SUSPICIOUS RECEIVERS' INTERACTION GOALS AND STRATEGIC BEHAVIORS WITHIN DATING RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

The study of suspicion in previous research has primarily focused on the impact of suspicion on deception detection accuracy or the pragmatics of suspicious receivers. The premise of the present study is that cognitive aspects of suspicious receivers must be accounted for to further understand their active participation in deceptive communication. The present study attempts to identify suspicious receivers' interaction goals and strategic behaviors and to find links between the goals and behaviors. The influence of situational and affective factors on suspicious receivers' goals and behaviors are also investigated. Data were collected from one hundred and eighty two undergraduate students within dating relationships. The results revealed four interaction goals and nine behavior categories of suspicious receivers in dating relationship. Some qualitative differences between the goals were found in terms of their association with behavioral strategies. Also, outcome involvement, relational commitment, and emotional intensity were found to have important influences on suspicious receivers' behaviors. Implications for future suspicion research are discussed as well as the study's limitations.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Many deception researchers acknowledge that deception is one of the everyday communication strategies commonly adopted for various purposes (e.g., impression management and relational maintenance) (Buller & Burgoon, 1994; DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996; McComack, 1992). In DePaulo et al.'s (1996) diary studies, participants reported telling a lie in every three to five social interactions, meaning that communicators engage in deceptive behavior in at least 20 percent of the daily interaction.

Despite the ubiquity of deception, it is repeatedly reported that receivers of the deceptive message often fail to detect the deception (Levine, Park, & McComack, 1999; McComack & Parks, 1986; Stiff, Kim, & Ramesh, 1992). Between strangers, the lack of knowledge about the sender’s idiosyncratic behavioral features is deemed to hamper the accurate detection of the sender’s deceptive demeanor (Miller, Mongeau, & Sleight, 1986). On the other hand, it was found that interactants in a developed relationship (i.e., friends and intimates) are not significantly better than strangers in assessing the dishonesty of their partner, although they have baseline knowledge of their partners’ idiosyncratic behaviors. It was argued that people hold a judgmental heuristic (i.e., truth-bias) that predisposes them to believe others’ truthfulness rather than to evaluate or to cognitively scrutinize the complex stimuli (McComack & Parks, 1986; Stiff et al., 1992). This generalized belief of the partner’s honesty was demonstrated to have substantial power over people’s deception detection accuracy, which lowered the accuracy rate significantly below chance levels (Levine et al., 1999).

However, not always does the truth-bias interfere with an individual’s deception detection. There are instances in which receivers’ predisposition toward truth-bias is
offset and the finer grained cognitive processing of the senders’ behavior is initiated. A growing number of deception studies have pointed out that suspicion reduces the receivers’ reliance on the truth-bias and motivates the receivers to assess the veracity of the messages from the senders (Buller, Strzyzewski, & Comstock, 1991; Burgoon, Buller, Dillman, & Walther, 1995; Burgoon, Buller, Ebesu, White, & Rockwell, 1996; McCornack & Levine, 1990b; Stiff et al., 1992).

The previous studies in suspicion literature are oriented in two main directions: the impact of suspicion on (a) the receiver’s deception detection accuracy and (b) the interactional patterns of deceptive communication. The studies on a suspicious receiver’s deception detection accuracy examined how one or the combination of the following factors affect the receiver’s deception detection accuracy: the presence of suspicion (Tons & DePaulo, 1985; Stiff et al., 1992), the level of suspicion (McCornack & Levine, 1990b), the receiver’s probing (Buller et al., 1991), the relationship between interactants (McCornack & Parks, 1986). Overall, suspicion has been found to be a significant factor to decrease the receiver’s truth-bias and, when in its moderate level, increase the deception detection accuracy. In terms of pragmatics, it was found that a suspicious receiver strategically controls the expression of his or her suspicion, while nonstrategically leaking the uneasiness of suspicion (Buller & Burgoon, 1996; Buller et al., 1991; Burgoon et al., 1995, 1996).

Although the previous suspicion studies enhanced our knowledge of the impact of suspicion on a receiver’s deception detection accuracy and shed better insights into the interplay between the receiver’s suspicion and the pragmatics of deceptive communication, our understanding of suspicion is still incomplete. One of the missing pieces in the puzzle of suspicion is the suspicious receiver’s cognitions. Little is known
about the cognitive mechanisms underlying the receiver’s strategic suspicion displays. Also, previous suspicion studies failed to fully explain what it takes for the receivers to be better able to detect deception. It is a receiver’s cognition that links his or her aroused suspicion to the behavior. Thus, there is a significant need for communication researchers to examine the role of a suspicious receiver’s cognition in deceptive communication.

The present study aims to explore the suspicious receiver’s cognition and its relation to his or her behavior within dating relationships. The principal question is what the receiver’s interaction goals and behaviors are and how the goals are associated with strategic behaviors. In addition, the impact of three antecedents (i.e., outcome involvement, relationship commitment, and emotional intensity) on a suspicious receiver’s goals and behaviors is also examined. In the following sections, the previous suspicion literature is reviewed and the findings from relevant research areas are applied to the context of suspicion. Through this exploratory analysis, suspicious receivers’ primary interaction goals and the various types of strategic behaviors enacted to achieve the goals are identified, and the relationship between the goals and the behaviors are examined. Finally, how outcome involvement, relational commitment, and emotional intensity relate to the goals and the behaviors are investigated.

Suspicion in Deceptive Communication

Individuals hold strong expectations about communication with others (Burgoon & Walther, 1990; Grice, 1989). The expectations function as mental guidelines, which direct people to make decisions with less cognitive effort (Hubbell, Mitchell, & Gee, 2001; Stiff et al., 1992). One such expectation is the belief that persons will be truthful in a conversation (Grice, 1989). That is, individuals enter into interactions with a general belief that their conversational partner is truthful to them. A stimulus deviant from this
pre-conversational expectation hinders the receiver’s reliance on the heuristic judgment of the partner’s truthfulness and provokes suspicion, which leads the receiver to initiate a more systematic process of the situational cues (Burgoon, 1992).

Suspicion is a belief, held without definite certainty, that a person’s behavior is untruthful (Buller & Burgoon, 1996). Previous studies have found that a sender’s violation of a receiver’s pre-conversational expectancy provokes a receiver’s suspicion (Burgoon, 1992; Burgoon et al., 1996). The two lines of research that hint at the impact of suspicion on deceptive communication are the research on deception detection accuracy (Buller et al., 1991; McCormack & Levine, 1990b; McCormack & Parks, 1986; Stiff et al., 1992; Toris & DePaulo, 1985; Zuckerman, Spiegel, DePaulo, & Rosenthal, 1982), and the work of Buller, Burgoon, and their associates (Buller & Burgoon, 1996; Buller et al., 1991; Burgoon et al., 1995; 1996) on the pragmatics of deceptive communication.

A number of studies attempted to associate suspicion with deception detection accuracy. The studies have found that suspicion attenuates the impact of truth-bias and increases the scrutiny of the other’s behavior (Buller et al., 1991; Stiff et al., 1992). The research findings were inconsistent on whether suspicion enhances the deception detection accuracy rate. Increases in suspicion were found to decrease one’s decoding accuracy in one study (Zuckerman et al., 1982), while no relationship was found between suspicion and deception detection accuracy in other studies (Buller et al., 1991; Stiff et al., 1992; Toris & DePaulo, 1985). Regarding the inconsistent findings, McCormack and Levine (1990b) argued that there was a curvilinear relationship between suspicion and deception-detection accuracy, which indicates that only a moderate level of suspicion increased one’s deception detection accuracy, while a low or high level of suspicion entails biased cognitive processing (i.e., truth-bias or lie-bias).
On the other hand, a handful of studies have investigated how a receiver’s suspicion is behaviorally displayed in the interaction. While investigating the interactants’ behavioral sequences in deceptive communication, researchers have found that a suspicious receiver strategically controls the display of suspicion; for example, Buller et al. (1991) found that suspicious receivers utilized a more positive and accepting probing style than nonsuspicious receivers. This indicated that receivers were trying to conceal their suspicion by demonstrating a greater level of acceptance. Likewise, subsequent studies have shown that suspicious receivers displayed more kinesic pleasantness and immediacy (Burgoon et al., 1995), smiled longer, and showed an increased level of dominance and global involvement (Burgoon et al., 1996). Again, this suggests that receivers were attempting to suppress the overt display of their suspicion by the strategic behavioral manipulations.

Put together, previous suspicion studies have found that suspicion reduces a receiver’s reliance on the truth-bias (McCornack & Levine, 1990b; Stiff et al., 1992) and leads a receiver to strategically control the degree of overt suspicion displays (Buller et al., 1992; Burgoon et al., 1995; Burgoon et al., 1996). Although the previous studies successfully demonstrated the significant role of suspicion in deceptive communication, several methodological limitations remain, which leads to a need for further exploration of the phenomenon.

The methodological limitations of the previous suspicion studies primarily originate in the use of experimental designs. The experiments in the previous suspicion studies typically adopted the following procedures: Participants were randomly assigned to the role of interviewer or interviewee. Half of the interviewees were asked to provide dishonest answers to questions, while the other half of the interviewees were asked to
answer questions truthfully. The content of the interviewee’s tasks varied across the studies: providing honest or dishonest reactions to a film clip (Stiff et al., 1992), acting consistently or inconsistently with one’s own personality in a simulated job interview (Toris & DePaulo, 1985), answering truthfully or untruthfully to the Social Desirability Scale (Buller et al., 1991) or the Machiavellinism Scale (McCornack & Levine, 1990b), and showing one’s actual or simulated attitudes (Burgoon et al., 1995, 1996). Suspicion was induced in half of the interviewers. Interviewers either directly interacted with the interviewees face to face (Buller et al., 1991; Burgoon et al., 1995, 1996; Toris & DePaulo, 1985) or watched the interviewees’ videotaped responses (McCornack & Levine, 1990b; Stiff et al., 1992) and were asked to make judgments whether the interviewees were truthful or not.

The most critical limitation of the past suspicions studies resides in the unrealistic nature of the experiments. The two unrealistic manipulations are (a) the induced suspicion and (b) the honesty judgments as a given task. Suspicion in reality is not always initiated by a third party. Rather, suspicion can arise in the receiver’s mind spontaneously. Previous experimental studies could not account for the impact of such spontaneous suspicion. Also, a suspicious receiver in reality is hardly required to make an honesty judgment by a third party. How and at which moment to make an honesty judgment or even whether to make an honesty judgment completely depends on the receiver in real life interactions. Previous experimental studies failed to fully reflect such autonomy that a suspicious receiver possesses.

These unrealistic experimental manipulations result in a considerable restriction of the receiver behavior. For example, only one generic type of strategic receiver behavior was found in previous studies (i.e., responding to the sender with a heightened
level of acceptance, pleasantness, and immediacy, while concealing one's suspicion). It is very likely that the experimental nature of the studies limited the receiver's behavioral choice. As Burgoon et al. (1995) stated, the experimental task and/or laboratory setting may have discouraged interactants' normal behavior. More dynamic receiver behaviors may be found in reality where one can behave livelier with less constraint.

Another critical limitation of the previous studies is the content of suspicion. The content of the induced suspicion is largely insignificant (e.g., reactions to a film clip, reports to the various personality tests). This methodological limitation is partly inevitable because it would be unethical for the researchers to induce a suspicion to the participants on a significant matter with considerable personal relevance. Such a suspicion may hurt the research participants. Nevertheless, the relative insignificance of the content of suspicion might also have contributed to the limited behavioral choices. If the source of suspicion is more significant and personal, it is likely that more dynamic behavioral patterns will be found from the receivers.

To overcome the shortcomings of the previous suspicion studies, the present study adopts a cognitive approach to suspicion. Participants are asked to recall their experience of suspicion within dating relationships and answer the questions regarding their goals and behaviors engendered by the suspicion. It is expected that such a self-report cognitive approach could fill in the gap between the previous studies and real life communication. Also, the present study expands the scope of suspicion studies further to incorporate the cognitive aspects of a suspicious receiver. In previous studies, the cognitive mechanisms underlying a suspicious receiver's behavior were not fully described. A series of experimental studies by Buller, Burgoon, and their associates (Buller & Burgoon, 1996; Buller et al., 1991; Burgoon et al., 1995, 1996) put their focus
on the interactive nature of the deceptive communication but not on an individual’s cognition. Suspicious receiver’s behavior in the interaction was depicted purely in a behavioral perspective and no further empirical evidence is given on the receiver’s interaction goals or the underlying mechanism that led the receiver to behave in certain ways.

Of specific interest to this researcher are the interaction goals and strategic behaviors of suspicious receivers. It is presumed that a suspicious receiver’s strategic behavioral choice would largely depend on one’s interaction goals. The underlying premise here is that an individual’s interaction goals would mediate his or her strategic behaviors (Berger, 1997a). Two studies (Burgoon et al., 1995, 1996) illustrate some possible relations between a receiver’s goals and behaviors, but they were suggested on the basis of the researchers’ supposition and no empirical support was provided. Care will be taken in the present study to empirically examine the link between a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals and his or her strategic behaviors. In the following section, previous research on uncertainty reduction, interpersonal influence, emotion management, and face protection will be briefly reviewed in the context of suspicion as an attempt to identify the interaction goals of a suspicious receiver.

Suspicious Receivers’ Interaction Goals

The strategic perspective of human interaction has been of primary interest in the study of interpersonal communication processes (Berger, 1997a). The general postulate is that people seek to achieve goals and employ a variety of strategies to reach them. It is reasoned that goals engender planning, which in turn guides action (i.e., goal-planning-action sequence; Dillard, 1990). To this end, goals are the motivating forces of human behavior. The impact of goals was found to be substantial throughout various aspects of
the communication process. For example, Srull and Wyer (1986) noted that goals influence an individual's perception, interpretation, and evaluation of a message, and also impact the person's selection of behaviors. Researchers also pointed out the multiplicity of goals, which indicates that the configuration of multiple interaction goals shape an individual's message (Berger, 1997b; Dillard, 1990; Wilson, 1997).

As motives and constraints, goals are significant mediators in the generation of an individual's behavior. Therefore, the understanding of interaction goals is a crucial underpinning in theorizing about message production. In the study of deceptive communication, however, a receiver's interaction goal has not gained much attention, whereas a deceiver's interaction goal has been a primary focus of research (see Buller & Burgoon, 1994, for review). As a result, little is known about a suspicious receiver's interaction goal. Despite its apparent relevance to the study of deceptive communication, the strategic perspective of the receiver's behavior is largely in need of attention.

Hence, the present study attempts to identify a suspicious receiver's interaction goals. The underlying presumption is that a suspicious receiver would possess multiple interaction goals, the configuration of which would lead the person to engage in certain behaviors in response to the message of the sender. It is expected that identifying the goals of a suspicious receiver would provide significant insights into the receiver's strategic behavior toward deceptive communication.

Although there are not enough research findings to make specific predictions on a suspicious receiver's interaction goals, there is an a priori expectation on the finding of certain interaction goals. Specifically, it is speculated that uncertainty reduction, influence, emotion management, and face protection would be salient interaction goals of suspicious receivers. The relevant research areas are reviewed to account for this a priori expectation.
Suspicion and Uncertainty Reduction

Suspicion has not been specifically discussed in association with uncertainty in previous research, but it is highly likely that suspicion would raise uncertainty. As defined, suspicion is an uncertain belief about the other’s duplicity, which can fall at any point in the “truth-falsity judgment continuum” (Buller & Burgoon, 1996, p. 205). Buller and Burgoon’s definition of suspicion, as an uncertain psychological state due to one’s lack of confidence on judging the message veracity, is consistent with Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) conceptualization of uncertainty within interpersonal interaction. Berger and Calabrese reasoned that individuals experience uncertainty when “there are a number of plausible alternative attributions one might make for a particular communicative act” (p. 101). In deceptive communication, it appears that a receiver retroactively attempts to understand the truth behind the partner’s behavior or message and experiences uncertainty due to the insufficient amount of evidence to ensure one’s veracity judgment.

The uncertainty that a suspicious receiver may experience, however, could expand further than that from one’s decreased confidence in making a veracity judgment. Knobloch and Solomon (2002) propose that uncertainty within close relationships could be better understood when an individual’s questions, doubts, and ambiguities about the relationship involvement are taken into consideration as well as the person’s questions about the partner’s attributes. Individuals’ decreased confidence in their perceptions of involvement within interpersonal relationships constitutes “relational uncertainty” (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002, p. 245). Knobloch and Solomon reasoned that people began to doubt their partner’s participation in the relationship (i.e., partner uncertainty) as well as the relationship itself (i.e., relationship uncertainty) as a result of uncertainty
increasing events.

Therefore, it is likely that a suspicious receiver would experience uncertainty from three interdependent but distinct sources: message uncertainty, partner uncertainty, and relationship uncertainty. In addition to message uncertainty, which is noted in the definition of suspicion, partner uncertainty and relationship uncertainty are taken into consideration as reflections of relational uncertainty a suspicious receiver may experience. This expanded conceptualization of uncertainty is empirically supported by Kim’s (2004) preliminary study. The study demonstrated that suspicious receivers experience varying degrees of uncertainty about the event, the partner, and their relationship.

In addition, the present study posits that uncertainty reduction would be one of the major goals of a suspicious receiver in deceptive communication. Although not exclusively in the context of suspicion, previous research has found that uncertainty-increasing events elicit uncertainty reduction goals and lead individuals to initiate certain communicative behaviors (Guerrero & Afifi, 1999; Planalp, Rutherford, & Honeycutt, 1998). Such findings support the prediction in this study that uncertainty reduction goals would be salient goals in the unique communicative situation of suspicion experience.

**Suspicion and Influence**

According to Cody, Canary, and Smith (1994), “influence goal” is defined as an individual’s intention to make particular changes in one’s environment. Traditional communication researchers have pointed out that the direct instrumental goal to influence others is one of the fundamental concerns present in every interaction (Clark & Delia, 1979; Dillard, 1990). Accordant to this view, Cody et al. (1994) found that the goals to protect their rights (i.e., express the irritation and request a change to the target) and change relationship status (i.e., initiate, escalate, or de-escalate the relationship) were
frequently reported interpersonal influence goals among others. In addition, Roloff and Cloven (1994) contended that individuals possessed proactive goals to prevent future relational transgressions when faced with negative incidents in the relationship, such as the partner’s violation of relational rules (e.g., violence). Furthermore, Stutman and Newell (1990) discussed the influence goal to change the partner’s behavior was a primary goal of social confrontation (i.e., confronting the partner about his or her expectancy violation).

Although aforementioned findings deal with more generic communication contexts than the specific situation of suspicion, these findings largely support the present study’s speculation that influence goals would be one of the primary goals of suspicious receivers. The uncertainty that suspicion entails can be a threat to one’s relationship. Therefore, a suspicious receiver may have goals to express one’s suspicion to the partner and attempt to alter or stop the partner’s suspicion-arousing behavior (i.e., influence goal to protect rights). It is also likely that a suspicious receiver would believe that communication helps to confirm relational rules and makes the relationship stronger (i.e., influence goal to escalate the relationship). These influence goals are also related to one’s desire to prevent future occurrence of suspicion-arousing events.

**Suspicion and Emotion Management**

According to Lazarus’s (1991) Cognitive Appraisal Theory, emotion is aroused on the basis of goal relevance and goal disruption. Emotion is evoked when an individual has a personal stake in an encounter. The extent to which a person cares the issue in the encounter is directly related to the occurrence of emotions. Also, the degree to which the encounter is consistent or inconsistent with the person’s existing goals explains the valence of the emotional experience. When the event facilitates one’s goals, one is more
likely to experience positive emotions (e.g., happiness, pride, love). On the other hand, when the event thwarts personal goals, one tends to experience negative emotions (e.g., anger, fear, sadness).

In the context of romantic relationships, it is a person’s superordinate goal to maintain the relationship in a satisfactory manner (Canary & Stafford, 1994). Relational maintenance requires various types of strategic and routine maintenance behaviors, such as positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and sharing tasks (Canary & Stafford, 1994). Studies have shown that individuals engage in relational maintenance behaviors to maintain their relational satisfaction (Dainton & Aylor, 2002; Stafford & Canary, 1991). It was found that the relational maintenance behaviors, indeed, contribute to the successful maintenance of relational satisfaction (Dainton & Aylor, 2002). Therefore, it is plausible to presume that a mutual expectation exists in a dyad, whether mindful or mindless, that both parties of the dyad would engage in such maintenance behaviors (e.g., be positive, honest, loving, and share time and tasks) to maintain their relationship at a desired level of satisfaction (Canary & Stafford, 1994).

Burgoon (1992) stated that a violation of pre-conversational expectancies provokes suspicion. The pre-conversational expectancy in dating relationships is to engage in relational maintenance behaviors which are aimed for satisfactory relational maintenance. Therefore, suspicion will arise within dating relationships when one party of the dyad perceives the partner’s violation of this expectancy. Such perception of expectancy violation is relevant to the person because of the investments made for the maintenance of the relationship. Hence, suspicious receivers are much likely to experience emotional arousal due to the goal disruption. It is expected that this emotional arousal will elicit goals for emotion management on
suspicious receivers’ mind. Previous communication studies support this speculation. Roloff and Cloven (1994) found that retribution was an important goal of an individual experiencing relational transgression. Similarly, Guerrero and Afifi (1999) found that restoring relational equity through retaliation was one of the jealousy goals in their study of communicative responses to jealousy. Social confrontation literature also suggests the likelihood of emotion management goals in the context of suspicion, as Stutman and Newell (1990) demonstrated that retribution and venting frustration were two of the strategic goals for confronters.

Suspicions and Face Protection

When an individual strategically selects one’s response to the environment, one is influenced by multiple interaction goals. It is this multiplicity of goals which shapes a person’s actual behavior (i.e., suspicion display in particular). Berger and Kellermann (1983) found that people often use self-disclosure or comforting behaviors, rather than direct questioning, to bring out information from their conversational partners. It is suggested that a trade-off between efficiency and social appropriateness occurs in an attempt to gather information, which leads people to employ less efficient but more socially appropriate strategies (Berger & Kellermann, 1983).

Such compromising behaviors were found in suspicious receivers’ behaviors as well. Suspicious receivers encoded less suspicious probes (Buller et al., 1991), displayed more kinesic pleasantness and immediacy (Burgoon et al., 1995), and smiled longer while showing increased dominance and global involvement (Burgoon et al., 1996). It can be suggested that these behaviors, which are customarily associated with positive affect, allow the suspicious receiver to attain information from the sender, while displaying one’s suspicion less overtly. The trade-off has occurred here by not directly questioning
the partner’s duplicity, which could be a more efficient way to cope with one’s suspicion but conceals one’s suspicion. That is, suspicious receivers behaved in a less obtrusive way of information gathering by compromising efficiency with social appropriateness.

Kim and Wilson (1994) posit that the notion of social appropriateness can be expanded to include more fine-grained goal constructs. Three specific categories of their suggestions are (a) minimizing imposition, (b) considering the other’s feelings, and (c) avoiding disapproval of self. First, minimizing imposition entails a person’s goal to protect his or her partner’s negative face-needs. That is, people acknowledge that the partner has freedom of action and, thus, they avoid imposing on the partner’s autonomy. Second, consideration for the other’s feeling is a person’s concern about how his or her action would affect the partner’s feelings. It is related to people’s attempts to protect their partner’s positive face-need (i.e., the want to be liked). Finally, avoiding disapproval of self is related to a person’s desire to save his or her own positive face. It is speculated that people would choose strategies that would not cause, if possible, negative self-evaluation by their partner.

The three goals can be applied to the context of suspicion, specifically with regard to a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals. As discussed in the previous section, it is expected that the experience of suspicion would create uncertainty and confusion in a receiver’s mind. This uncertainty and confusion would increase a person’s need to gain more information. However, displaying suspicion may be risky because there is a possibility that one’s belief about the partner’s untruthfulness may be incorrect. Due to the insufficient evidence to support one’s belief, the display of suspicion is expected to involve face protection goals. The appropriateness of the suspicion display strategy would be extensively scrutinized in a suspicious receiver’s mind.
To sum, it is speculated here that suspicious receivers would possess uncertainty reduction, influence, emotion management, and face protection goals. This speculation is based on extant theories and research findings. However, whether this a priori expectation is reflective of the actual phenomenon is uncertain and requires further examinations.

Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

RQ1. What are the interaction goals of suspicious receivers?

Suspicious Receivers’ Strategic Behavior

Berger and Calabrese (1975) reason that uncertainty reduction is a fundamental motivation of individuals. Experiencing uncertainty about one’s partner and the relationship is a threat that can potentially harm the relationship (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002; Planalp et al., 1988). However, Knobloch and Solomon (2002) further contend that the process of uncertainty reduction provides opportunities for partners to resolve ambiguities and reaffirm commitments. Therefore, the successful negotiation of uncertainty is crucial for the maintenance of the relationship, and moreover, it can create a greater sense of togetherness by overcoming the relational threat.

However, whether an individual’s effort to reduce uncertainty in a relationship would be beneficial or detrimental depends on the individual’s communicative choices and the person’s sensitivity to relationship circumstances. This is where the suspicious receiver’s strategic behavioral choice becomes important. Three previous studies (Buller et al., 1991; Burgoon et al., 1995, 1996) found that suspicious receivers strategically controlled their suspicion to keep the interaction flow smooth. This finding indicated a strategic nature of suspicious receivers’ behavior in deceptive communication. Nevertheless, the scope of the previous suspicion studies is limited to the context of experimental environments and, thus, researchers know little about a suspicious
receiver's potential behavioral alternatives as well as the cognitive mechanisms behind suspicious receivers' behavioral choices.

To further the understanding of suspicious receivers' strategic behaviors, the present study adopted a typology of jealousy responses (Guerrero, Anderson, Jorgensen, Spitzberg, & Eloy, 1995). Although jealousy is a different area of study from suspicion, the application of Guerrero et al.'s (1995) typology to this study appeared to be reasonable for two reasons. First, jealousy and suspicion share their core characteristics: experience of uncertainty. The jealous or suspicious person has to face the potential threats to the relationship and engage in strategic behaviors to cope with the challenges. Second, it is very likely that jealousy and suspicion are interrelated subjects, because competing relationships can be an important source of suspicion, especially in romantic relationships.

Guerrero et al. (1995) identified six types of interactive responses to romantic jealousy (i.e., integrative communication, distributive communication, active distancing, general avoidance/denial, expression of negative affect, and violent communication/threats) and five types of general responses (i.e., surveillance/restriction, compensatory restoration, manipulation attempts, rival contacts, and violent behavior).

Under the assumption that Guerrero et al.'s (1995) typology is applicable to the present study, utilities of each behavioral category were examined. It was found that some categories (e.g., violent behavior, rival contacts) were not relevant to the context of suspicion. Thus, modification of the original typology was necessary. The modification process involved two steps. First, the categories which were relatively unrelated to suspicion were excluded. As a result, the numbers of categories were reduced to seven behavioral strategies (i.e., integrative communication, distributive communication, active
distancing, avoidance/denial, negative affect expression, surveillance/restriction, and compensatory restoration). Second, to ensure the thoroughness of the categorization scheme, other typologies used to code communicative responses to uncertainty-arousing events (e.g., Berger, 1997a; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985) were compared to the seven behavioral categories. As a result of the comparisons, two more categories (i.e., indirect interrogation and third party interaction) were added to the typology. The following subsections provide brief descriptions of the above nine strategic behaviors.

Avoidance/Denial

Previous uncertainty reduction studies suggest that avoidance can be a passive strategy for a suspicious receiver to reduce uncertainty. When asked their reaction toward an uncertainty-increasing event (e.g., competing relationship, deception), a significant number of people reported that they avoided the issue rather than engaging in communication about the issue (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp et al., 1988). Similarly, Emmers and Canary (1996) found that some of their participants trusted the partner, ignored the event, or relied on a higher power (i.e., God) when they experienced uncertainty in negative relational events.

It appears that there are implicit rules in interpersonal relationships which emphasize the similarity display and supportiveness in close relationships (Baxter, 1986). Baxter and Wilmot (1985) found that individuals avoid talking about topics that might be painful, embarrassing or humiliating to the self and/or the other. When relational harm is expected, the topics are declared to be taboo in the relationship (Roloff & Johnson, 2001). It seems plausible to say that avoidance is one of the alternatives a suspicious receiver can chose because questioning the partner's truthfulness risks the partner's face and violates the tacit rule to show similarity and support to one's partner.
**Compensatory Restoration**

Compensatory restoration is a behavioral strategy used to improve the relationship. In Guerrero and Affifi's (1999) jealousy study, some people reported that they sent flowers or gifts to the partner and tried to look more attractive to turn their partner back to them. Similarly, some suspicious receivers may think that they share the responsibility for the occurrence of the suspicion-arousing event and engage in compensatory restoration to reinstate the relationship. For example, one may attempt to create relaxing and supporting environment for the partner with the hope that the partner will be more satisfied with the relationship and, thus, stop engaging in the suspicious behaviors.

**Surveillance / Restriction**

An individual can also attain information about the issue in suspicion by carefully observing one's partner (Berger & Kellermann, 1994). For example, Bell and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1990) found that some people observed their partners in secret (e.g., listening secretly to the partner's personal phone calls) to gain information about their relationship. Similarly, Guerrero and Afifi (1999) found that some individuals attempted to check up on the partner frequently or increased their interaction with the partner to restrict the partner's chance to meet the rival. Suspicious receivers can also reduce their uncertainty in the situation by keeping their eyes on the partner and restricting the partner's behavior. For example, one may increase phone calls to the partner to ask the detailed information of the partner's routines or maximize the time spent with the partner to increase one's chance to find out the truth about the suspicion.

**Third Party Interactions**

Seeking information from a third party seems to be another possible behavioral
alternative of a suspicious receiver. Individuals were found to utilize such behavioral strategies for uncertainty reduction in other contexts (e.g., testing the state of a relationship). Individuals would ask third parties in their social network about their perceptions of the relationship (Baxter & Wilmot, 1984; Bell & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1990; Emmers & Canary, 1996).

Having interaction with a third party is a good source of support as well. Fehr (2000) discusses the importance of friendship as a source of social and emotional support. It is noted that providing and receiving supports between friends are important factors facilitating the maintenance of good friendship. Therefore, interacting with a third party should help suspicious receivers relieve the cognitive and emotional distress from suspicion and obtain advice to solve the problem.

*Indirect Interrogation*

Planalp and her colleagues (1985, 1988) indicated that individuals attempt to communicate about a problem with their partners when a problem increases uncertainty. Talking around an issue without directly mentioning the problem was a commonly reported strategy people employed to manage uncertainty. In a more specific context, such as the test of relationship status, some people reported that they indirectly hinted at the issue about which they wanted to address (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Bell & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1990). A similar indirect strategy is expected to be initiated by a suspicious receiver. An individual may indirectly talk around the issue with the hope that the partner would release further information.

*Integrative Communication*

Previous studies of personal relationships have found integrative communication to be a frequently utilized and constructive strategy in response to various difficulties
experienced within relationships (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). When facing a relational threat (e.g., uncertainty), individuals seem to desire to solve the problem by engaging in communication with the partner (Guerrero et al., 1995; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). For example, individuals engaged in a “state of a relationship talk” with their partner when they wanted to clarify their relationship status (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Emmers & Canary, 1996). In addition, jealous persons disclosed their feelings to their partner and tried to reach an understanding through calm discussion (Guerrero et al., 1985). It is speculated here that suspicious receivers would also engage in integrative communication as a means to cope with the suspicion. An individual may explain one’s feelings to the partner and calmly question about the partner’s behavior.

Distributive Communication

Extant research on personal relationships shows the prevalence of distributive communication in response to relational difficulties (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Rusbults et al., 1986). Arguing over an issue in response to the uncertainty increasing event (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985), taking an active destructive approach to the relational dissatisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1986), and making abusive comments to the partner due to jealousy (Guerrero et al., 1995) are examples of distributive communication within close relationships. Suspicious receivers may also engage in distributive communication. When the suspicion is strong and a heavy attribution is made that the partner is deceptive, the suspicious receiver may make accusatory remarks, blame the partner, or attempt to hurt the partner.

Active Distancing

According to Guerrero and Afifi (1999), active distancing is an indirect and
aggressive communicative strategy, such as giving the silence treatment to the partner or acting mean without giving the partner any reason for the meanness. Similar behavioral patterns may be found from the suspicions receivers. It is expected that suspicious receivers as well as the jealous persons experience intense negative emotions, which lead the individuals to engage in distancing behaviors on the basis of the retribution goal.

_Negative Affect Expression_

Negative affect expression involves nonverbal expression of emotions. Although it is less destructive than accusation or active distancing, negative affect expression is still a passive way to express suspicion. As the jealous persons in Guerrero and Afifi’s (1999) study, suspicious receivers may try to appear anxious and hurt or cry in front of the partner to hint at the problem or to gain attention from the partner.

Put together, suspicious receivers are expected to use various behavioral strategies in response to suspicion. Although a priori speculations are made about the nine types of behaviors described above, it is unclear whether suspicious receivers actually utilize the predicted strategies. Therefore, a research question is presented:

_RQ2_. How do suspicious receivers act toward the partner in response to suspicion?

_Goal – Behavior Relationships_

The diverse behavioral strategies listed in the previous section can be differentiated in terms of two dimensions: active – passive and constructive – destructive (Rusbult et al., 1986). Although in different degrees, indirect interrogation and integrative communication seem to be active and constructive strategies, because they are aimed at improving the situation in positive ways. On the contrary, distributive communication seems to be an active destructive strategy which is aimed at solving the problem but
enacted with a strong negative presumption about the partner. Avoidance/denial, compensatory restoration, third party interaction, and negative affect expression are rather passive strategies in response to suspicion. To varying degrees, they reflect one’s passive willingness to remain loyal to the partner. Lastly, active distancing and surveillance/restriction appear to be a passive and less constructive approach to solving the problem. By engaging in such behaviors, individuals would allow the relationship to suffer without actively attempting to solve the problem.

What types of approaches a suspicious receiver would take largely depends on his or her interaction goals. Behaviors are defined by the combinations of multiple goals (Cody et al., 1994), and it is believed that suspicious receivers’ strategic behaviors are the function of many goals, such as uncertainty reduction, influence, emotion management and face protection. Goals may complement or displace one another (Berger & Kellermann, 1983; O'Keefe & McCormack, 1987). For example, it is possible that a suspicious receiver’s goal to reduce uncertainty or influence the partner may conflict with the goal to protect self- and partner-face needs. Thus, it is likely that a suspicious receiver would weigh the effectiveness of a strategy against the possible relational damage the strategy may cause, as he or she selects one’s behavioral strategy.

Extant research findings in jealousy studies support the speculation of this study that there will be significant links between suspicious receivers’ goals and behaviors. For example, Guerrero and Afifi (1999) found that uncertainty reduction and relationship maintenance goals were significantly associated with negative affect expression. In addition, goals to restore equity through retaliation were significantly related to distributive communication, whereas the goal to preserve self-esteem was related to avoidance / denial. To investigate the link between suspicious receivers’ interaction goals
and strategic behaviors in a more specific context of suspicion, the following research question is proposed:

RQ3. What are the relationships between suspicious receivers’ goals and behaviors?

Factors Influencing the Dynamics of Suspicion Display

In addition to identifying suspicious receivers’ goals and behaviors, the present study attempts to examine the influence of psychological and affective factors on the goals and behaviors. Three variables that may potentially influence a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals and strategic behaviors are isolated from the past literature and briefly reviewed in this section. It is expected that people’s perception of the outcome involvement, relational commitment, and the emotional experience in the situation would influence the relative weights of suspicious receivers’ interaction goals and the likelihood to select certain behaviors over the other.

Outcome Involvement

Outcome involvement refers to “the importance that a topic holds for an individual, particularly because the individual will be affected by the outcome” (Hubbell et al., 2001). Stiff et al. (1992) propose that outcome involvement reduces a receiver’s reliance on truth-bias heuristics because individuals are more likely to scrutinize the information when the potential outcome of the deception is severe. Hubbell et al. (2001) argue that outcome involvement is a motivation which prompts the receiver to process the message more systematically. McCornack and Levine (1990a) have found that issue importance (i.e., outcome involvement) has significant influence on the receiver’s emotion and behavior. Once the deception is discovered, the importance of the issue that was lied about (a) significantly increases the receiver’s intensity of emotion and (b)
becomes the strongest predictor of relational termination (McComack & Levine, 1990a).

Although previous research findings hint at the substantial influence of outcome involvement on the receiver’s cognition, emotion, and behavior, it is hard to predict the precise direction of its influence on a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals and strategic behaviors. There is no previous research in the suspicion literature investigating the effects of outcome involvement on a suspicious receiver’s goals or behaviors. Yet, other research areas in interpersonal communication (e.g., interpersonal conflict, topic avoidance) shed light on the possible links between the outcome involvement and a suspicious receiver’s goals and behaviors.

Researchers studying topic avoidance have found that intimates often avoid complaining to their partner for fear of relational harm (Roloff & Johnson, 2001). Thus, unimportant problems are withheld most of the time, and taboo topics are reintroduced only under compelling situations. Also, it was found that interpersonal arguments are initiated only when the problem requires urgent action (Newell & Stutman, 1991). Related to these findings, some theorists have proposed that interaction urgency orients individuals to deploy certain communicative strategies. Berger (1997b) proposes that interaction urgency drives the message producer to deploy direct communication strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987) also suggest that urgency promotes more direct face threatening actions. Nevertheless, the findings are not directly relevant to the context of suspicion and the theoretical propositions are yet to be empirically tested. Therefore, the relation between outcome involvement and a suspicious receiver’s goals and behaviors is asked as a research question:

RQ4. How is outcome involvement related to a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals and strategic behaviors?
**Relational Commitment**

Previous studies have shown that the nature of the relationship may influence one’s decision to indicate disagreements and confront the partner about the perceived rule violations (Newell & Stutman, 1991; Stutman & Newell, 1990). Stutman and Newell (1990) found that individuals who are highly committed to their relationship and consider their relationship important are more likely to confront their partner about the relational problems.

Rusbult et al.’s (1986) study of people’s responses to relational dissatisfaction indicated more dynamic results as for how relational commitment influence people’s behavior. The results indicated that greater relational commitment is associated with the use of constructive strategies to cope with the relational dissatisfaction. That is, couples with a high level of relational commitment are more likely to openly discuss difficulties or avoid enacting immediate responses to support the partner. On the other hand, highly committed partners were found to be less likely to engage in destructive strategies, such as screaming and threatening to end the relationship. Rusbult et al. (1986) reason that persons with high investment in their relationship have more at stake in terms of displaying dissatisfaction, whereas those with little investment do not have much to lose.

Solomon and Knobloch’s (2001) proposal that the strength of the relationship may have nonlinear association with relationship uncertainty sheds light on a potential link between relational commitment and suspicious receivers’ goals and behaviors. In their review of past literature, Solomon and Knobloch (2001) contend that people in committed romantic relationships seem to experience less conflict, negative emotion, and more communicative directness. Solomon and Knobloch reason that highly committed partners have a clearer understanding of their relationship and firmer establishment of
mutual involvement in the relationship.

However, how exactly relational commitment influences a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals and strategic behaviors in the context of suspicion is unclear. Individuals may display suspicion directly to the partner based on their confidence on the strength of the relationship, but, at the same time, they may wait for the situation to improve and passively support their partner without expressing suspicion. To understand the phenomenon more clearly, it is necessary to investigate how the level of relational commitment influences the dynamics of goal structure and subsequent behavioral choices of a suspicious receiver. Therefore, the following research question is presented:

RQ5. How is relational commitment related to a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals and strategic behaviors?

*Emotional Experiences*

According to the Componential Model of Jealousy Experience and Expression (Guerrero & Anderson, 1998), cognition and emotion are two major factors determining a jealous person’s communicative response to the relational threat. It is discussed that the joint influence of goals and emotions activates strategic communicative responses to jealousy. In fact, communication theorists acknowledge the importance of the concept of emotion in understanding the nature of close relationships. Berscheid (1983) points out the utility of the concept of emotion in classifying interpersonal relationships and defining close relationships as the ones with strong positive emotional ties.

According to Berscheid (1983), two dimensions of emotional experience in the situation should be identified to understand the impact of emotion on a relationship: emotional intensity and emotional valence. Emotional intensity means the magnitude of the affect and emotional valence indicates the positivity or negativity of the affect. The
examination of the intensity of the emotion and the types of emotion that suspicious receivers experience will provide further understanding of the impact of emotion in deceptive communication.

Although there is not enough empirical findings regarding emotional experiences in suspicion, relevant research areas, such as responses to jealousy or relational uncertainty, offer some significant insights on the phenomenon. Guerrero and Afifi (1999) found that the intensity of jealous emotion had significant associations with negative affect expression and distributive communication. Knobloch and Solomon’s (2003) study on relational uncertainty also showed similar results. It was found that the more angry or sad the person felt, the more likely he or she would engage in distancing, distributive, or avoidant behaviors. These findings suggest potential links between emotional intensity and a suspicious receiver’s strategic behavioral choice. It is yet uncertain how the intense emotions would influence the goal dynamics on a suspicious receiver’s mind and the role of emotional intensity in the context of suspicion remains to be examined. Therefore, the following research question is presented:

RQ6. How is emotional intensity related to a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals and strategic behaviors?

The dimension of emotional valence is also accounted for in this study. Guerrero and Anderson (1998) reviewed the extant research on jealousy experience and noted that fear, anger, and sadness were the three central emotions in jealousy. Similarly, Knobloch and Solomon (2003) found that individuals experiencing relational uncertainty (i.e., doubts about a relationship in general) reported the feelings of anger and sadness significantly greater than the midpoint.

Overall, it appears that individuals experience negative emotions when
experiencing uncertainty within the relationships. The findings accord with Lazarus’s (1991) Cognitive Appraisal Theory, indicating that negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, shame, sadness, jealousy, and disgust, are aroused when important goals (e.g., relational maintenance) are thwarted. Because the previous findings are not exclusively focusing on the context of suspicion, a research question is proposed to examine the types of emotions suspicious receivers experience:

RQ7. What types of emotions do suspicious receivers experience?
CHAPTER II. METHOD

Participants

Two hundred and twenty-two undergraduate students in dating relationships were recruited to participate in the study from large undergraduate Speech courses at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Among the returned questionnaires, twenty-two participants reported that they have never been suspicious of their partner and fifteen questionnaires were incomplete. Therefore, they were excluded from the subsequent data analyses. This selection process left the researcher with responses from 185 participants.

The overall mean age of the 185 participants was 20.63 (SD = 2.25), ranging from 18 to 34. Females comprised 62.7% (n = 116) of the sample. Majority of the participants were sophomores (34.4 %) or juniors (35.0 %), followed by seniors (17.8 %), freshmen (8.3 %), and graduate students (4.4 %). The participants had diverse cultural backgrounds, but a significant portion of the sample was of Asian descendant: 56 Japanese (30.3 %), 41 Caucasian (22.2 %), 21 Filipino (11.4 %), 17 Chinese (9.2 %), 14 Hawaiian or part Hawaiian (7.6 %), 13 mixed without Hawaiian (7.0 %), 10 Korean (5.4 %), 6 other (3.2 %), 4 Hispanic (2.2 %), 2 Pacific Islanders (1.1 %), and 1 African American (.5 %). On average, participants reported a moderate degree of ethnic identification (M = 4.92 on a scale of 1 to 7, SD = 1.64).

All participants were currently involved in dating relationships. The length of the relationship had a wide range. Participants have known their dating partner for 27.76 months on average (SD = 27.58, minimum 1.5 month and maximum 168 months) and the mean length of the actual dating relationship was 17.21 months (SD = 16.52, minimum 3 weeks and maximum 90 months). Participants described the specific goals that they had as they experienced suspicion and the behaviors that they deployed in the situation.
Participants also provided information about their level of uncertainty, outcome involvement, relational commitment prior to the suspicion-arousing event, and emotion felt.

**Instrumentation**

*Recollection of the Suspicion-Arousing Event*

Participants were asked to recall a recent event in which they became suspicious about their dating partner's truthfulness. Direction was given about the definition of suspicion to distinguish it from the discovery of deception. It was clarified that one is not sure whether the partner is being truthful in suspicion, while one knows for sure that the partner is not truthful in the discovery of deception. Participants answered an open-ended question by providing a detailed description of the event. Most of the participants reported an event with the current dating partner (n = 179; 96.8 %), while few were about a past relationship (n = 6; 3.2 %). The time when the reported suspicion-arousing event occurred had a wide range (minimum 1 hour ago to maximum 48 months ago, $M = 7.34$, $SD = 8.56$).

*Message Uncertainty, Partner Uncertainty, and Relationship Uncertainty*

A four-item semantic differential scale was created to measure message uncertainty. Participants were asked how certain they were that their partner was being untruthful. Responses were made on a 7-point scale anchored by various terms indicating uncertainty and certainty. The items were unidimensional and highly reliable ($\alpha = .96$). The scale is presented in Appendix A.

The partner uncertainty measurement was adopted from Parks and Adelman’s (1983) uncertainty scale. The original 8 items were modified to better fit the context of suspicion. The modified scale is presented in Appendix B. Responses were made on a 7-
point Likert scale with anchors of *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*. Although factor analysis result indicated the unidimensionality of the modified items, two reversed items were excluded from further analyses to increase the reliability of the scale. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability of the remaining six items was .83.

The relationship uncertainty measurement was adopted from Solomon and Knobloch’s (2001) study. Three subscales of relationship uncertainty employed in the present study were: uncertainty about behavioral norms, uncertainty about the future, and uncertainty about mutuality. First, the subscale of uncertainty about behavioral norms was developed to measure an individual’s uncertainty about the relational rules (e.g., “I became uncertain about the norms for this relationship”). The four items measuring relational norm uncertainty were reliable ($\alpha = .85$). Second, the subscale of uncertainty about future was developed to measure a person’s confusion about the future of the relationship (e.g., “I became uncertain about where this relationship is going”). The four items measuring relational future uncertainty were highly reliable ($\alpha = .96$). Lastly, the subscale of uncertainty about mutuality measured one’s confidence about the equal level of commitment or affection in the relationship (e.g., “I became uncertain about whether or not my partner likes me as much as I like him/her”). The four items measuring relational mutuality uncertainty were highly reliable ($\alpha = .93$).

*Outcome Involvement*

To examine the impact of outcome involvement on a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals and strategic behaviors, a four-item semantic differential scale was adopted from McCormack and Levine’s (1990a) study. Participants were asked how important the issue was to them. Responses were made on a 7-point scale anchored by various terms indicating insignificance and significance. The items were unidimensional
and highly reliable ($\alpha = .97$).

Relational Commitment

To measure the participants' level of relational commitment toward their dating partner, a four-item scale developed by Rusbult et al.'s (1986) was utilized. Participants reported how committed they were to maintaining the relationship prior to the suspicion-arousing event. Responses were made on a 7-point scale anchored by various terms indicating high and low level of commitment. The items were unidimensional and reliable ($\alpha = .82$).

Types of Emotions and Emotional Intensity

A list of negative and positive emotions (Lazarus, 1991) was provided and the participants were asked to check one of the emotions that best describe the primary emotion they experienced due to suspicion. If none of the emotions on the list reflected their emotional experience, they could specify their experience in the “other” category. Emotional intensity was measured with a four-item semantic differential scale created by the author. Participants were asked the extent to which they experienced the emotion they selected on the checklist. Responses were made on a 7-point scale anchored by terms indicating varying degrees of intensity. The items were unidimensional and highly reliable ($\alpha = .96$). The scale is presented in Appendix C.

Strategic behaviors and interaction goals

Based on the recollection of the event, participants were asked to provide further information specifically about their goals in the interaction and their actual behaviors enacted to cope with the suspicion. Participants answered one open-ended question for their interaction goals and one for the behaviors by providing the detailed description of each.
Coding

Suspicious Receivers’ Interaction Goals

Participants’ reports about their interaction goals while in suspicion were coded according to the four categories (i.e., uncertainty reduction, influence, emotion management, and face protection) as speculated. Two coders, who were blind to the research questions and hypotheses, were familiarized with the coding scheme and independently coded the same twenty reports about interaction goals for an initial reliability check. Inter-coder reliability for the twenty reports of interaction goals was .85 (Cohen’s kappa). Discrepancies were discussed and mutual agreements were made between the coders and the author as to how to understand the categorization system.

The remaining data pile was then divided in half and each coder independently coded half of the remaining questionnaires (n = 165); each coder then randomly chose and coded 15% of the other coder’s questionnaires and the author computed inter-coder reliability using Scott’s pi (Scott, 1955) which adjusts for chance agreement. Pi values between the two coders for suspicious receivers’ interaction goals were .93 and .94 both with 96% agreement.

Suspicious Receivers’ Strategic Behaviors

Participants’ reports about their strategic behaviors while in suspicion were coded according to the modified typology of Guerrero et al.’s (1995) jealousy responses. The same procedure as interaction goals was employed. Two coders were trained with the categorization system, went through an initial reliability check with twenty reports (Cohen’s kappa = .87), and each coder independently coded half of the remaining data (n = 165). Reliability was examined again by having each coder randomly choose and code 15% of the other coder’s questionnaires. Pi values between the two coders for suspicious
receivers’ strategic behaviors were .92 and .89 with 95 % and 94 % agreement, respectively.

A significant portion of the participants reported multiple goals and behaviors. To investigate the multiplicity of goals and behaviors, the coders were instructed to code each sentence as reflective of one goal or behavior and to consider the categories in the typology as mutually exclusive. For the reports with multiple goals, the order of presentation was believed to represent the salience of the goals not the chronological ordering of goals. For the reports with multiple behaviors, there was a clear pattern that the behaviors were being reported in a chronological order. Therefore, the multiple goals and behaviors were coded in the order that they appeared in reports.

Types of Suspicion-Arousing Events

To see what kinds of events bring about suspicion in dating relationships, the suspicion-arousing events reported by participants were coded into eight categories: substance abuse, distance, deviant behavior, inhibiting emotions / not expressing true opinions, competing relationships, routines, positive suspicion, and miscellaneous. The first five categories (i.e., substance abuse, distance, deviant behavior, inhibiting emotion, and competing relationships) and the category of miscellaneous were derived from Emmers and Canary’s (1996) study on negative relationship events and their impacts on the experience of uncertainty in romantic relationships. Two categories (i.e., routines and positive suspicion) were added to adapt the categorization scheme to the context of suspicion and to make it more exhaustive.

The two independent coders who implemented coding to the goals and behaviors of suspicious receivers also coded the types of suspicion-arousing events. Two coders were trained with the categorization system and independently coded twenty reports.
Inter-coder reliability for the twenty reports about suspicion-arousing events was examined by using Scott's pi (Scott, 1955). Two coders had 90% of agreement and had a Pi value of .85.
CHAPTER III. RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

Before answering the specific research questions, some preliminary analyses were performed to obtain baseline information about the data set. The overall pattern in the occurrence of suspicion-arousing events (i.e., types of suspicion-arousing events), reports on different uncertainty experiences in suspicion, and the correlations between the variables were examined.

Types of Suspicion-Arousing Events

The most frequently reported suspicion-arousing event was competing relationships ($n = 90, 48.6\%$). Majority of the competing relationship cases were about a suspicion that the partner might be cheating or have a desire to date others. Some participants also reported that they felt suspicious whether the partner puts more importance on the family or friends than the relationship. The next frequently reported category was routines ($n = 39, 21.1\%$). It seems that not knowing the details of the partner’s routines (e.g., not getting a phone call on the usual time) can elicit suspicion. Inhibiting emotions and not expressing true opinions was another often mentioned category ($n = 21, 11.4\%$). Participants noted that they felt the partner was not being truthful to them when the partner seemed to hide their emotions or opinions and be superficially nice. There also were participants who experienced suspicion when their partner seemed to be involved with substance abuse, such as smoking and alcohol consumption ($n = 10, 5.4\%$), show distancing behaviors ($n = 10, 5.4\%$), and engage in deviant behaviors, such as gambling and unusual sexual practices ($n = 7, 3.8\%$). Only two respondents reported positive suspicion ($1.1\%$).

A goodness-of-fit chi-square test was conducted to determine if the frequencies
of the suspicion-arousing events differed significantly from one another. Results indicated that there was a significant difference between the types of suspicion-arousing events, \( \chi^2 \) 
(7, \( N = 185 \)) = 262.61, \( p < .001 \). Standardized z-values indicated that competing relationship and routines were reported significantly more often than would be expected by chance, whereas substance abuse, distance, deviant behavior, and positive suspicion were reported less often than would be expected by chance. The frequencies of event types and their examples are presented in Table 1.

Experience of Uncertainties

To examine to which degree a suspicious receiver experiences message uncertainty, partner uncertainty, and relationship uncertainty, mean scores of the scales were calculated. Overall, participants reported a moderate level of message uncertainty \( (M = 3.81, SD = 1.74) \), and partner uncertainty \( (M = 3.89, SD = 1.21) \). Regarding relationship uncertainty, participants also indicated a moderate level of uncertainty in terms of norms \( (M = 3.64, SD = 1.47) \), future \( (M = 3.99, SD = 1.82) \), and mutuality of the relationship \( (M = 4.06, SD = 1.79) \).

ANOVA indicated a possibility that different types of suspicion-arousing events might generate significantly different uncertainty experiences: uncertainty about the future of the relationship, \( F(6, 169) = 4.42, p < .001 \), and the mutuality of the relationship, \( F(6, 170) = 4.78, p < .001 \). Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate differences among the means. Because the sizes of the eight event groups were very different, equal variances were not assumed. Based on Holm’s Sequential Bonferroni method (Green & Salkind, 2003), the significant \( \alpha \) level was adjusted to .0024 to control for Type I error across the multiple pairwise comparisons. Dunnett’s C test results indicated that the level of future uncertainty people experienced from positive suspicion
was significantly lower than that from the suspicion about one’s partner’s routines, distancing behavior, involvement with substance abuse or competing relationships. Pairwise comparisons did not show significant differences between events regarding mutuality uncertainty. Descriptives and ANOVA results for the future and mutuality uncertainties are shown in Table 2. ANOVA results did not show any other significant differences among the event types for the rest of the variables (i.e., message uncertainty, partner uncertainty, norm uncertainty, outcome involvement, relational commitment, and emotional intensity).

*Relationships between Variables*

Besides event types and the experience of uncertainties, the significance of the issue (i.e., outcome involvement), the respondent’s commitment to the relationship prior to the event, and the emotional experience as a result of suspicion were measured. Although ANOVA results did not indicate significant differences between the event types for the variables except the experiences of future and mutuality uncertainty, correlation analyses indicated that the rest of the variables have some significant associations. The means and standard deviations of variables are presented in Table 3 and the correlation coefficients are shown in Table 4.

The results of correlation analyses showed that the more a person is certain about one’s suspicion (i.e., the belief that the partner is being untruthful), the more likely that he or she will think that the event is significant (i.e., outcome involvement) \((r = .20, p < .01)\) and have intense emotional experiences \((r = .30, p < .001)\). However, the more certain a person becomes about his or her suspicion, the less confident he or she becomes about one’s knowledge of the partner \((r = .19, p < .05)\). Outcome involvement had significant positive associations with various measures of uncertainty (partner uncertainty, \(r = .60, p\)
norm uncertainty, \( r = .42, p < .001 \); future uncertainty, \( r = .56, p < .001 \); mutuality uncertainty, \( r = .53, p < .001 \)), indicating that one’s experience of uncertainty becomes greater when the issue is perceived to be important. Outcome involvement also had a significant positive correlation with emotional intensity (\( r = .58, p < .001 \)). On the contrary, relational commitment had significant negative associations with various measures of uncertainty experiences (partner uncertainty, \( r = -.25, p < .01 \); norm uncertainty, \( r = -.17, p < .05 \); future uncertainty, \( r = -.26, p < .01 \); mutuality uncertainty, \( r = -.22, p < .01 \)), indicating that the more committed one is, the less likely one would feel uncertain in coping with suspicion. Various measures of uncertainty experiences were all significantly related to emotional intensity (partner uncertainty, \( r = .43, p < .001 \); norm uncertainty, \( r = .39, p < .001 \); future uncertainty, \( r = .41, p < .001 \); mutuality uncertainty, \( r = .44, p < .001 \)).

Suspicious Receivers’ Interaction Goals

To examine the first research question regarding suspicious receivers’ interaction goals, participants were asked what their goals were (i.e., what they wanted to accomplish in the interaction with the partner) and the answers were coded into four categories derived from extant communication literature. In total, 262 goals were reported. Although the majority of the participants (\( n = 112, 60.5 \% \)) reported a single goal, some participants reported two or more goals (\( n = 72, 38.9 \% \)). There was one case where no goal was reported.

As speculated, all reported goals were classifiable into the four categories of uncertainty reduction, influence, emotion management, and face protection. When considering an overall frequency of each category regardless of the order in which they were reported (\( N = 262 \)), uncertainty reduction goals were found to be most prevalent
goal (n = 137, 52.3 %) which suspicious receivers want to accomplish. Participants reported that they felt the need to reduce uncertainty as they became suspicious about their partner's truthfulness. Specifically, detecting the veracity of partner's message, gaining more knowledge about the partner, and clarifying relationship characteristics were main uncertainty reduction goals. Influence goals were the next frequently reported goals (n = 65, 24.8 %). Participants reported that they wanted to change the partner's behavior or strengthen the relationship by successfully coping with the suspicion. Emotion management goals were also often reported (n = 40, 15.3 %). Emotion management goals are related to the desire to vent frustration to the partner or to make the partner feel guilty for the behavior. Face protection goals were the least reported goals (n = 20, 7.7 %). Face protection goals involved the goals to consider the partner's feeling, avoid negative evaluation, and respect the partner's autonomy.

A goodness-of-fit chi-square test was performed to determine which reported goals significantly differed from expected goals. Results indicated that the reported goal frequencies differed significantly from the expected, $\chi^2 (3, N = 262) = 119.59, p < .001$. Standardized $z$-values indicated that uncertainty reduction goals were reported significantly more often than would be expected by chance, whereas emotion management and face protection goals were reported less often than would be expected by chance.

Among the responses where multiple goals (N = 72) were reported, specific patterns of goal combinations were found. Uncertainty reduction goals and influence goals were frequently reported together (n = 24). Uncertainty reduction and emotional management goals were also often reported in combination (n = 17), and so were uncertainty reduction and face protection goals (n = 10). Combinations of emotion
management and influence goals were commonly shown as well (n = 13).

Suspicious Receivers’ Strategic Behaviors

In addition to the investigation of suspicious receivers’ interaction goals, the second research question seeks to examine their strategic behaviors. Guerrero et al.’s (1995) categorization scheme of responses to jealousy was modified and adopted to code suspicious receivers’ strategic behaviors. Most of the participants (n = 135, 73 %) reported one behavior, while some participants reported two or more (n = 50, 27 %) behaviors. In total, 241 strategic behaviors were reported.

All reported behaviors were classifiable into the nine categories (i.e., active distancing, negative affect expression, indirect interrogation, integrative communication, distributive communication, avoidance/denial, surveillance/restriction, compensatory restoration, and third party interaction). Regardless of the order in which the behavior was reported, the overall frequency of each category (N = 241) showed that integrative communication was the most frequent response to suspicion (n = 110, 45.6 %), followed by distributive communication (n = 37, 15.4 %), avoidance/denial (n = 28, 11.6 %), indirect interrogation (n = 24, 10 %), negative affect expression (n = 13, 5.4 %), active distancing (n = 9, 3.7 %), surveillance/restriction (n = 9, 3.7 %), third party interaction (n = 6, 2.5 %), and compensatory restoration (n = 5, 2.1 %).

A goodness-of-fit chi-square results indicated that the reported behavior frequencies differed significantly from the expected, $\chi^2(8, N = 241) = 327.42, p < .001$. Standardized z-values indicated that integrative communication and distributive communication were reported significantly more often than would be expected by chance, whereas active distancing, negative affect expression, surveillance/restriction, compensatory restoration, and third party interaction were reported less often than would
be expected by chance.

When there were more than one behavior reported \((N = 50)\), it was clear that the participants were describing their behaviors sequentially. Although there were many different behavioral combinations reported, the most repeatedly described was a sequence from integrative communication to distributive communication was repeatedly described \((n = 10)\). The rest of the behavioral sequences (e.g., from distributive communication to integrative communication, indirect interrogation to integrative communication) were rather minor with less than four reports.

**Goal-Behavior Relationships**

The third research question was presented to examine the relationships between suspicious receivers’ interaction goals and strategic behaviors. Because some participants reported multiple goals and behaviors, it was necessary to make decision rules as to which goal and behavior to select for the chi-square analysis. In terms of interaction goals, it was assumed that the first reported goals would be the most salient goals on the suspicious receiver’s mind. Likewise, the first reported behaviors were assumed to be the most immediate responses to suspicion. Therefore, only the first reported goals and behaviors were used for the chi-square analysis, and the rest of the goals and behaviors, if multiple goals or behaviors were reported, were not taken into consideration in the analysis. This resulted in a loss of 30% of the total number of goal reports and 23% of the total number of behavior reports. Additionally, 5 cases where face protection was reported as a first goal were dropped from further analyses because of the low number of reports.

The results of the chi-square analysis with a delta value of .5 added to each cell indicated that suspicious receivers’ interaction goals were significantly associated with
their strategic behaviors, $\chi^2 (16, N = 179) = 32.93, p < .01$. It was found that uncertainty reduction goals are positively related to avoidance/denial and negatively related to third party interaction. Whereas, emotion management goals were found to be positively associated with active distancing and third party interaction. The results are presented in Table 5.

Influences of Psychological and Affective Factors

To examine how an individual's cognition and affect influence the person's interaction goals and strategic behaviors in the experience of suspicion, the present study explored the impact of outcome involvement (RQ4), relational commitment (RQ5), and emotional intensity (RQ6) on suspicious receivers' goals and behaviors. The types of emotions suspicious receivers experience were also examined (RQ7).

Impact of Outcome Involvement

To examine the influence of outcome involvement (i.e., the degree to which one perceives the issue is important and relevant to oneself) on the goals and behaviors (RQ4), two one-way ANOVAs were conducted. First, for the examination of its relationships with goals, participants' first reported goal (i.e., the groups of four goals) was entered as a fixed factor, and the perceived outcome involvement was entered in the dependent list. There was no significant association found between the outcome involvement and the goals, $F (3, 180) = .56, \text{ns}$. The second one-way ANOVA investigated the relationship between outcome involvement and the behaviors. Among nine behavior categories, five (i.e., active distancing, negative affect expression, surveillance/restriction, compensatory restoration, and third party interaction) were reported less than seven times. These five categories were excluded from further ANOVA tests to decrease the unequal variances among the
groups. Participants' first reported behavior (i.e., indirect interrogation, integrative communication, distributive communication, and avoidance/denial) was entered as a fixed factor, and the perceived outcome involvement was entered in the dependent list.

ANOVA results showed a significant relationship between outcome involvement and suspicious receivers' strategic behaviors, $F(3, 160) = 4.90, p < .005$. Follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the behaviors (see Table 6). Because the frequencies of the four behaviors were not close to equal, equal variances were not assumed and Dunnett's C tests were conducted. Based on Holm's Sequential Bonferroni method (Green & Salkind, 2003), the significant $\alpha$ level was adjusted to .0083 to control for Type I error. The results indicated that the perception of outcome involvement was significantly greater when a suspicious receiver engaged in distributive communication ($M = 5.76$) than in avoidance/denial ($M = 3.81$). No additional significant differences were found between other behaviors.

**Impact of Relational Commitment**

RQ5 asked about the impact of relational commitment (i.e., the degree to which one is committed to the relationship) prior to the occurrence of the suspicion-arousing event on suspicious receivers' goals and behaviors. Two one-way ANOVAs were conducted to answer the question. First, for the examination of its impact on goals, participants' first reported goal (i.e., the groups of four goals) was entered as a fixed factor, and the perceived relational commitment prior to the event was entered in the dependent list. There was no significant association between the relational commitment and the goals, $F(3, 177) = .59, ns$.

The second one-way ANOVA investigated the relationships between relational commitment and the behaviors. The same procedure was employed and only four
behavior categories were included in the ANOVA. Participants’ first reported behavior (i.e., the groups of four behaviors) was entered as a fixed factor, and the perceived relational commitment prior to the event was entered in the dependent list. ANOVA result did not show a significant relationship between the relational commitment and suspicious receivers’ strategic behaviors, $F(3, 157) = 2.54, p = .059$ (see Table 6).

**Impact of Emotional Intensity**

Lastly, the impact of emotional intensity on suspicious receivers’ goals and behaviors was examined (RQ6). Again, two one-way ANOVAs were conducted to answer the question. First, participants’ first reported goal (i.e., the groups of four goals) was entered as a fixed factor, and the perceived emotional intensity was entered in the dependent list. There was no significant association between the relational commitment and the goals, $F(3, 177) = .23, ns$.

For the second one-way ANOVA, participants’ first reported behavior (i.e., the groups of four behaviors) was entered as a fixed factor, and the perceived emotional intensity was entered in the dependent list. ANOVA result showed a significant relationship between emotional intensity and suspicious receivers’ strategic behaviors, $F(3, 157) = 4.59, p < .005$ (see Table 6). Follow-up tests with the significant $\alpha$ level of .0083 indicated that the emotional intensity was significantly greater when a suspicious receiver engaged in distributive communication ($M = 5.79$) than in avoidance/denial ($M = 4.29$). There were no significant findings regarding other behaviors.

**Types of Emotions**

RQ7 asked about the types of emotions people experience when they become suspicious about their partner. A frequency test was conducted to answer the question.
According to the result, a majority of the participants reported negative-valenced emotions, such as jealousy (n = 39, 21.2 %), anger (n = 36, 19.6 %), sadness (n = 28, 15.2 %), anxiety (n = 26, 14.1 %), disgust (n = 13, 7.1 %), and shame (n = 3, 1.6 %). A small portion of participants reported positive-valenced emotions, such as love/affection (n = 4, 2.2 %) and happiness (n = 3, 1.6 %). A goodness-of-fit chi-square analysis results indicated significant differences between observed emotion frequencies and the expected, \( \chi^2 (7, N = 152) = 83.79, p < .001 \). Anger, jealousy, and sadness were reported more often than would be expected by chance, while shame, happiness, and love/affection were reported less often than would be expected by chance. Some participants (n = 32) chose the “other” category and described their emotion in their own words. “Confusion (n = 10),” “disappointment (n = 3),” “frustration (n = 3),” “hurt (n = 2),” and “curiosity (n = 2)” were the frequently reported descriptions, to name a few.
CHAPTER IV. DISCUSSION

The present study had four distinctive goals: (a) to identify suspicious receivers’ interaction goals, (b) to identify suspicious receivers’ strategic behaviors, (c) to investigate the links between the goals and behaviors, and (d) to examine the impact of three situational perceptions (i.e., outcome involvement, relational commitment, and emotional intensity) on the goals and the behaviors. Overall, it was found that suspicious receivers have multiple goals and engage in a series of strategic behaviors. The goals and behaviors were found to be in significant associations. Outcome involvement, relational commitment, and emotional intensity were found to have significant impact on suspicious receivers’ strategic behaviors.

Suspicious Receivers’ Interaction Goals

Suspicious receivers’ goals were classifiable into four generic categories of uncertainty reduction, influence, emotion management, and face protection. The findings of these four goals converge with the traditional interaction goal typology suggested by Clark and Delia (1979). Clark and Delia reasoned that the most fundamental issues present in every interaction concern the issues of identity and relationship as well as the direct instrumental goal to influence others. The present study has found that suspicious receivers wanted to know the truth and alter the partner’s behaviors, and had a desire to present what they think and feel, but at the same time were concerned about potential relational damage that suspicion display might produce.

Results from the chi-square analysis suggest that the four goals may vary in salience for the suspicious receivers (Dillard, 1990). Uncertainty reduction goals were most frequently reported and the observed frequency was significantly higher than would be expected by chance. On the other hand, emotion management and face protection
goals were much less frequently reported and their observed frequencies were significantly lower than would be expected by chance. Therefore, it seems that uncertainty reduction is the primary goal in the suspicious receivers’ interaction with the partner, where to influence the partner is the secondary goal. To manage emotions and to protect face needs seem to be less salient goals, whose importance is temporarily diminished by other goals in priority.

Although the present study identified the four goals listed above, the categories are derived deductively from the extant literature and the author’s subjective opinions and the understanding of communication studies were inevitably involved in the process of defining the categories and setting their boundaries in the context of suspicion. Therefore, further research is necessary to evaluate the current categorization scheme and to develop a valid typology for suspicious receivers’ interaction goals. Toward that end, the next step of this study will entail converting participants’ goal descriptions into scales. Transferring the open-ended answers to the standardized scales will allow factor analyses of the goals, from which an applicable typology can be derived.

Standardized scales of suspicious receivers’ interaction goals will not only provide a valid typology of goals, but also allow the examination of goal intensity and goal co-occurrence. The present study hints at the varying degree of goal importance and the possibility of different goal combinations. Nevertheless, the content analysis conducted in this study had a limited power in finding the deliberate goal structure and its dynamics. It is expected that the goals vary in their importance (Dillard, 1990), so that some goals have a primary influence on the suspicious receivers’ behaviors while others remain as secondary goals in the situation. By measuring the goals on scales, we can compare suspicious receivers’ multiple goals in terms of their perceived level of
importance.

Goals are also expected to vary in their likelihood to co-occur with other goals. Suspicious receivers may attempt to accomplish multiple goals simultaneously. The co-occurring goals may complement or displace one another (Berger & Kellermann, 1983; O'Keefe & McCorrnat, 1987). The patterns and degrees of goal co-occurrence can be examined by using the standardized scales of interaction goals. It will also allow us to examine which goals complement or displace each other.

Suspicious Receivers’ Strategic Behaviors

Nine behavioral strategies of suspicious receivers were found in the present study: active distancing, negative affect expression, indirect interrogation, integrative communication, distributive communication, avoidance/denial, surveillance/restriction, compensatory restoration, and third party interaction. A series of frequency tests (i.e., overall and in reported orders) showed fairly consistent results. It was indicated that people would most often try to take an active and constructive approach to the problem by engaging in integrative communication with the partner or indirectly talking around the issue (i.e., indirect interrogation).

However, a substantial number of people seemed to take a rather active destructive approach, such as engaging in distributive communication with their partner. A similar number of people seemed to prefer taking a passive but loyal approach to the suspicious situation. Avoiding the issue, treating the partner nicer, and releasing the stress to a third party rather than directly to the partner were some of the relevant strategies. The passive destructive approach (e.g., distancing, surveillance) was present but constituted the least portion of suspicious receivers’ behavior.

The results are inconsistent with the findings of previous experimental studies
(Buller et al., 1991; Burgoon et al., 1995, 1996). In previous suspicion studies that incorporated experimental designs, the only strategic behavior found from suspicious receivers was to control the suspicion display and to passively observe the verbal and nonverbal cues of the senders. However, the findings in this study showed that suspicious receivers employ a variety of strategic behaviors. As speculated, the results demonstrated that the experimental manipulations of previous suspicion studies significantly limited the behavioral choices of suspicious receivers, neglecting other behavioral alternatives (e.g., interactive strategies) that are more frequently utilized in actuality.

As with the goal categories, the validity of the behavioral categories employed in this study needs to be reassessed. Therefore, participants’ reports about their behaviors should be converted to standardized scales. By conducting factor analyses of the items, a more valid and applicable typology of suspicious receivers’ strategic behaviors is expected to be derived.

Another fruitful avenue of research suggested by the study is the behavioral sequence of suspicious receivers. The findings showed that people engaged in multiple layers of behaviors when they suspected their partner’s truthfulness. The most frequently found behavioral sequence was the escalation of communication from integrative communication to distributive communication. This communication pattern resembles that of relationship conflict (Canary & Messman, 2000) and suggests that some responses to suspicion can lead the dyad to conflicts.

This is a very interesting finding, because it provides a new approach in studying communicative responses to uncertainty. Previous studies on uncertainty reducing strategies made significant contributions to the identification of behavioral categories in various communication situations (Bell & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1990; Berger & Kellermann,
1994; Emmers & Canary, 1996; Guerrero et al., 1995; Knobloch & Solomon, 2003; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). However, the typologies developed in previous studies focus on the primary or immediate responses to the uncertainty and do not extend the findings to the sequential pattern of the uncertainty reducing strategies. Therefore, the behavioral sequences found in this study not only explain the communication patterns in the experience of suspicion, but also provides valuable insights for future relational communication studies.

Goal – Behavior Relationships

Consistent with a goal-based approach to the communication process (Berger, 1997a; Canary & Cody, 1994), suspicious receivers’ interaction goals and strategic behaviors were found to be significantly associated. Specifically, uncertainty reduction goals were found to be positively associated with avoidance/denial and negatively associated with third party interaction. On the other hand, emotion management goals were found to be positively related to both the active distancing strategy and the third party interaction strategy.

As for the positive association found between uncertainty reduction goals and the avoidance/denial strategy, there is one explanation possible. It is likely that the suspicious receivers are using a passive strategy (Berger & Kellermann, 1994) to obtain information about the partners’ behaviors, while avoiding the confrontation. The person may not actively interact with the person, but may be watching the partner and the environment for verbal and non-verbal signs which could lead one to the truth.

Uncertainty reduction goals had a significant negative association with a third party interaction strategy, which indicated that third party interaction might not be perceived as an effective information source in the context of suspicion. This can be
interpreted in a similar way that explained the positive association between uncertainty reduction goals and the avoidance/denial strategy. A suspicious receiver may be taking a passive way to gather information about the truth rather than hastily contacting people in the network and asking for the information.

Emotion management goals were found to have positive association with the active distancing strategy. The intense negative emotions aroused by suspicion seem to elicit emotion management goals, such as to retaliate the partner for the emotional distress or to vent one’s negative feelings. Individuals seem to deploy the active distancing strategy as a means to make the partner feel guilty about the event. The results indicated a significant positive link between emotion management goals and a third party interaction strategy. This indicates that individuals would seek for third party’s help in terms of venting frustration and getting emotional supports.

Face protection goals were not included in the chi-square analyses due to the small number of reports. However, it is probable that there exist qualitative differences between face protection goals and the other goals. The extant communication literature, where the goal of effectiveness and social appropriateness were discussed to oppose each other (Berger & Kellermann, 1983), supports such a speculation. It appears that content analysis has a limitation in providing thorough explanations of the phenomenon when the frequency distribution of the categories is widely unequal as in this study. Therefore, future studies with the scaled measures of goals and behaviors are suggested to complement the findings of this study.

Influences of Psychological and Affective Factors

The study’s initial prediction was that the emergence of interaction goal is a joint function of various situational perceptions, which, in turn, influences one’s behavioral
choice (Cody et al., 1994). It was believed that perceptions regarding outcome involvement, relational commitment, and the intensity of emotional experience would jointly derive a suspicious receiver’s interaction goals and behaviors.

The results of ANOVA indicated significant relationships between the perceptions and suspicious receivers’ strategic behaviors. Significant relationships between outcome involvement and the behaviors were found, indicating that the level of perceived significance of the issue has significant impact on suspicious receivers’ behavioral choices. More specifically, it can be inferred from the results that the more important a receiver perceives an issue, there is greater likelihood for the person to argue with the partner rather than passively avoiding the issue.

Emotional intensity was also found to be significantly related to a suspicious receiver’s behaviors. The people who had high mean scores of emotional arousal (i.e., emotional intensity) had a high frequency of distributive communication. This result indicated that the intensity of one’s emotional arousal may influence the person to engage in distributive communication rather than avoiding the issue.

Regarding the impact of relational commitment, the results of ANOVA did not indicate significant differences between the behaviors. However, the probability level was very close to significance. Some potential associations between the relational commitment and specific behaviors are noteworthy. The mean relational commitment scores of each behavior category indicate that those who have a high mean score of relational commitment also show a high frequency of compensatory restoration. Based on the insights shed by this study, future studies can further examine whether relational commitment actually facilitates suspicious receivers to engage in compensatory restoration.
Regarding the impact of the perceptions on the goals, however, the present study failed to identify any links between the perceptions and the goals of suspicious receivers. Again, it is believed that the methodological limitations of the study were the main reasons that no significant links were found between the perceptions and the goals. Not only were the frequencies of the categories unequal, but also only the first reported goals were taken into account in the data analyses. The problems from such disparities of goal frequencies and the neglect to take the goal multiplicity into consideration were major methodological concerns in this study. Therefore, future studies must reassess the relationships between the goals and the perceptions. Scaled measures may solve the methodological problems presented in this study.

Conclusion

Although this study had succeeded in identifying goals and behaviors of suspicious receivers and found some potential links between their goals and behaviors as well as the influences from situational and affective factors, the study has its limitations. As mentioned in previous sections, the categorization systems for goals and behaviors derived in this study need further validation by converting them to standardized scales. In addition, the study has failed to reflect the multiplicity of goals and behaviors in examining the goal-behavior links. Only the first reported goals and behaviors were utilized in the chi-square analyses. This problem should be overcome in future studies by using interval data instead of nominal data. The recall method used in this study has limitations as well. It is possible that the participants’ memories about the past experiences are not accurate. Also, respondents may have intentionally reorganized or deleted some of the sensitive information, such as their interaction goals and behaviors in reaction to suspicion, for concerns of social desirability.
Despite the limitations, it is believed that the present study makes significant contributions to the study of deceptive communication. The study successfully acknowledges a suspicious receiver as an active agent in deceptive communication. In addition to the pragmatics of suspicious receivers found in previous research, the present study further explicates receivers’ active involvement to the interaction by delineating their various interaction goals and strategic behaviors.

In addition, the findings in this study suggest a number of interesting directions for future research. First, further investigation of the impact of various situational perceptions (e.g., outcome involvement, relational commitment) on suspicious receivers’ goals and behaviors is very promising, as some significant relationships between the variables were indicated in this study.

The role of emotion in the communication of suspicion is another appealing avenue future studies can take. The present study showed that suspicious receivers’ emotional experience is primarily negative. In addition, the intensity of the emotional experience was found to have a substantial impact on the suspicious receivers’ behaviors. Future studies must clarify the relationships between the emotional experience and the goals of suspicious receivers. Emotion may be a leading factor of a goal pursuit, as originally speculated in this study (Lazarus, 1991), or may rather be a spontaneous reaction to the threat, which functions completely independently from cognition (Guerrero & Anderson, 1998).

Also, researchers can investigate whether the findings of this study within dating relationships are applicable to other social contexts (e.g., parent-child relationship, friendship). Categorically different goals and behaviors may be found in different social contexts, because they involve completely different situational and relational factors.
Lastly, it is very important for the researchers to examine the relational outcomes that different goals and behaviors bring about. The types of coping strategies a suspicious receiver takes may foster or deteriorate the relationship. Future studies must address how suspicious receivers' goals and behaviors are related to the quality of the relationship after the suspicion experience. By so doing, suspicion studies can benefit laypersons at a practical level and assist them to make more informed judgments about how to cope with the suspicion in a more appropriate and effective manner.
Footnotes

1. McComack and Levine (1990b) conceptualize suspicion in three distinctive categories: “trait” suspicion, “state” suspicion, and “lie-bias” (p. 220). Trait suspicion is an individual’s predisposition toward being suspicious about others’ truthfulness, while state suspicion is a situationally induced belief that one’s conversational partner is being deceptive in a specific setting. Lie-bias is a judgmental bias, which leads a receiver to decode all of a partner’s messages to be deceptive. The present study limits the use of the construct to the state suspicion, since the focus of the study is on the situationally induced suspicion which is an unexpected and abrupt experience for the receiver.

2. Responses under the miscellaneous category were not included in the ANOVA to reduce the probability of committing Type I error.

3. If multiple hypothesis tests are conducted on the basis of common constructs, there is greater likelihood that the researcher may commit Type I error. Therefore, it is necessary to adjust the likelihood of Type I error (i.e., $\alpha$). Holm’s Sequential Bonferroni method (Green & Salkind, 2003) is one way to adjust $\alpha$ level when the multiple hypothesis tests involve pairwise comparisons. According to Holm’s Sequential Bonferroni method, $\alpha$ for the pairwise comparison is derived by dividing family-wise $\alpha$ (e.g., .05) with the number of pairwise comparisons.

4. Cells with zero observed frequency were present. Therefore .5 delta value was added to all observed cell frequencies for a more conservative log-linear analysis (Kennedy, 1983).
References


Table 1

Types of Suspicion-Arousing Events

I. Substance abuse (n = 10, 5.4 %)

"He went out to party with his friends. I asked him if he had done any drugs. He said no. I wasn’t sure if I should believe him or not."

II. Distance (n = 10, 5.4 %)

"I started suspicious w/ my girlfriend when we barely spent times together. She has a lot reason when I called to ask her out. The reason she gave me like she had to study, helping her parent, or going out w/ her girlfriends. I think she wants to avoid or end this relationship."

III. Deviant behavior (n = 7, 3.8 %)

"We made plans to go and see a movie one night, but when that night arrived, he suddenly had a ton of homework to do. It turns out the next day that he had got nothing done. I’m not positive, but I can’t help but think that he gambled with his friends the whole night."

IV. Inhibiting emotions and opinions (n = 21, 11.4 %)

"He never tells me truthfully when he is upset."
V. Competing relationships (n = 90, 48.6 %)

“One time my gf went to the movies with a guy friend when I was gone. She said they only saw a movie but I was suspicious that something more could be going on.”

VI. Routines (n = 39, 21.1 %)

“Whenver she doesn’t answer her phone it makes me wonder what she’s doing.”

“Be gone for hours upon a time, saying at friend’s house, most nights would sleep out.”

VII. Positive suspicion (n = 2, 1.1 %)

“My partner called me up one day, around the time of our anniversary, and asked me questions about clothing size & color. I asked what did he need the info for and he said he needed my advice because he wanted to buy something for his mom. I was suspicious because it was weird that he was asking me these questions when it was only for his mother.”

VIII. Miscellaneous (n = 6, 3.3 %)

“My partner would often forget to tell me things, such as giving other people her number.”
Table 2

Types of Suspicion-Arousing Events and the Experience of Uncertainty

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<th>Event</th>
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<td>Future</td>
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Note. *** p < .001
Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables*

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*Note. All items were measured on the scale of 1 to 7.*
Table 4

*Correlation Coefficients of the Variables*

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<td>3. Commitment</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Partner</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Norm</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td>.65**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Future</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.56**</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.65**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mutuality</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.72**</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>.77**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Emotion</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.58**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Message = Message uncertainty, Outcome = Outcome involvement, Commitment = Relational commitment, Partner = Partner uncertainty, Norm = Relational norm uncertainty, Future = Relational future uncertainty, Mutuality = Relational mutuality uncertainty, Emotion = Emotional intensity, *p < .05, **p < .01
Table 5

*Conditional Proportions of Behaviors in Relation to Goals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Uncertainty Reduction</th>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Emotion Management</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active distancing</td>
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<td>-.43</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Negative affect expression</td>
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<td>-.60</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect interrogation</td>
<td></td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.65</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance/denial</td>
<td></td>
<td>.91*</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveillance/restriction</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory restoration</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.66</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party interaction</td>
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<td>-.00**</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Minus sign indicates negative deviation from expected frequencies; UR = Uncertainty Reduction, INFL = Influence, EM = Emotion Management; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$
Table 6

ANOVA Results regarding the Associations between Psychological and Affective Factors and Suspicious Receivers' Strategic Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Strategic Behavior</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Indirect interrogation</td>
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<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>.003</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrative communication</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>1.89</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distributive communication</td>
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<td>5.76</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoidance/denial</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Indirect interrogation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>.059</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrative communication</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distributive communication</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoidance/denial</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>Indirect interrogation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>4.59</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrative communication</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.44</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distributive communication</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoidance/denial</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Items were measured on the scale of 1 to 7.
Appendix A

Message Uncertainty Scale

(Instructions) How certain were you that your partner was being untruthful to you? Using each of the following scales, rate how sure you were about your suspicion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Certain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubtful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Convinced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Modified Partner Uncertainty Scale (Parks & Adelman, 1983)

1. I felt that I don't know my dating partner very well.
2. I became less confident of my ability to accurately predict my dating partner's behavior.
3. It made me think if my dating partner often does or says things which surprise me.
4. I felt that I have a very good idea of what my dating partner's values and preferences are.
5. It made me think if I often have trouble understanding why my dating partner does what s/he does.
6. My belief that I can accurately predict my dating partner's attitudes became unsure.
7. I became less confident of my ability to tell what my dating partner is feeling inside.
8. It made me believe that I can accurately predict how my dating partner will respond to me in most situations.
Appendix C

Emotional Intensity Scale

(Instructions) To what extent did you experience the emotion reported above?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slight</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtle</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dull</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strong
Intense
Acute
Severe