

## **Implications of Dispositional Overattribution for Film and Television Narrative**

*Bruce Hutchinson*

A large amount of social psychology research has been devoted to the question of causal attribution, that is how we understand the actions we observe people take and why they perform those actions. Causal attribution is also an important question in film viewing, as viewers must constantly decide why characters do what they do. As Joseph Anderson has argued, movies engage many of the same perceptual and cognitive mechanisms as the real world (Anderson 1996). When viewers watch films and try to understand characters' motivations, they engage in a similar process to the one they use in the real world (Hutchinson 2008). The main difference is that a character's actions have no direct influence on the viewer; success or failure in accurately judging the reasons for a character's actions have no real consequences on the viewer, other than on the viewer's potential understanding or enjoyment of the film. In the real world, accuracy of causal attribution can have important consequences for the observer of action. Despite the lack of consequence, viewers nevertheless engage in causal attribution when watching films, and they do so for three primary reasons. First, if they did not, they might not understand the film. Second, much of this process is automatic (Gilbert 1988), and to willfully suspend this process would be to refuse to attend to the film. Finally, even in ambiguous situations, many viewers will do the required work to understand character action because, presumably, that is one of the reasons they choose to watch films (Hutchinson 2008).

One of the interesting findings in causal attribution research is that when people attempt to understand the causes behind a person's behavior, they tend, in many

circumstances, to attribute behavior to the person's disposition, rather than, or more so than, to the situation or circumstances in which the person is behaving. This is popularly known as the fundamental attribution error or correspondence bias. Researchers disagree as to the causes of this dispositional bias and how exactly it functions and should be considered. Some researchers have hypothesized that this phenomenon exists primarily in experimental situations and not in the complex situations of the real world (Forsterling 2001). Others have noted that the effect may not be cross-cultural (Norenzayan and Nisbett 2000). Despite these possibilities, research continues on this issue. As with causal attribution in general, dispositional bias has some interesting implications for cinematic narration, both in terms of audience perception of character and specific manipulation by filmmakers. These implications are the focus of this article. However, before the unique cinematic aspects of this phenomenon can be explored, some basic aspects of attribution, and the bias in particular, need to be addressed.

### Basic Attribution<sup>1</sup>

When observers attempt to understand the cause of behavior in a real person, or a character in a movie, they do two things. First, they identify the person's behavior. This includes identifying his intention and his action. Second, they attribute this behavior to either the person's disposition, the circumstances of the situation, or both. This division of attribution into internal or external causes was popularized by Harold Kelley's covariation theory (Gilbert 1998). Kelley's conceptualization was that the potential cause of a behavior "covaries" over time with observed effects (Forsterling 2001). As observers identify and attribute a variety of actions, they begin to integrate the assortment

of dispositions they have assigned to a person, and begin to form an overall impression of that person (Gilbert 1998).

While identification and attribution had traditionally been considered separate stages, Yaacov Trope developed an influential model that proposes an interaction between the two stages. In Trope's model, observers make use of both prior knowledge of a person and their previous behaviors, as well as knowledge of the current situation. In identifying the action, previous knowledge and situational knowledge are additive. For example, if an observer perceives a friend yelling at his dog, the observer will attempt to identify the action. In the past, when the observer witnessed a similar behavior, the friend had been reprimanding the dog. Furthermore, the observer sees the dog holding a chewed up shoe in his mouth. Previous knowledge and current situational knowledge add up to the identification that the friend is scolding the dog. The effects may also be contextual. That is, by witnessing the friend's behavior, and recalling past examples of similar behavior, the observer may be even more likely to assess the current situation as one that requires the friend to scold his dog. In addition to identifying the action, the observer also attributes it. However, in attributing action, while previous knowledge is additive, situational knowledge is subtractive. Previous knowledge of the friend's similar behavior will make the observer more likely to attribute this behavior to his disposition and conclude that the friend is a scold. Conversely, knowledge that the situation calls for the friend to behave in this way will make the observer less likely to attribute the behavior to the friend's disposition (Trope 1986).

#### Dispositional Overattribution

Ever since Kelley popularized dividing attribution into internal and external causes, researchers have found that observers tend to have a preference for attributing behavior to internal (disposition) rather than external (situational) causes. For example, McArthur found that when an effect was set-up to covary with a person (internal or dispositional cause), subjects made attributions to the person 82% of the time. However, when the effect was set-up to co-vary with an external cause, subjects made attribution to the external cause only 63% of the time (Forsterling 2001). Given the expectation that both percentages should be equal, the lower percentage in the external cause situation indicates that subjects were more likely to make a dispositional attribution, even when the experimental condition indicated an external, or situational explanation. This phenomenon has been widely replicated and observed by researchers (Gilbert 1998).

A variety of explanations have been proposed for this propensity for dispositional attribution. The two labels for this phenomenon reflect two different approaches: fundamental attribution error and correspondence bias. Fundamental attribution error assumes dispositional overattribution is problematic, that the observer has done something wrong and that there is a better, more logical way to operate. It also assumes that the observer has simply ignored or been unable to incorporate situational explanations. Bias, on the other hand, assumes that observers are simply more likely to attribute causes to disposition, that they may actually have reason to do so, and that they may still consider situational variables (Zebrowitz 1990). Recent research favors this latter approach.

An evolutionary approach may also favor an assumption of bias rather than error. The key, as Leslie Zebrowitz points out, is that dispositional overattribution may reflect

an automatic process that most of the time yields accurate judgments. That is, even if dispositional bias occasionally leads to errors in attribution, as long as it usually leads to accurate judgments it may be adaptive. Furthermore, overattribution may be the safer approach to causal attribution. That is, assuming that a behavior reflects a person's disposition will be safer than assuming a behavior reflects temporary situational influences. Errors of underattribution, on the other hand, may be dangerous. For example, assuming that the violent behavior of a person is situational and temporary, and that the person is normally safe to be around, is much more dangerous than assuming the person is dispositionally violent and choosing to avoid that person. Even if a dispositional attribution is in error, it is unlikely that choosing to avoid the person will turn out to be the more dangerous option. Because both "error" and "bias" are weighted with specific assumptions, the fundamental attribution error or correspondence bias will be referred to with the more neutral label "dispositional overattribution."

In order to clarify the various situations in which dispositional overattribution can be found, Gilbert outlines four general categories: egotism, circumstantialism, idealism, and realism.<sup>2</sup> The first, egotism, involves situations in which assuming dispositional inferences will be more beneficial than assuming situational ones. For example, research has shown that when observers will have to predict a person's behavior in a future situation, they tend to look for more stable (i.e. dispositional) causes to explain current behavior. This will allow them at least the illusion of believing they can more accurately maneuver in the upcoming situation.

The second category, circumstantialism, grows out of Fritz Heider's statement that, "behavior in particular has such salient properties it tends to engulf the total field"

(1958 p. 54). That is, observers tend to focus almost entirely on what is happening in the present. Situational contexts that happened before the onset of behavior or that the observer is aware of, but are not currently present, may not be given proper consideration by the observer. This same situation may also occur when the situation does present salient information, but the observer is unable to use it, perhaps because of the complexity of the situation (Gilbert et al 1988). The result is that the observer assumes that the behaviors can be directly attributed to the person, and must therefore be dispositional.

The third category, idealism, refers to observer expectation of the situation. If observers believe that a situation has certain requirements for success, they may be more likely to ascribe those requirements to a person's behavior in that situation. For example, if observers perceive a person teaching, and they believe that such a situation calls for the person to be extroverted, they may be more likely to judge the person as being extroverted. Of course, idealism is somewhat paradoxical, since it is knowledge of the situation (teaching requires extroversion) that makes observers less likely to attribute extroverted behavior to the demands of the situation. In further research building on his integrated identification and attribution model, Trope and colleagues confirmed this does happen.

The final category, realism, concerns conditions in which observers make attributions based on what they perceive before them and are unable to understand how the situation may differ from what it appears to be. For example, if observers witness a first time teacher fumbling over a lesson, they may attribute this to a particular

disposition (poor speaking skills, lack of focus, inability to connect with others), because they have never taught and therefore do not comprehend the situation's difficulty.

While these various aspects of dispositional overattribution were originally discovered as exceptions to what attribution theories predicted, a number of researchers have incorporated just such an assumption into their theories. Quattrone (1982), for example, suggested that observers make use of an "anchoring/adjustment" in which they assume that behavior corresponds with disposition and then make an adjustment for situational contexts. However, this adjustment is influenced by the anchor, meaning that even after adjusting for the situation, observers are still biased toward the dispositional attribution.

Trope's integrated identification/attribution model also predicts dispositional overattribution, as noted above (Trope 1988). Previous knowledge of a situation may lead to the expectation of a certain behavior. When a person displays the behavior, observers' expectations may cause them to see the behavior as stronger than it actually is, since they are attuned to signs of that behavior. This in turn will cause observers to overattribute the behavior to disposition (Gilbert 1998).

Finally, Gilbert and colleagues (1988), borrowing from both Quattrone and Trope, have proposed a model in which attribution becomes two steps, rather than one. In this model, observers automatically attribute behavior to disposition. They then move into a "correction" stage, considered a more conscious process, in which they make adjustments to their dispositional attribution based on situational information. In a set of experiments, two subject groups were given situational explanations for observed behavior in seven short video clips, and were asked to make attributions afterward. One group was also

given the task of remembering what the situations were in each clip. Both groups were able to make dispositional attributions, but the “cognitively busy” group was unable to use situational information to correct their dispositional attribution. According to the authors, this suggests that using situational information to correct a dispositional attribution is a conscious process that requires effort. Observers are likely to skip this correctional stage if they have, or are given, other things to attend to.

### Cinematic Aspects of Dispositional Attribution

Dispositional overattribution plays a role in how viewers understand and make attributions to characters in films. Because viewers are prone, under certain circumstances, to overattribute causes to disposition, filmmakers can manipulate the narrative to make use of this aspect of human nature. Specifically, filmmakers can make use of three of the four categories of dispositional overattribution: circumstantialism, idealism, and realism. The fourth category, egoism, which involves the observer benefiting from making dispositional attributions, is not relevant since film viewers do not interact with movie characters and therefore do not gain from trying to assign stable qualities to characters.

### Range of Information

One of the most common ways filmmakers manipulate viewer causal attributions is through the manipulation of range of information. As defined by David Bordwell, range of information concerns how much access we have to characters other than the protagonist. Restricted range of information limits the viewer primarily to information available to the protagonist. Unrestricted range of information, on the other hand, allows the viewer access to a wide range of information, including information concerning other

characters not available to the protagonist (Bordwell 1985). While some genres, such as detective films, lean heavily toward restricted range of information, most films tend to be unrestricted. However, within any given film, range of information can vary, being unrestricted for a while, and then becoming more restricted for a particular scene or sequence.

Manipulation of range of information can utilize dispositional overattribution to create viewer attitudes toward characters. Specifically, if situational information is withheld, viewers will be more likely to attribute behavior to disposition. This is a function of the circumstantialism category of dispositional overattributions, as the lack of situational information places all of the observer's focus on the person performing the action. In the real world, an observer's ability to access situational information is dependent on knowledge of past events, including those immediately preceding the behavior. In a film, knowledge of past events and information is controlled by the filmmaker, who can choose to provide, or withhold, key information. Providing the information may make viewers more likely to attribute a behavior to situation (or at least less likely to attribute it to disposition). Withholding the information may cause the opposite effect.

An example can be found in the first few scenes of Notorious. The film opens at the sentencing of John Huberman to 20 years in prison for treason (the implication is that he a Nazi spy). His daughter Alicia Huberman emerges from the courtroom and is besieged by reporters whom she ignores. At the end of the scene, after Alicia has left, one man tells another, "Let us know if she tries to leave town." It is unclear who these men are. In the next scene, Alicia hosts a late night party with a number of upper crust

friends. She is drunk and encourages the partygoers to continue drinking. She also flirts with a man whose back is to the camera. After she sends the partygoers home, the man is revealed to be Cary Grant, though his character's identity is unknown. The two flirt, and then leave for a drive. Before they do, Grant's character twice expresses concern that Alicia will get cold, and wraps a handkerchief around Alicia's exposed midriff. In the next scene, the drunken Alicia drives fast and dangerously, trying to rattle Grant's character, before they are finally pulled over by a policeman.

At this point, viewers have watched a number of different behaviors and identified and attributed them. Alicia's behaviors include drinking heavily, flirting, and trying to scare Grant's character. It would be normal to attribute Alicia's behavior to her disposition, leading viewers to assume she is a drunk, a flirt, and a daredevil. However, viewers have been given some key situational information in the opening scene, namely that Alicia's father has been convicted of treason. This difficult and disturbing event may explain Alicia's erratic and extreme behavior, making a dispositional attribution less likely. The behavior of Grant's character includes drinking heavily, flirting, and also being kind by expressing concern that Alicia will get cold. Again, it would be normal to attribute this behavior to disposition: Grant's character is a drunk and a flirt, but also kind. Unlike Alicia's situation, the audience has no situational information to counter this attribution, and will most likely assume that these are dispositions of Grant's character.<sup>3</sup>

However, after Alicia is pulled over for speeding, Grant's character, who the viewer soon learns is named Devlin, hands identification to the police officer, who apologizes, salutes, and quickly departs. Both Alicia and the audience realize that Devlin

is a federal agent. At this point, viewers may adjust their dispositional attribution, because Devlin's status as an agent presents the audience with situational knowledge that they did not have before. Devlin's drinking and flirting can now be seen as attempts to insinuate himself with Alicia, and are much less likely to be seen as dispositional traits. Devlin's kindness may be harder to judge, but it too may be less likely viewed as dispositional. This manipulation of viewers is a result of range of information. In these first few scenes, the narration is restricted to Alicia. This means that viewers have access to situational knowledge concerning her; however, it also means viewers do not have situational knowledge concerning Devlin. If range of information was unrestricted, there may have been a scene before the party in which Devlin is introduced as an agent and given instructions. If so, viewers would not have attributed his drinking and flirting to dispositional traits, but would have understood those behaviors as motivated by the situation. The most obvious result of withholding Devlin's status as an agent is surprise when the audience discovers the truth. More importantly, however, the audience's need to correct their dispositional attribution has two important consequences. First, dispositional attributions are not easy to correct. While viewers are unlikely to hold on to the extreme disposition of Devlin as a drunk, they may be more likely to hold on to the dispositions of Devlin as a flirt and a kind man. These lingering dispositions are useful later on in both helping to understand Devlin falling in love with Alicia and in helping too not judge him too harshly when he treats Alicia cruelly because she agrees to go undercover as the mistress of a friend of her father's. Second, because the initial dispositions of Devlin contradict his behavior as a professional, viewers must be more careful in the future of making dispositional attributions to Devlin. Interestingly, these

two consequences are contradictory, meaning viewers may be more inclined to view Devlin as kind, but are also always wary of assuming future acts of kindness are dispositional. This is, of course, what makes Devlin an interesting character, and the contradiction is not resolved until Devlin finally rescues Alicia at the end of the film.

### Depth of Information

Causal attributions can also be manipulated through the depth of information presented. Bordwell defines depth of information as the kind of information presented for a particular character. Most classical Hollywood films are dominated by objective information. The only information about a character that viewers have access to is what they see the character doing or what they hear the character say. At times, however, viewers may be given access to subjective information. This can be perceptual, when viewers see a point of view shot from a character's perspective. It may also be psychological, when for example, viewers hear internal character thoughts through voice over narration or sees internal thoughts through flashbacks, dreams, or other visual devices (Bordwell 1985).

Because most films are limited to objective information, causal attribution of character motivation is limited to the objective information the audience sees and hears. Unlike real life, where we can ask a person why he did something, in movies we have no access to a character's reasons for his actions. This is especially important when a character lies, or chooses to act opposite to what he believes. In this case, viewers will make a dispositional attribution because the only situational information to counter such an attribution exists in the character's mind. As with the case of range of information, the

attribution is based solely on the person performing the action, and is an example of circumstantialism.

An example of this type of situation occurs in Season 6 of the television show 24. Tom Lennox is President Wayne Palmer's Chief of Staff. After a nuclear explosion set off by terrorists, Tom recommends an aggressive response that the President rejects. Sensing Tom's frustration, his aide Reed, who is working for a cabal bent on replacing what they view as a weak president, approaches Tom with a proposition that not so subtly suggests they assassinate the President. Tom rejects the proposition, but after more bad news, approaches Reed with a change of heart, agreeing that the President must be dispatched. Tom is complicit in the plot until he discovers the specific details of the assassination. At that point, Tom attempts to alert the Secret Service, but is discovered and subdued by Reed.

As in the example of Notorious, when 24's Tom agrees to help kill the President, viewers must identify and attribute his actions. His action is a betrayal, and given that the President is presented as reasonable and likable figure, the only situational knowledge that the audience has is Tom's previous disagreement with the President. Even if the disagreement is an important one, it does not justify assassinating the President. Therefore, Tom's actions lead to a dispositional attribution. He is a traitor. This assumption is aided by him acting in a somewhat ruthless (though not evil) fashion in the past. What the viewer does not know is that Tom has decided to go along with the plot in order to uncover the details, so that he can report them to the Secret Service. The lack of situational knowledge to understand Tom's actions is due to objective range of information. Voice over narration from Tom, informing the viewer of his true intentions,

would allow an attribution of Tom's behavior to the situation, rather than to his disposition. This plot twist is especially surprising exactly because viewers assumed Tom was a traitor, rather than that he was simply acting in a traitorous way. If people tended to withhold attribution or constantly ran through all possible situational explanations for behavior, Tom's reversal would not be especially surprising.

### Situational Intensity

One key difference between movies and the real world is that movies tend to portray characters in much more intense situations than are normally found in real life. This is especially true of action-adventure, mystery-suspense, horror, and science fiction films. The intensity of situations can have opposing influences on a viewer's tendency for dispositional attribution. In some cases, intense situations may reinforce dispositional overattribution, while others may reduce that tendency. A return to the show 24 provides examples of each.

The reinforcement of dispositional attributions in intense situations can be a result of the effects of the category Gilbert terms realism. Realism results when observers fail to understand the true nature of a situation, believing that they fully understand what is happening because they are witnessing it. An example occurs in a scene from Season 6 of 24, when gunmen corner two characters, Milo and Marilyn. Milo is an agent for the Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU), while Marilyn is a civilian. Milo tells Marilyn he will lay down cover fire, and that she should use the opportunity to run away and find help. Milo begins firing and draws return fire. Marilyn begins to run away, but then becomes scared of the gunfire, freezes, and returns to Milo. He rebukes her and the two are captured shortly thereafter. Viewers watching Marilyn's behavior might be tempted to

attribute her fear to a fearful disposition (as I initially did). Although the situation offers reason to act fearfully, the viewer who fails to fully appreciate how frightening the situation is likely to make a dispositional overattribution. A viewer may think something along the lines of, “Get out of there!” or even, “If I was in that situation I’d run like hell!” Milo’s reaction to Marilyn’s failure may have reinforced such a response. In this case, the producers might have counted on such a dispositional attribution so that they could later surprise the viewer with an act of bravery on Marilyn’s part. Otherwise, if the producers did not desire such a reaction in the viewer, they might have shot the scene to try to avoid the dispositional attribution. They could, for example, have made the situation more obviously frightening, or perhaps just made Milo’s reaction more sympathetic to Marilyn’s failure to run.

Dispositional overattribution in intense situations may also be caused by the effect of the category Gilbert labels idealism. Here, observers assume that in order to perform in a certain situation, a person must possess certain traits, and therefore are more likely to see those traits as a result of the situation. An intense situation might be more likely to make this happen. When viewers watch action movies, for example, it would be natural to assume that action heroes find themselves in intense, dangerous situations because they have the unique set of traits to deal with those situations. In Season 2 of 24, CTU agent Jack Bauer acts bravely and unselfishly by flying a plane with a nuclear bomb on it to the desert in order to insure it detonates far from a populated area. The viewer will see Bauer as a brave and unselfish person partly because, presumably, only brave and unselfish people would do something like that.

Intense situations may also reduce dispositional attribution. This seems the more likely result, as an intense situation should be more likely to cause an observer to attribute behavior to the situation. For example, Jack Bauer is famous for torturing his enemies for information. He does this in almost every season of 24. In Season 6, Jack tortures his own brother Graem by asphyxiating him with a plastic bag and then later pumping him full of hyocine-pentothal. These cruel, sadistic actions could very easily lead viewers to a dispositional attribution of Jack as a cruel, sadistic person (and probably has for some viewers). However, a nuclear bomb has just exploded in Los Angeles, and terrorists have three more bombs in their possession. Jack believes Graem possesses information about the bombs and CTU has no other leads. The intense situation provides a discounting effect, making a dispositional attribution less likely. That is, Jack isn't cruel and sadistic, but he does have a good reason to behave that way.

### Character Saliency

One type of attribution bias that may or may not lead to dispositional overattribution is known as “illusory causation effect.” Researchers have found that in situations where two people are interacting, observers tend to attribute the cause of behavior to the more “salient” of the two interactors (Zebrowitz 1990). This is an aspect of circumstantialism in which what is attended to most is seen as the cause of the behavior. Saliency can take a wide range of forms. The person who is larger, moving, more brightly lit, more colorful, louder, or facing the actor, may be more likely to be seen as the cause of an observed behavior. The possibilities of illusory causation effect in movies are wide ranging and could be deeply explored. On the most obvious level, when the adventurers in The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring encounter the

Balrog, their fear and subsequent flight is easily attributed to the situational cause of the Balrog, who is a very salient creature, rather than any fearful disposition on their part. Had the Balrog been a mouse-like creature, the same actions would more likely have been perceived as dispositional in the group of travelers. In a more subtle example, Alicia's flirtations with Devlin at the beginning of Notorious are more likely to be attributed to Alicia, who is facing the camera, and wearing a noticeable striped blouse, than to Devlin, who is silent, in the dark, and with his back to the camera. Had Devlin been more salient and brightly lit, viewers might be more likely to attribute Alicia's flirtations to Devlin's good looks (he is after all Cary Grant) than to some disposition of Alicia. Because saliency can be created through a wide range of subtle, cinematic tools (costume, lighting, staging), it seems that the illusory causation effect deserves more attention as a method of influencing viewer attributions.

### Conclusion

Clearly, any consideration of causal attribution towards people in the real world or characters in a film must consider the role of dispositional overattribution. While films place viewers in similar attributional situations as the real world, the inability to interact directly with the characters along with the constructed nature of films, creates unique possibilities for both how dispositional overattributions function and how they can be exploited. Formal tools such as range and depth of information, stylistic tools such as lighting, costume design, and staging, and narrative situations all play a part in, and can be manipulated to influence, how a viewer balances situational and dispositional attributes in judging character motivation.

## References

- Anderson, Joseph. (1996). The Reality of Illusion: An Ecological Approach to Cognitive Film Theory. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Bordwell, David. (1985). Narration in the Fiction Film. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Forsterling, Friedrich. (2001). Attribution: An Introduction to Theories, Research, and Applications. East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press Ltd.
- Gilbert, Daniel. (1988). On Cognitive Busyness: When Person Perceivers Meet Persons Perceived. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54, 733-740.
- Gilbert, Daniel. (1998). Ordinary Personology. In Daniel Gilbert, Susan Fiske and Gardner Lindzey (Eds.), The Handbook of Social Psychology (Vol. Two), Fourth Ed. (pp. 89-150). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Heider, Fritz. (1958). The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations. New York: Wiley Press.
- Norenzayan, Ara & Nisbett, Richard E. Culture and Causal Cognition. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 9, 132-135.
- Quattrone, George A. (1982). Overattribution and Unit Formation: When Behavior Engulfs the Person. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 42, 593-607.
- Trope, Yaacov. (1986). Identification and Inferential Processes in Dispositional Attribution. Psychological Review, 93, 239-257.

Trope, Yacov, Cohen, Ofra, & Moaz, Yifat. (1988). The Perceptual and Inferential Effects of Situational Inducements on Dispositional Attribution. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 55, 165-177.

Zebrowitz, Leslie A. (1990). Social Perception. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

---

<sup>1</sup> In social psychology literature, the person watching an action is the “observer” and the person performing the action is the “actor.” However, because of the confusion the term “actor” might cause in this article, I have replaced that term with the less technical, but more easily understood “person.”

<sup>2</sup> While I find Gilbert’s four categories to be useful for understanding types of dispositional overattributions, I find his particular labels less compelling. However, for clarity and consistency I will keep his terms.

<sup>3</sup> It is likely that many viewers will recognize that Cary Grant often plays characters who are flirtatious and kind, and therefore they be more likely to attribute these dispositions to Devlin. Certainly Hitchcock, and other filmmakers in similar situations, was aware of the dispositions normally associated with movie stars. How viewers integrate the dispositions they associate with movie stars with the dispositions they assign to specific characters played by those stars is an issue worth studying.