Call for Papers: Embedding the Concept of Suspicion in Research on Business and Applied Psychology

Philip Bobko · Alex J. Barelka · Leanne M. Hirshfield ·
Joseph B. Lyons

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The *Journal of Business and Psychology* announces a special issue and call for papers entitled “Embedding the concept of suspicion in research on business and applied psychology.” A link to the associated invited article (Bobko et al., J Bus Psychol, doi:[10.1007/s10869-014-9360-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-014-9360-y), 2014b) is provided below. We seek both theoretical and empirical papers that investigate a relatively new construct in business and applied psychology; i.e., suspicion. The management literature has a substantial history of investigating the concept of trust—particularly interpersonal trust (e.g., see, Mayer et al. 1995, classic article and subsequent work). However, only a handful of studies and theories have considered distrust, and almost no studies in business or applied psychology have considered the hypothetical construct of suspicion (either at the state or trait level). We believe the time is ripe for such investigations.

Recently, Bobko et al. (2014a) reviewed the sparse literature on the concept of suspicion across a variety of social science disciplines (management, social psychology,

marketing, neurological science, human factors, communication). Their definition of state suspicion in information technology (IT) contexts was defined by the interaction of three components: uncertainty about an external agent, attributions of intent about that external agent (usually malintent), and heightened cognitive activity devoted to sense-making of (and generation of explanations for) the observed behavior of the external agent. More specifically, suspicion was defined as “a person’s simultaneous state of cognitive activity, uncertainty, and perceived malintent about underlying information that is being [electronically] generated, collated, sent, analyzed, or implemented by an external agent.” The notion of “external agent” was purposively left general in this definition—so that one might be suspicious about another individual, a competitor, a group/team of individuals, an organizational entity (e.g., an entire company/country), or a system in general (computer or otherwise).

Similarly, in an article in the detection of deception in the communication literature, Kim and Levine (2011, p. 52) defined suspicion as the “degree to which a person is uncertain ... thereby stimulating a construal of motives in an effort to assess potential deceptive intent.” Thus, although the literature on suspicion is sparse, recent definitions converge – incorporating uncertainty, motive construal, and cognitive activity.

Bobko et al. also noted that although trust and distrust were related to suspicion, the three concepts are theoretically and empirically separable – as trust and distrust are decisions about others, while suspicion involves “suspended judgment.” (Indeed, these constructs lead to different emotional reactions; e.g., trust likely leads to cognitive/emotional/behavioral relaxation, distrust likely leads to anger, while suspicion likely leads to anxiety.)

In this Call for Papers, we suggest that the concept of suspicion is under-represented in business and applied

P. Bobko (✉)
Gettysburg College, PA, Gettysburg, USA
e-mail: pbobko@gettysburg.edu

A. J. Barelka
Illinois State University, IL, Normal, USA
e-mail: ajbarel@ilstu.edu

L. M. Hirshfield
Syracuse University, NY, Syracuse, USA
e-mail: lmhirshf@syr.edu

J. B. Lyons
US Air Force Research Laboratory, OH, Dayton, USA
e-mail: joseph.lyons.6@us.af.mil

psychology disciplines, yet the concept can have important links to many sub-disciplines in those fields.

For example, recent articles in business and applied psychology journals have included topics on cynicism, information in advertisements, self-monitoring, political skills, psychological contract breach, computer-mediated communication, reactions to location monitoring devices, psychopathy and group effectiveness, and so forth. Each one of the domains might benefit from incorporating the concept of suspicion in their nomological nets (e.g., How suspicious are individuals of electronic communication modalities? What are the triggers of suspicion when considering ads? etc.).

We suggest that follow-up studies (empirical or theoretical papers) in any of these domains might contribute to this special issue. To further denote the multidisciplinary nature of this call, we note yet other possible contributions to this special issue:

- What is the role of suspicion in the leadership literature? Will leaders who are more or less suspicious of followers be perceived as more or less transformational? Are suspicious leaders better able to detect subtle environmental cues and discern hidden agendas/motivations behind observed changes, or might they overcompensate and look for ulterior motives when none exist? How should change agents incorporate the role of employee suspicion into their interventions; i.e., what are the antecedents and consequences of suspicion during an organizational change event?
- Suspicion is quite general in its focus (the external agent can be a person, a collection of individuals, a corporate entity, or even a computer system/algorithm). In contrast, many researchers who study the related concept of trust assume that trust is applicable only to dyadic relationships (interpersonal trust). How does one reconcile these two underlying assumptions, either theoretically or empirically?
- In decision making, what is the role of suspicion? Does insufficient suspicion lead to cognitive relaxation, complacency, use of stereotypical decisions, etc.? Does too much suspicion lead to inaction on the part of the decision maker (e.g., inaction due to being paralyzed by paranoia)? Are there relevant models or data that capture the longitudinal progression of cognition and information acquisition which influences the formation of suspicion?
- If organizational systems incorporate automatized decision aides, how will decision making models be influenced by the introduction of the concept of suspicion? Can automated decision aides be designed to provide transparency of system capabilities and

associated data, so that users can move from automatic to deliberate/suspicious modes as situations require?

- At the neurological level, can management theories be enhanced by embracing the concept of suspicion? For example, Hannah et al. (2013) noted that measurements of neurological complexity can have unique predictive capacity for leader behavior, over and above more traditional measures of leader proclivity. Will neurologically based models of suspicion help better understand leader and/or follower behavior?
- How might the concept of suspicion change (if at all) at the group/team level? Also, within groups, is suspicion contagious and, if so, what types of models might be derived? For example, does the group polarization literature apply to levels of suspicion, such that initial levels of suspicion breed more suspicion?
- At the organizational/country level, is there such a thing as “healthy respect”? Is it based upon an appropriate level of mutual suspicion?
- What is the role of culture in theories of suspicion? Are some cultures more or less suspicious than others? For example, one component of suspicion is “uncertainty,” and one of the primary dimensions of globally based culture is labeled “uncertainty avoidance” (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Also, what culture-specific models of suspicion might be derived in such applied contexts (e.g., will Gelfand et al.’s, 2011, cultural factors of tightness and looseness trigger or buffer the emergence of suspicion)?

The above examples are illustrative, not exhaustive—and they are provided to emphasize the notion that the concept of suspicion can have application in many sub-disciplines of business and applied psychology, and at many levels. We hope to generate many such links with this call—and the contributions can be empirical or theoretical.

To assist potential authors, we have made available two additional documents.

1. There is an invited article which outlines the vision of the guest co-editors. This article also includes a potential set of twenty items that might be used for a self-report scale of state suspicion. The article is Bobko et al. (2014b). The construct of suspicion and how it can benefit theories and models in organizational science, *Journal of Business and Psychology*. To access that paper, please use following url: http://newhouse-faculty.syr.edu/lhrshfield/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/04/BBHandL_JBP.pdf
2. The theoretical review of the psychological construct of suspicion appears in the journal *Human Factors*. To access that paper and associated conditions of use,

please use the following urls, http://newhouse-faculty.syr.edu/lhirshfield/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/04/BBandH_HF.pdf and <http://newhouse-faculty.syr.edu/lhirshfield/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/04/conditions.pdf>

Submission process and timing

Due to editorial constraints, authors must adhere to the following deadline, or submissions will be returned unreviewed:

- June 30, 2015: First complete draft of regular length manuscript is due. Submissions before that deadline are welcome.

Papers must be submitted in APA style. These papers will undergo the usual double-blind review process. The final acceptance of papers (by one of the guest co-editors) will be contingent upon the successful incorporation of editor and reviewer feedback.

The corresponding author for each submission should first register in the *Journal of Business and Psychology* system (at <https://www.editorialmanager.com/jobu/>), and then submit the manuscript on behalf of all the authors of the manuscript. Please make sure that when submitting to the system, authors select the article type for the special issue on “Suspicion in business and psychology.”

Authors may (although they are not required to) query the editorial team about fit of their work with the special

issue call. The special editors will reply to any such queries, but developmental feedback will not be given to the authors, nor will any feedback necessarily increase the likelihood of the eventual acceptance of the associated full-length submission.

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