositionism (Ross & Nisbett, 1991), we have come to neglect the possibility that any fight against the spontaneous evocation of personality causes may be difficult to win not only in the short term but in the long term as well (for an exception, see Gilbert & Osborne, 1989). Ironically, it is when social perceivers believe that they have killed the beast that new life seems to flow into it. If there is one message coming from the present data it is that perceivers are very tempted to come back with even more vigor to their beloved personality factors whenever they have forced themselves to momentarily neglect them. For what's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh.

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