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INTENTIONAL RELATIONS AND DIVERGENT PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING¹

Introduction

It is a common notion that we understand ourselves better than we understand other people. It is also apparent why we think this is so. After all, we know much more about ourselves than about others, including our memories, our present intentions, and our future goals. And we care more about ourselves than we care about others, so we are more likely to attend to and interpret our own activities than we are likely to attend to and interpret the activities of others. Yet, it is also a common notion that a person has the least knowledge of his or her own biases or prejudices, and that it is often a naive observer, who can better interpret the meaning of someone's actions when such biases are involved.

In the present paper I intend to take a closer look at the bases for knowledge of self and other, and, in particular, to look more closely at the consequences of divergent sources of information and perspective on this knowledge. In the process I will also consider the role that motivations play in social understanding of self and other. But, in addition to considering social understanding between individuals, I will also consider social understanding between groups. I will argue that there is a strong analogy between these two types of understanding, and that the basis of this strong analogy is the means by which we process information about our own group versus an opposing group. Thus, I will claim that the biases that occur in interpersonal social cognition are matched by comparable biases in intergroup social cognition.

Intentional relations theory (IRT)

I begin by describing a general theoretical framework developed by Barresi and Moore (1996) that I will extend to the phenomena of divergent perceptions in this article. I will call the extended conceptual framework Intentional Relations Theory or IRT. The basic notion that Barresi and Moore put forward

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is that all social understanding involves various sorts of representations of intentional relations. By intentional relation they mean a relation between an agent and some object or state of affairs that is either real or imagined. Intentional relations are psychological or mental relations of three basic types : actions, emotional or motivational relations, and epistemic relations. In each of these types of relations there is an animate agent that is in some way mentally related to some actual or counterfactual object or event. The purpose of describing the phenomena at issue in this way is to focus on the fact that an organism's activities are organized in certain systematic ways around intended objects and that most "intended" objects are also "actual" objects, that are perceptually accessible to observers. Furthermore, it is these relations between the activities of agents and actual situations or objects, which make it possible for observers to come to know what the mental activities of actors are about. By first understanding these simple intentional relations to actual objects, it later becomes possible to understand more complex mental states involving absent and counterfactual objects.

The particular focus of IRT is on the processes by which individuals represent the intentional relations of self and other. It is proposed that humans come to know their own and another individual's intentional relations through the development of a system of uniform representations of intentional relations that can be applied to one's self as well as to others. The main supposition here is that my understanding of the proposition or intentional relation : "I love Mary" is the same as my understanding of the proposition or intentional relation : "Tom loves Mary". The meaning of these two propositions is the same though my access to information about my own loving of Mary is not the same as my access to information about Tom loving Mary. The crucial point for IRT is that "I love Mary" and "Tom loves Mary", as propositional representations, take an identical form, even though the way I may come to know these two propositions is divergent. Thus, according to IRT, there is nothing unique or special about my understanding of the first proposition compared to my understanding of the second. What is unique and special is my way of knowing that I love Mary compared to my way of knowing that Tom loves Mary. In the former case, I experience the love as a property of my self that is directed toward Mary ; whereas in the latter case, I do not experience the love directly as mine, but know of it through perceiving its existence in Tom.

This assumption of IRT, that we use a common representational form to understand ourselves and others seems to fly in the face of the obvious fact that we are conscious of ourselves and others in very different ways. Whereas I know my love of Mary by the many emotions, thoughts, and internal phys-

iological states that occur when I think of Mary, my knowledge of Tom's love of Mary is entirely different. It depends on my observing Tom's behavior in the presence of Mary, what he has to say about her, or to her, etc. I have only externally observable information about Tom's love and seemingly must "infer" and imagine his inner states — thus, that he loves Mary. By contrast, it seems that I do not have to "infer" and imagine that I love Mary ; it seems that I know it directly by reading my internal states.

As much as it may seem obvious that what I know, about these two propositions, is different, the claim of IRT is that, at the level of the semantics of the proposition, the knowledge in the two cases is identical. But what is different, are the sources of information by which I know the propositions, and the qualitative nature of the information. I have direct first-person information about my own love of Mary, while I have direct third-person information about Tom's love of Mary. These two sources of information provide us with qualitatively different kinds of information. Nevertheless, in order to understand that each of us loves Mary, I must be able to represent both first- and third-person information for each person who loves Mary. Thus, it is not only the case that I must somehow imagine Tom's internal first-person information to know that he loves Mary, it is also necessary for me to imagine my own third-person information in order to know that I love Mary. I must know how I appear to others, or how I would appear to myself as a third-person if I were able to see myself from the outside. This is the reason that it is often the case that people do not know that they are in love, despite their direct awareness of those inner qualitative states that indicate love. And this is the reason why observable behavior of love, does not guarantee, by itself, that someone is actually in love. For "love" as a concept implies qualitative properties of information of both a first-person and a third-person variety. Thus a person's knowledge of the intentional relation "X loves Mary" is conceptually (or semantically) the same regardless of who X is, whether it be oneself or another person.

It is sometimes suggested that intentional concepts like love are really mental, and that the outer expression is secondary, providing only a sign of the mental state but not an essential property of that state. However, according to IRT this cannot usually be the case, though in some instances it may be that intentional concepts refer primarily to the first-person properties of intentional relations. For, as Wittgenstein (1953), among others, has argued, there must be public as well as private criteria for determining the use of mental concepts. And learning how to use such concepts requires being able to match these inner and outer criteria.

In fact, it seems that there are many situations where we tend to attribute inner qualities to intentional relations, when those qualities, if they exist at all, are secondary to the external properties. This is often the case in actions, where we suppose that the actor must be consciously aware of his or her intentions while acting ; yet, though they certainly will attribute to themselves this intention if asked, they actually perform the action with little or no awareness or their own intentions. The same holds for beliefs. We can very often attribute beliefs to someone without the person being at all aware of having those beliefs. This is not to say that they have no first-person qualitative information that implies having that belief. But the fact that this information implies the belief does not express itself in the quality of the first-person information. Rather, the belief expresses itself mainly through a variety of behaviors of the person that are best understood in terms of that belief. The point here is that all intentional relations have their inner and outer properties, those directly accessible from a first- and a third-person perspective, and that the understanding of an intentional relation implies not only the existence of both kinds of qualities, but also their integration into a concept which expresses the intentional relation or state.

The development of social understanding

How do we come to understand the intentional activities of self and other ? Or, as this question has been put in recent discussions : How does the child develop a “theory of mind” ? This way of posing the question initially arose when Premack & Woodruff (1978) asked whether the chimpanzee had a “theory of mind”. But, within a few years, the question became even more strongly associated with a flood of research on the child's growing knowledge of mental phenomena (see, e.g., Astington, Harris, & Olson, 1988 ; Frye & Moore, 1991 ; Perner, 1991). One of the initially surprising, but significant, findings of this research was that the child's understanding of mental phenomena grows at the same pace for both activities of self and activities of others (Gopnik, 1993). Thus, when the child can understand that she has desires, she can also understand that others might have different desires ; and only when the child can understand that others might have false beliefs, can she understand that her own beliefs were false in the past. This concurrence in the development of the child's understanding of mental states in self and other has provided evidence to support the idea implicit in the label “theory of mind” — that the child is, indeed, forming a “theory” of mind. Such a theoretical theory of mind would include general concepts like “desire” and “belief” that could be applied equally well to self and other. As particular theoretical concepts are acquired, the child would apply them to both self and other. This could explain

why knowledge of mental states of self and other develop at the same time. However, in addition to the “theory” theory of mind, there has been another model of the process of social understanding which follows a more traditional idea : that we first understand our own mental states and then use these mental states to understand those of other individuals. This view has been put forward as an “imagination” or “simulation” theory of mind (Goldman, 1992 ; Gordon, 1986 ; Harris, 1991 ; Humphrey, 1984 ; see, Carruthers & Smith, 1996, for the debate between these two types of theories of mind).

The view put forward by Barresi and Moore (1996) has properties similar to both the “theory-theory” and “simulation-theory” accounts of theory of mind, but has its primary roots in Baldwin's (1894 ; 1996) account of the “bipolar self”. Baldwin held that the understanding of ego and alter are always in dialectical relation, and that one could not possibly understand one's own self without understanding that others are also selves.² The Barresi and Moore view differs from the simulation view in suggesting that imagination is required not only in simulating the first-person aspect of the minds of others, but also in simulating the third-person aspect of one's own mind. Thus, while it shares with the theory theory, the property of accounting for the parallel development of self and other knowledge, it shares with the simulation theory the use of imagination, or simulation, as basis for this understanding, and in supposing that such understanding occurs prior to the development of any theoretical concepts about mind.

Barresi and Moore (1996) also provide an account of how the capacity for imagination originally develops out of first-person information of self and third-person information of others. They propose that the development of social understanding of self and other goes through four stages or levels. At the first and lowest level, we have understanding of self that is based entirely on first-person information, and understanding of others that is based entirely on third-person information. This kind of understanding does not involve any representations that can be applied to both self and other since the informational sources and resulting representations of self and other are qualitatively different. Barresi and Moore suggest that this form of understanding is typical of most animals, but rarely occurs in human social cognition (Autism is an exceptional case that they discuss at length in the article). At this lowest level of understanding there is a radical distinction between self and other. Others are only understood as animate objects with physical motions and expressions, but not with experiences. With respect to self, the reverse is true :

2. See Martin and Barresi (2000) for an historical account on the relationship between Baldwin's views and previous and subsequent accounts of the development of understanding of self and other.

the self is known not as an animate object that moves, but in terms of activities directed at objects, and the experiences one has of those objects. Organisms that understand only at this level do not really have a concept of self or other in the usual sense of both being the same kind of thing. Instead, whatever understanding they have of self is different from their understanding of other. While social animals at this level have some understanding of social relations, they do not seem to be able to think of themselves in the same way that they think about the other organisms with which they interact.

The mirror recognition test developed by Gallup (1970) provides evidence to support this interpretation. Only humans and other great apes (in particular, chimpanzees and orangutans) can learn to recognize themselves in a mirror. Other organisms think that it is another animal in the mirror and can't be taught otherwise. While other interpretations of this result can be given, it is at least suggestive of the distinction being made here in the model. Barresi and Moore claim that the great apes go beyond this lowest level and can come to know intentional relations from a unified perspective that includes both first- and third-person information. This makes it possible for them eventually to recognize their own "third-person" appearance in the mirror as well as to come to know the "first-person" experiences of others.

The reason that level one processing rarely occurs in human social cognition is that, from very early on, human infants begin to "share" activities with others, and, thereby, come to know from a first-person point of view what goes with the third-person activities that they observe in others. Thus, they smile when others smile and cry when others cry, and, thereby, experience the inner properties of what they perceive in the outer expression of others. This intermodal matching of first-person and third-person properties of expressions develops later in infancy into matching actions involving other objects through imitation of another's actions directed at the same or similar objects. At this second level of the Barresi and Moore model, the infant comes to know both first- and third-person aspects of intentional relations to particular objects, not through developing a representation of her own intentional relations, as some simulation theorists would have it, but through sharing activity with others and, thereby, forming a representation of that shared activity which combines first-person information of self with third-person information of other.

This social origin of the understanding of intentional relations has enormous implications for later developments in social cognition. For it is only as members of social units involving at least two persons that we come to form attitudes toward objects or persons categorized within these units as "good" and "bad", as something or someone to "approach" or to "avoid", or,

in the case of persons, to treat as one of “us” or one of “them”. Our attitudes are really social representations shared with members of our group and are not primarily individualistic in origin. These shared attitudes are a form of non-localized understanding that belongs to the collective rather than to individuals. Hence, this kind of early experience provides the ground upon which the infant eventually becomes a member of various social units, far larger in size than its origins, yet maintaining the same basic nature of having “thoughts” that don't belong to individuals but to the collective (cf. Augoustinos, & Walker, 1995 ; Moscovici, 1981).

At this second level of social understanding, the infant cannot discriminate between her own intentional relation to an object and that of the other person with whom she shares activities. Indeed, Barresi and Moore (1996) suggest that the infant does not yet have a concept either of self or other to whom they might assign individual intentional relations, whether they be the same or different. The infant, in effect, only understands “we” or “us” as the subject of intentional relations. But even this may be attributing too much to the infant. What is clear is that the infant has some sort of notion of sharing with the other person an attitude toward some other person or object, and can regulate her behavior toward the external object based on this shared attitude.

However, it is not long before the infant begins to be able to discriminate between her own intentional relations and those of others, and, by the end of the second year, she can assign distinct relations to self and other. Thus the infant achieves the third level of understanding, wherein self and other are distinguished as concrete individuals with distinct intentional relations to the same object as well as to different objects. Barresi and Moore (1996) suggest that in acquiring this ability the infant must use imagination or simulation to generate this understanding. In understanding that another individual might be in a different intentional relation to the same or a different object, it is necessary for the infant to imagine the first-person aspect of the intentional relation, when she perceives only the third-person expressions or activities of the other. By the same token, she can only understand her own intentional relations as distinctly her own by imagining the third-person aspects that go with its current first-person experiences.

In order to provide this imaginative component the infant must use what she learned from sharing activities with others at the earlier phase. But she no longer has to share the activity, only imagine the first- and third-person information that she experienced when sharing the activity. Thus she can represent the experience of others as well as their behavior, even though she has a different experience and behavior for herself, through imagining how it would feel if she engaged in the same activity as the other. And, likewise, the

infant has an understanding of how she appears by recalling or constructing in imagination how someone else appeared or would have appeared when sharing a comparable experience with the infant in the past and assigning that appearance to herself in the present. It is only when the infant can fuse the first- and third-person aspects of an intentional relation in a single agent that she can come to know herself and the other as individual agents, capable of engaging in distinct intentional relations. Thus, it is only at this time that the infant comes to understand mental properties as applying uniquely to particular individuals as well as to larger social units.

It is at this stage of development that infants come to recognize themselves in mirrors, and also that they come to show empathic responses to others sensitive to the other's particular desires or needs. Furthermore, at about the same time, children show evidence of self-conscious emotions, such as coyness and embarrassment (Lewis, Sullivan, Stanger & Weiss, 1989). These latter forms of behavior suggest that the child's own intentional relation is affected by her imagination of how she appears from a third-person point of view. The infant or toddler also begins to understand perception and true beliefs. But this stage of development will not allow the toddler to understand false beliefs. It is not until the child is about 4-years-old that this understanding comes about ; and along with it comes the ability to understand the distinction between a representation and an object of a representation. At this fourth level of the Barresi and Moore (1996) model, the 4-year-old child can understand that different people may have different representations of (rather than just relations to) the same object. Thus, the child can understand that mental states can have relations to counterfactual, as well as actual, objects. It is at this point that the child is said to have a representational theory of mind (Perner, 1991). In terms of the four-level model, the child at this age is able not only to imagine the first- or third-person aspect of an intentional relation and combine it with direct perception of the other aspect, but she can now also imagine both aspects at once. Thus, she can represent the possibility that another individual has a different third- as well as first- person relation to reality, which allows her to represent not only true but false beliefs of the other ; and the child can also entertain the possibility that her own beliefs are false.³

While further developments that occur in childhood and early adolescence might be described, the important point that should be understood with

3. The 4-year transition is important in other respects connected with the development of a representational theory of mind. Perhaps, the most important change is that the child acquires a conception of herself and others as mental beings extended in time, with past and future selves that differ from the present self. Thus the child becomes able to engage in autobiographical reconstruction of the past, and can now make rational choices based on consequences for a differently motivated future self (cf. Barresi, in press).

respect to IRT is that the uniform understanding of mental activities of self and other depicted in the higher three levels of the Barresi and Moore (1996) model, require the integration of first- and third-person information, whether based in direct perception or through imagination, and that the result of this integration is a representation that can be used equally well on self and other, or on a group. It provides for the uniformity of understanding of the activities of individuals, as well as, of groups. And it does not matter whether one is the actor or observer in the activity, or whether it is of one's own group, or of another group. In all cases the basic form of the representation is the same, and it contains both an experiential first-person component and an observable third-person component — otherwise it would not be a representation of an intentional relation at all, but, perhaps as in level one of the 4-level model, a representation of only one or the other aspect of an intentional relation. I turn now to describing some adult social cognitive phenomena that I wish to re-interpret within the context of this model of social understanding.

Divergent perspectives in interpersonal social cognition

In contrast to the interest of developmental psychologists in how children come to understand the intentional activities of self and other in comparable ways, psychologists who focus on adult social cognition have directed most of their research in showing how adults understand intentional activities of self and other in different ways. In particular, social psychologists have expended enormous effort trying to understand a phenomenon called the actor-observer effect — the finding that actors and observers provide divergent explanations for an actor's behavior (Jones & Nisbett, 1972). According to the original interpretation of this difference, actors explain their own behavior in terms of the situation, or circumstance they are in, which caused them to act in the way they did. By contrast, an observer of the actor is much more likely to claim that it was something about the actor (typically a disposition of the actor) that caused the action. Paradigm examples of this actor-observer asymmetry are ways people tend to explain why they chose the career, or partner, they have, versus how a friend would explain the same choices. The actor tends to focus on the qualities of the career or partner that attracted them. In terms of the original theory this would be a situational attribution ; in terms of IRT it would be an explanation that focussed on properties of the objects of intentional relations. By contrast, the actor's friends tend to indicate some trait or disposition of the actor that led the actor to make the same choice. In terms of the original theory this would be a dispositional attribution ; in terms of IRT this would be an explanation that focussed on observable properties of the agent of the intentional relations. The difference between these two ways of

expressing the phenomena will be dealt with shortly. Regardless of how we describe the phenomena, the finding is very reliable, and has been replicated in numerous experiments (see, e.g., Watson, 1982 for a critical review).

Although there are clear and predictable differences between attributions of actors and observers, the theoretical explanations and interpretations of these differences have been more diverse than the findings themselves. In the original paper, Jones and Nisbett (1972) focused on two factors that lead to differences between actors and observers — the content of the information available to them and processing differences between them. While admitting that actors as well as observers are prone to distortions, they seem to suppose that the actor is generally more accurate than the observer in providing an explanation. The supposition here is that situational causes are usually better explanations for behavior than dispositions, and this is the kind of explanation preferred by the actor. The advantage to the actor comes from the fact that the actor has both better internal information about why she acted as she did, and, because her attention was directed at the situation rather than to herself, she processed the information she had better than did the observer. The observer, overwhelmed by the salience of the actor's motions, tends to ignore the importance of situational factors in causal explanations of actions.

There is more subtlety to Jones and Nisbett's (1972) discussion of the phenomena, but the main point of their interpretation is that explanations given by actors and observers should be understood as explanations of causes of the actor's behavior, and that these fall into two kinds — agent and situation — and that agents as causes — in particular the dispositional traits of agents as causes — are preferred by observers, while situations as causes are preferred by actors. In thinking this way about the meaning of actor-observer differences in attribution, these authors follow a tradition initiated by Heider (1958), where they assume that naive persons engage in quasi-scientific causal analyses of their own and other people's behavior (Heider's approach is actually more subtle than this ; see, Malle, 1999). Indeed, as attribution theory has developed, it is primarily a theory of “naive-scientific” causal analysis of events. Kelly (1967) is most explicit in this assumption, when he develops his model of causal attribution in which the perceiver engages in an analysis-of-variance in order to determine the cause of behavior. The causes sought in such a model are causal laws in the Humean sense of regularities, not idiosyncratic causal explanations that account for particular actions in terms of intentions and purposes.

The notion that the naive perceiver is engaged in such a quasi-scientific causal analysis of behavior has been attacked by a number of writers (e.g. Buss, 1978, 1979 ; Gigerenzer & Murray, 1987 ; Locke & Pennington, 1982 ;

Malle, 1999, Malle, & Knobe, 1997a, 1997b ; Schoeneman & Rubanowitz, 1985 ; White, 1991). The general argument of this opposing camp is that the naive observer is less interested in causal analyses than in intentional analyses. It is as if scientific psychologists have modeled the naive person's mind based on their own minds rather than on the "folk psychology" that actually interests normal people (Gigerenzer & Murray, 1987). These opponents suggest that the main concern of "folk" analysis of behavior is to understand the particular "reasons" for the behavior, not, typically, their universal regular causes. And in the analysis of such reasons, what people care about knowing are the "beliefs" and "desires" that the actor has, how these issue in an "intention" and result in an "action". In other words, people normally engage in analysis of the mental states and activities of the other person that result in intentional actions and only in exceptional cases focus on what looks more like a naive-scientific causal analysis of human behavior.

Although this clash between "cause" and "reason" approaches to social attribution has a fairly long history going back to Buss (1978), it is only in the very recent research by Bertram Malle (e.g. Malle, 1999 ; Malle, & Knobe, 1997a, 1997b ; Malle, Knobe, O'Laughlin, Pearce, & Nelson, in press) that a sophisticated reason-based alternative to the causal attribution has been developed and tested. In a brilliant array of theoretical and empirical contributions, Malle has been able to show that people typically interpret behavior in terms of intentionality, not in terms of causality in the scientific sense of cause usually intended by attribution theorists. In folk psychology, intentions, desires, beliefs, and choices are causes — with as much status to explain behavior as are "dispositions" or "situations". Causal analysis in the attribution theorists' usual sense does play a role, but a more modest one, in folk psychology. Causal analyses are applied mainly to explain accidental, not intentional, behavior, and also used to explain the historical causes that make a person have the intentions and purposes that he or she has. For the rest, people mainly try to understand the desires, beliefs, and intentions behind actions, and, to a certain extent, the capabilities of the individual that make the action possible. In other words, people are mainly concerned in attributing mental states to other people ; they are less concerned in trying to explain those mental states and their consequences in terms of the kinds of causes that interest scientists — in particular, scientific psychologists. Hence, folk psychological accounts of personal actions and other mental phenomena have little relation to the "trait" versus "situation" controversy among personality theorists that Jones and Nisbett (1972) saw as related to their original conceptualization of the actor-observer effect in terms of dispositional and situational causes. Folk psychol-

ogy of personal actions must be studied in its own terms, and these terms are primarily intentional not causal.

In light of this alternative tradition, and, in particular, of Malle's integrative research program, I believe that much of the attribution literature will have to be reinterpreted.

The actor-observer effect and other related phenomena will have to be looked at in terms of a conception of folk psychology of intentionality rather than in terms of causal analysis. Malle, himself, has begun to do this, and some other researchers have taken a similar view (e.g. Andersen, Glassman, & Gold, 1998 ; Malle, Moses, & Baldwin, (Eds.), Forthcoming). But, in the present article, I wish to look at these phenomena in terms of IRT. IRT differs from the folk psychology of intentionality in providing a framework in which the genesis of such a psychology can be explained. It does not presuppose that every culture will necessarily develop the particular concepts of "belief", "desire", "intention" and "action" — indeed, even "situational" and "dispositional" causes — that are found to apply in our culture. It could have turned out otherwise, and, almost certainly has done so in other cultures (Lillard, 1998). Nevertheless, according to IRT all these alternative folk psychologies have their roots in the kind of social understanding that emerges from observing, engaging in, and eventually being able to represent, intentional relations. The specific theories of mind that get developed may have some universal properties, but they will also have local variations. Nevertheless, all such theories will engage in some kind of understanding of the phenomena of mental activity in self and other, and use concepts such as purposes, intentions, reasons, desires, and beliefs in the interpretation of the activities of groups as well as of individuals. But let us return to a discussion of findings associated with the actor-observer effect in terms of intentional relations.

The actor-observer difference in attribution parallels the difference in information that the actor and observer have about an actor's intentional relations. The actor is in the position to have direct first-person information about self's own actions, while the observer has only direct third-person information. Nevertheless, according to IRT both actor and observer are able to recognize the actor's action as a kind of intentional relation — one that involves an agent, a relation, and an object. Where they differ is in the dominant form of the information that indicates to them what the intentional relation is. For the actor the direct information is predominantly about the object of the relation and the actor's relation to that object. For the observer it is the actor and the actor's movements and expressions. Nevertheless, both actor and observer are able to categorize the intentional relation as an action of the agent toward the object, so they must be able to fill-in, if necessary, the rest of the information

needed to make this categorization possible. The actor-observer effect can be understood as an outcome of the difference in the primary bases for knowledge that the actor and observer have of the actor's intentionality. The actor emphasizes what appears as first-person information — the object of the intentional relation. This appears in the methodology of attribution theorists as a “situational” attribution. By contrast, the observer, who attends primarily to the third-person information of the actor's behaviors, attributes the intentional relation to the “actor” or, if forced to make a choice, to the disposition of the actor. Nevertheless, both actor and observer are aware that an intentional relation requires both an actor and an object for the action (or intentional relation) to have occurred at all. Thus, actors and observers make both agent and situational attributions if they have an opportunity to do so (cf. Augoustinos, & Walker, 1995, pp.71-77). How they differ is the degree to which they emphasize one or the other of these two types of attribution. Typically, actors place greater emphasis on the situation as they experience it from a first-person perspective than do observers, while observers emphasize the actor as they experience the actor from a third-person perspective as source of the action. An actor takes her own first-person perspective of the situation and treats its content as a reason or cause for action, while an observer, dominated by a third-person perspective of the actor, assumes that some dispositional property of actor is main cause of the action, failing to take into account how the actor's first-person perspective of the situation might also be implicated as a cause of the action.

At this point it might help to give an example. I happen to be a member of a department of psychology that has a relatively large number of neuroscientists. In trying to illustrate the actor-observer effect to neuroscientists in my audience, I suggested to them that from their point of view neuroscience is “intrinsically” interesting, but psychology is not. Hence, it probably seems to them that anyone interested in psychology, such as myself, must have some sort of “fetish” about the mind. Of course, the reverse view is the one that I would take of the difference between us. It is the mind that is intrinsically interesting, and only someone with a fetish about the brain could possibly become a neuroscientist. Note that, in both of these examples, the actor believes that the object of his interest should be of interest to everyone — an egocentric belief that has been called the “false consensus effect” by social psychologists (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). So, even though the actor ascribes his career preference to the object of his intentional relation, or what is called the “situation” by attribution theorists, it isn't the situation per se that is the “cause” of his preference. Rather, it is the situation as experienced by the actor from a first-person point of view, which provides a “reason” for his action. Hence, he

believes that others should agree with him because he doesn't adequately recognize that his own personality must be included as part of the explanation of why he finds the mind or brain more interesting than his colleagues in the same department. However, those colleagues, as observers, well aware of their own first-person preference being different, but not realizing why it is different, focus on just this point. They naturally suppose that it is something about their colleague's personality, not the situation, that "causes" the colleague to show an interest in a subject matter that they, themselves, don't find that interesting. But again, though the observers are making a "dispositional" attribution in this case, it is "third-person information" about the actor colored by the observers' own biases that leads them to make that attribution. They fail to appreciate, how the actor's different experience the situation is also a factor. In both cases a certain blindness occurs by focusing too much on the aspect of the actor's intentional relation that is most directly available to them, while failing fully to appreciate that aspect that is not directly available, and must be imagined.

A variety of studies investigating possible causes of the actor-observer effect are congruent with this IRT interpretation of the effect. One of the main findings is that the causal attributions of actors and observers are determined by whatever information is perceptually salient to them and that visual perspective is an important determinant of perceptual salience. In a classic study by Storms (1973), the actor's behavior in the situation was videotaped from two locations, one focusing on the situation, which was analogous the visual perspective of the actor, and one focusing on the actor, which was analogous to the visual perspective of the observer. When the male actor was asked to explain his action shortly after the action his situational attribution (i.e., his attribution to the object of his intentional relation) was stronger than his dispositional attribution (i.e., his attribution to himself as agent). But, when he watched the video that focused on him as an actor, his situational attribution was decreased, and his dispositional attribution increased, so that there was a greater emphasis on dispositional attributions of self. In other words, as his visual perspective of the action was shifted from a first-person perspective to a third-person perspective, his attributions shifted from the object of his intentional relation to himself as its subject. The reverse occurred for observers who watched the video that focused on the situation rather than on the actor. When they saw the object of the actor's intention rather than the actor, himself, they increased their situational attributions and decreased their dispositional attributions relative to their earlier judgements, when their attention had been focused on the actor. Thus, the observer, when given the actor's visual

perspective behaved more like the actor had in his initial attribution, whereas the actor, given the observer's perspective, behaved more like the observer.

In a more direct test of the perceptual salience hypothesis, Taylor and Fiske (1975) had some observers placed behind two actors engaged in an interaction, while other observers were on their sides. Observers placed behind one of the actors tended to attribute greater causality to the individual who they faced, as did the actors they were behind. By contrast, the observers placed to the side gave equal emphasis to both actors.

These two studies show that when an actor is given third-person information of his action, he will make a dispositional inference like an observer. By contrast, an observer, for whom the situation of an actor is made more salient, than is the actor, will tend to make situational inferences like the actor. This role reversal of actors and observers can be made to occur even without the use of replayed video-recordings or manipulating the observer's position relative to an actor. In a number of studies it has been shown that it doesn't matter what the actual layout of information is for an actor or observer, so much as how the information that is available is processed. In particular, empathic imagination can be manipulated so that observers make situational attributions and actors make dispositional attributions. In the case of observers, the mere instruction to take up or imagine an actor's point of view in a situation will lead that observer to make inferences more similar to the actor, than to a normal observer, or, to an observer, who is asked to attend closely to the actor (Galper, 1976 ; Regan & Totten, 1975 ; Gould & Sigall, 1976 ; cf. Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996).

Gould & Sigall's (1976) study is particularly interesting because, in addition to showing that observers can become functionally equivalent to actors in their explanations as a result of empathy, it also shows another effect that will be important to our understanding of attributional processes from first- and third-person perspectives. In other studies, it has been found that actors are more likely to attribute success to themselves and failure to the situation — a finding that shows that actor's can, when it is in their interest, make self-attributions rather than situational attributions. In the Gould and Sigall study, after instructions to empathize with or to observe actors, empathizing observers tended to produce the same self-serving situational attributions in the case of failure, and dispositional attributions in the case of success as actors normally would in this situation. Non-empathizing observers produced the usual dispositional attributions in both success and failure situations. These results show that empathic observers not only adopt the first-person perspective of the other with respect to salience of information, but also adopt the first-person motivations of the actor — motivations that

sometimes — as in “success” situations — lead to more dispositional than situational attributions in the actor.

With respect to IRT, what these empathy studies show is that observers can readily adopt the standpoint of actors. In doing so, all that is required is to flesh out in imagination the first-person information of the intentional relation that they would expect to accompany the third-person perceptual information readily available to them. In doing so, they use themselves in the simulation and thus become functionally similar to the actor. The result, with respect to the Gould and Sigall study, is that they adopt not only the informational perspective of the actor with respect to the situation, but also the motivational perspective of the actor in that situation, and thus reproduce in themselves the outcomes of motivations associated with success and failure (See also Arkin, Gabrenya, & McGarvey, 1978 and Wolfson, & Salancik, 1977 for comparable findings involving both actors and observers). While it is possible to account for these results by supposing that the observer uses a “theory” of how people respond to success and failure in making attributions, it is much more likely that observers do not use such a folk theory. Rather, it is more likely that they exhibit such apparent knowledge because their simulation in imagination of the actor's situation directly produces the appropriate response. It is the result of mentally acting out their own response in such a situation, without any explicit understanding of how that response might involve a self-serving bias that produces the response (See Gordon, 1986, for a clear exposition of how simulation produces knowledge without supposing that any sort of theory is involved, and see Carruthers & Stone, 1996, for a debate over whether this is possible).

Thus far we have shown how an observer can be turned into an actor through empathy. That the actor can be made to adopt a point of view like an observer is demonstrated in the results of an experiment by Duval and Wicklund (1973), where a large mirror was used to induce actors to be more “objectively self aware” of their actions. In this objectively self-aware condition the actor made dispositional attributions, whereas in a “subjectively self-aware” condition, when the actor was actively attending to a concurrent task, the actor made more situational attributions. In a follow-up study, Arkin and Duval (1975) found that actors and observers can reverse roles by increasing the self-attention of actors and decreasing the attention to the actor in observers by manipulating the use of a “live” camera. As predicted by the focus-of-attention attribution notion, actors attributed more causality to the situation than observers under normal circumstances, when the camera was not operative, but videotaping the actor reversed the usual actor-observer pattern such that actors attributed less causality to the situation than did observers.

As in the case of observer empathy effects, these experiments involving “objective self-awareness” can be readily reinterpreted in IRT terms. Instead of having to add, through imagination, first-person information of their intentional relations, as do observers, actors add to their direct first-person information, the imagination of third-person information about their actions. This induces actors to adopt an observer's point of view of their activities, shifting the balance from a first- to a third-person perspective. The result is to increase an actor's tendency to make dispositional attributions. Another experimental procedure, not directly involving attribution, indicates even more clearly how third-person imagination can change actors' perceptions of their actions. Haas (1984) asked participants to draw an E on their forehead, either when they were aware that they were being videotaped, or when they thought the video machine wasn't working. Participants who thought the video camera was turned off tended to draw the E with the vertical toward their left, while those who thought that the video camera was turned on more frequently drew the vertical toward their right. These results provide very suggestive evidence congruent with IRT. The normal participants, typically taking a first-person point of view of their action imaginatively “looked outward” with their mind's eye toward the E. By contrast, the participants thinking that they are being videotaped, tended to adopt a third-person point of view, representing how the E would appear to external observers. Thus, depending on whether one emphasizes the first-person point of view of an action or the third-person point of view, different information becomes more central in representing the action or intentional relation. It is as if one switches one's gestalt from a first- to a third-person perspective or the reverse, but in both cases, one nevertheless, represents the same intentional relation. It is also interesting to note, with respect to Haas's experimental procedure, that people who are dispositionally more “publicly self-conscious” tended, in a second experiment, to draw the E from the point of view of the observer relative to people less disposed to adopt such an external point of view of their actions. Thus it is partly a matter of disposition which viewpoint one is more likely to adopt — with some people generally adopting a third-person viewpoint of their own actions.

The effect of point of view on how the information about an action is processed by an actor has been shown to work even in memory for an event. If a participant actor is asked to recall a previous action, what determines whether there will be an emphasis on situation or disposition is how that memory is represented in recall. If the memory is represented from a first-person point of view, then the attribution is more situational, than if the memory is represented from a third-person point of view (Frank & Gilovich, 1989). This occurs regardless of whether the point of view taken is chosen by the ex-

perimeter or by the actor. Thus, overall, the information that is most salient or directly accessible to the attributor, at the time of the attribution, determines whether there is greater emphasis on the situation or the actor. Nevertheless, it should be clear that, in both kinds of cases, the attributor understands the action as an intentional relation involving both situation and actor. The difference in attributions is more a matter of degree than of kind, and these results should not be taken to imply that a major shift in attribution of causality is being made with these shifts in dominance of attributional direction.

Taken together these attributional and non-attributional phenomena provide support for an IRT interpretation of actor-observer findings. It is not that the actors and observers sometimes think that persons alone and other times think that situations alone are the unitary causes of human actions. Rather, they believe that actions are typically intentional and that both the person and the situation are essentially involved in action. But actors and observers perceive the intentionality of the action from different points of view, emphasizing different aspects of the intentional relation — the actor focusing on first-person information, hence producing stronger object or situational attributions, and the observer focusing on third-person information, hence producing stronger agent or dispositional attributions. However, because both actor and observer really conceive of the action in intentional terms, each can be moved to adopt the alternative point of view, and thus produce opposite attributions. Roughly speaking, it is an either/or situation, either one adopts the point of view of the actor or one adopts the point of view of the observer. In either case, one form of the information dominates over the other form of information. However, as pointed out earlier, these experiments do not always result in reversals of situational and dispositional attributions. Rather, they result only in an increase or decrease in situational or dispositional attributions, and produce a reversal primarily in forced-choice paradigms.

Other phenomena suggest that the degree that one emphasizes the actor or observer perspective in attribution experiments depends on social variables. One cross-cultural comparison of attribution phenomena which compared participants from India to Americans showed that non-westernized Hindu participants were more likely, as observers, to make situational attributions about the actions of others than were Americans and westernized Anglo-Indians (Miller, 1984). Furthermore, the magnitude of the difference between Americans and Hindus was found to be a function of age. Thus the younger Hindu participants showed less of the situational effect, and younger American participants showed less of a dispositional effect, than did older participants. This result is highly intriguing vis-a-vis IRT as it suggests the

possibility that children are less likely to show a bias in favor either of disposition or situation in their attributions, though their overall preference is for situational attributions. Indeed, this interpretation receives support from additional analyses of the data from this study (Miller, 1986), which indicate that young children use concrete instance-based explanations that adults in neither culture use. These explanations appear to be direct descriptions of particular intentional relations involving agents in situations. Thus, unlike adults, who often take a more abstract form of explanation that focuses mainly on agent disposition or situation, depending on culture, the children in both cultures provide a more balanced and concrete combination of first- and third-person information, thus more evenly weighing agent and situation in their explanations (See also, Peevers & Secord, 1973 ; and Ruble, Feldman & Higgins, 1979). Only later, and as a result of cultural learning, do adults diverge in their attributions, and these attributions tend toward greater abstractness and generality. The direction of this cultural impact on development may be due to the fact that westerners are taught to take an individualistic approach to action, thus emphasizing dispositions of individual agents rather than their situations, whereas Indians are taught to take a communal or collective approach to action, thus emphasizing role relations and other contextual variables eliciting actions, rather than emphasizing the dispositions of agents. The former leads westerners to emphasize their own third-person perspective of the actor's intentional relations as an observer, while the latter leads easterners to emphasize a first-person point of view of the actor's intentional relations even as an observer.

That observers can become like actors even in a western context is indicated in studies of actor-observer phenomena involving friends and strangers (e.g., Andersen, Glassman, & Gold, 1998 ; Prentice, 1990 ; cf. Wells, Petty, Harkins, Kagehro, & Harvey, 1977 ; and Wolfson and Salancik, 1977, for two other procedures that motivate observers to adopt an actor's point of view). When friends are involved in interaction, the actor has a greater tendency to take a dispositional view of her own activities in the interaction, and to take a situational view of the actions of the friend, as compared to attributions made when interacting with a stranger. Thus a friend is a sort of another self, whose perspective one has a tendency to adopt even in her interactions with self. However, whereas such an effect in a western context may occur in only limited situations, because of its individualistic ideology, in an eastern context, it tends to be adopted more widely, because of its communal ideology.

Divergent perspectives in intergroup social cognition

While most social psychologists have focused on divergence in interpersonal perception, there has also been some interest in divergence in intergroup perception. Furthermore, this research has an even longer history, going back to a study by Hastorf and Cantril (1954). In their study, Dartmouth and Princeton students observed films of a particularly brutal football game between the two universities. The students were then asked to describe and evaluate what they saw. The results showed a divergence in intergroup attributions. Dartmouth students, who were essentially in agreement with each other, saw the game as a rough one, and thought that both teams used equally dirty tactics. Princeton students had an opposing view of the game. They collectively saw the Dartmouth team as the much more guilty party for the dirty tactics. Thirty years later this experiment was replicated using the same film and with the same results (Loy & Andrews, 1981). It seems that, somehow, which school you attend determines what you see and think about the event. Individuals from the same school see the event in the same way, but differ radically from individuals associated with the opponent school.

Unlike Heider's theory of interpersonal perception, the Hastorf and Cantril experiment failed to spawn an industry of related research. This may be due to the individualistic orientation of most North American social psychologists, which differs from the more collective orientation of their European colleagues (See, Augoustinos and Walker, 1995). Nevertheless, there have been both theoretical formulations and important studies on both sides of the Atlantic, which have advanced our understanding of intergroup attributional processes. That the phenomena found by Hastorf and Cantril generalizes beyond university football games to much more significant relations between groups has been demonstrated in a study of attributional differences between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (Hunter, Stringer, and Watson, 1991). Participants in this study were shown newsreels of Catholic and Protestant violence that had been rated as equally violent by foreign exchange students from other countries. The films were then shown to Catholic and Protestant students at the University of Ulster, who were asked to explain in their own words what was happening in the video, and to explain why they thought that the people involved behaved as they did. In accordance with attributional concepts, participant responses were coded either as internal to the actors or external. The results were clear. Catholics gave more internal (dispositional) attributions to Protestant violence and more external (situational) attributions to Catholic violence. Protestants reversed these attributions.

Attributions similar to those in the Northern Ireland study have also been found to apply in less heated conflicts, for instance, involving gender (Abbey, 1982) and race (Duncan, 1976 ; but see, Sagar & Schofield, 1980 ; and Hewstone, 1990). Nevertheless, in explaining any of these intergroup phenomena, it is important to note the major role that motivations play in the results. It is not merely an issue of observing an event and empathizing with one side or the other because one shares a social identity with that particular side, though this certainly comes into play here. Very strong motivations are also involved that have not come up very often in the interpersonal attributional literature that we have discussed so far. Nevertheless, we have considered, though briefly, one related effect associated with individual attribution. This is the finding that actors have a tendency to provide more self attributions for successful or positive outcomes involving self, than for negative outcomes (See e.g. Zuckerman, 1979). In the case of negative outcomes actors tend to attribute the outcomes to others involved or to other aspects of the situation. In other words, in non-neutral contexts the attribution to self versus situation is a function of positivity or negativity of outcome. This is a very strong effect, much stronger, it would seem, than the actor-observer effect, and this effect is probably more independent of cultural influence than the actor-observer effect. The impact of such a motivational bias is likely to be especially strong when the situation that one is in involves another individual or group that one dislikes, or is prejudiced against. Indeed, biased motivational effects on attribution have been hypothesized to be strongest in an intergroup setting (Pettigrew, 1979 ; Hewstone, 1990). Racial and other forms of intergroup prejudice can be taken as extreme forms of this motivational bias to favor one's own group over others in attributional contexts.

In interpreting the Dartmouth-Princeton results (and, by implication, religious conflict at Ulster and comparable findings involving gender and race), we now have two factors with which to account for the divergent attributions : information and motivation. Both factors lead to a divergence in their accounts of actions by the two teams.

Dartmouth and Princeton students, by identifying with their "own" team, adopt the viewpoint of that team in observing the interactions occurring on the field. By processing the information that is available from the point of view of their own team, while also maintaining the motivations of that team, they will tend to view their team's actions as "justified" responses to the situation that they are in and warranted by the actions of the other team. The other team will be seen as frustrating the intentions of their favored team, sometimes doing so by overly "rough" and "dirty" tactics. The illegal and immoral nature of the other team's activities will be salient to them, but not com-

parable activity on the part of their own team. Because of the viewpoint they adopt, they will tend to dismiss, or ignore, comparable acts by their own team. When adopting the viewpoint of their team they will engage in the same kind of defensive or self-serving attributions that the players themselves would produce. Their motivations are the same and strongly biased to see their own team's behavior in a positive light and the opponent team's behavior in a negative light. So they reproduce, in effect, the view that the actors themselves doubtless experience during the game. Even though the student spectators technically have a neutral position relative to the game and might produce similar inferences regardless of the team or university with which they identify, their identification is enough for them to adopt the standpoint of the players of that team and to make inferences comparable to those that the players themselves would make about the game. They experience the game from the first-person point of view of their own team members both informationally and motivationally, and they take a strongly negative third-person, point of view of the opponent team members. Hence, situational attributions of a positive sort tend to apply to their accounts of their own team's negative behavior, while dispositional attributions apply to their accounts of the other team's negative behavior. The reverse is the case for any positive behavior involving members of the two teams. The result is that there tends to be uniformity in the views of students from each of the universities, but a wide divergence between students of the two universities — a divergence that can maintain itself from one generation of students to another generation thirty years later.

Conclusion

In the present article I have attempted to provide a general account of divergence in the perception of events involving self and other and also between own and other groups. This account has been based on the fundamental difference that occurs in first- versus third-person perception of events. I have suggested that human understanding of intentional activities of self and other is fundamentally the same under a wide range of circumstances and that humans usually agree on the meaning of their own and each other's actions. However, there are two factors that tend to produce biases in social perception and understanding of human actions. The first of these is that our access to the meaning of social behavior requires us to engage in imaginative empathy as well as direct perception. The extra effort required to use imagination can lead to biases in perception of the actions of self and other. This is especially the case when the second factor that affects social perception is also involved. This second factor is that we are motivated to bias our interpretations of events in a self-serving manner. Under these circumstances, when it is to our

advantage not to put extra effort into the necessary imaginative or empathic component, an actor and observer can come to different interpretations of the action. This kind of bias seems to occur most strongly in motivated competitive interactions and is especially strong when this competition is between groups. In such circumstances there develops uniformity in the social representations of the activities of each group relative to the other group, where members in each group tend to agree with each other and have opposing views to those in the other group. According to the present account the source of the problem is that individuals adopt the first-person perspective of members of their own group and a third-person perspective of members of the opposite group. This leads to uniformity in viewpoint of actors and observers of one group and divergence with actors and observers of other groups. The root of the problem is that sharing a viewpoint with others in one's group is the habitual and original source of all social understanding. The distinction of "us" and "them" is more foundational to social understanding than is the distinction of self and other. Even so, if IRT is correct in its analysis of the origins of uniform representations, then it should be possible to overcome even the worst of interpersonal and intergroup biases. All that is required is an active empathic imagination on the part of all concerned.

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