Invited Article: The Construct of Suspicion and How It Can Benefit Theories and Models in Organizational Science

Philip Bobko  
Departments of Management and Psychology  
Gettysburg College  
pbobko@gettysburg.edu

Alex J. Barelka  
Department of Management and Quantitative Methods  
Illinois State University  
ajbarel@ilstu.edu

Leanne M. Hirshfield  
Newhouse School of Communications  
Syracuse University  
lmhirshf@syr.edu

Joseph B. Lyons  
US Air Force Research Laboratory  
711 Human Performance Wing  
joseph.lyons.6@us.af.mil

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Abstract

This article introduces the construct of suspicion to researchers in business and applied psychology, provides a literature-based definition of state suspicion and an initial self-report measure of that construct, and encourages research on this important topic. The construct of suspicion is under-researched in business and applied psychology, yet has wide application for both researchers and practitioners. These applications occur across many content domains (e.g., consumer psychology, leadership), as well as at varying levels of analysis (e.g., individual, group, organizational). To motivate research on this construct, possible studies are delineated/suggested by way of example and a Call for Papers also appears. The organizational sciences will benefit from the incorporation of suspicion-based constructs in theoretical and explanatory models. Organizations might also function more efficiently because of these efforts – as decision makers assess, understand, and better manage appropriate levels of suspicion in their employees and work groups.
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If a normally cool and collected co-worker indicates s/he did not betray the trust of a supervisor, but shakes visibly during the denial, does the supervisor become suspicious? If information systems begin to repeatedly display incorrect information, do users become suspicious? If previously conscientious subordinates begin coming to work late and leaving early, do supervisors become suspicious? If noisy co-workers become immediately silent when an employee enters a conference room, does the employee become suspicious that her co-workers were talking about her behind her back?

What does it mean for the above individuals to be “suspicious”? What are the “triggers” of such suspicion? How might the concept of suspicion best be measured? Will a suspicious person spend cognitive energy generating multiple possible scenarios for any observed behavior? Will a suspicious supervisor become anxious about possible future behaviors of an employee? In general, what effect will suspicion have on any dyadic work relationships (in terms of efficiency, LMX quality, trust, etc.)? Will suspicion generate a decrease in work efficiency because of re-directed cognitive energy (focusing thoughts about what might be occurring rather than focusing on primary work tasks) or will it cause an increase in efficiency (because players will be on guard and not engage in mis-steps at work)?

Going beyond these individual-level examples, what does it mean when one work group is said to be suspicious of another work group? Can we measure suspicion and its effects at the group/team level? Will any increase in anxiety due to suspicion cause negative affect that permeates the work environment, or will it breed a shared sense of vigilance and purpose which increases overall group cohesion and performance? When it is said that an organization is suspicious of its competitors (or even its partner organizations), what does “suspicous” mean? Can countries be suspicious of one another, and what might “suspicous” mean in these contexts? What are the business implications of suspicion within a multicultural, global, and inter-agency context?
To further stimulate thoughts about the study of suspicion, note that globalization has increased the amount of information that is created and exchanged, as well as the speed of that exchange (e.g., see Siegele, 2014). As a result, business relationships are able to develop at a much quicker rate, leaving little time for trust, cooperation, cohesion, or the formation of other important team processes. Such environments might be considered as breeding grounds for the creation and growth of suspicion. Further yet, given the proliferation of electronic information exchanges (including e-commerce), are employers and employees suspicious about threats lurking within those digital exchanges, and what do they do about those perceived threats?

The above paragraphs delineate but a few of the relevant questions relevant to the construct of suspicion. In general, it is suggested in this article that the concept of “suspicion” can be applied to, as well as enhance, current theories and models of organizational behavior, leadership, human resources management, entrepreneurship, and decision making within organizations. The intent of this article is to motivate an increased level of research which incorporates this construct. Although suspicion as a psychological construct is relatively un-researched and ill-defined in the prior literature, we believe that many topic domains in business and psychology can benefit from its use in both theoretical and applied work. The goals of such research in organization science could include assessment (development of metrics to identify when suspicion occurs in the workplace), understanding (knowing how suspicion develops and implications of suspicion in organizational contexts), and management (having the capability of influencing levels of suspicion).

The Construct of Suspicion and its Definition

Bobko, Barelka, and Hirshfield (2014) recently reviewed the social science literature on suspicion, including literature in management, marketing, communication, human factors, and psychology (consumer, counseling, and social). Their work was focused on state suspicion (e.g., what caused individuals to become suspicious in particular situations), although it is suggested that trait suspicion (including the propensity of individuals to more readily become suspicious than others, ceteris paribus) is also of interest to organizational researchers. Also, those authors were particularly interested in applications to information technology (IT) contexts, but their
focus was sufficiently general to allow an overall definition of state suspicion. They found that the pre-existing literature on suspicion was rather sparse. They also found that many researchers who used the psychological construct of suspicion in their theoretical logic did not define the concept and/or measure it – and this seems to be a continuing concern in the multiple literatures they reviewed. As one example, while writing the current article, we became aware of a paper entitled “Removing the shadow of suspicion: The effects of apology versus …” (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004). Although suspicion is in the title and the header, and the notion of suspicion is used as the explanatory mechanism in a discussion section, suspicion is neither defined nor measured in this study.

Other efforts – generally in social psychology and communication studies – do indeed offer definitions of suspicion and, on occasion, measures of the construct (although the measures are often ad-hoc manipulation check items). Bobko et al. (2014, Table 2) considered these prior definitions and noted conceptual commonalities among them. In particular, they noticed that the three facets of (i) uncertainty, (ii) malintent, and (iii) cognitive activation were often implicitly used in the discussions of suspicion. In turn, state suspicion was defined as the simultaneous occurrence of these three facets. Their definition is adopted here, although the definition is edited a bit to remove their specific focus on IT contexts. Thus, the definition of state suspicion is:

State suspicion is a person’s simultaneous state of cognitive activity, uncertainty, and perceived malintent about underlying information.

Regarding the facet of uncertainty, suspicion involves “suspended judgment” (Hilton, Fein, & Miller, 1993, p. 502), “questioning” (DeCarlo, 2005, p. 239), or simply “uncertainty” itself (Kim & Levine, 2011, p. 52; Lyons et al., 2011, p. 220). This component of suspicion is fundamental, and it also helps distinguish suspicion from trust/distrust. That is, although suspicion, distrust, and trust are related concepts, they are separable; trust and distrust are decisions, while suspicion involves suspended judgment.

Regarding the facet of malintent, suspicion involves an unknown concern about another entity’s motives. For example, Buller and Burgoon (1996, p. 205) note that suspicion involves concern that another person’s actions may be “duplicitous,” while Buss and Perry (1992) indicate
that suspicion and resentment items load on the same factor. Other researchers mention similar, negatively-cast concepts such as deception, hidden intent, and so forth. Although being uncertain does not necessarily involve concern, the current focus of attention is on the negative side of intent (malintent). Thus, for example, the current focus is on being suspicious of others who intend to do us harm (and not on, say, individuals who are planning surprise birthday parties for us).

The third facet is cognitive activation. That is, suspicion involves heightened levels of thought processes that attempt to generate explanations for observed behavior, as well as processes involved in encoding and decoding that information. Thus, cognitive activation is an integral component of suspicion. Indeed, Kim and Levine (2011, p. 52) note suspicion “stimulat[es] a construal of motives in an effort to assess potential deceptive intent.”\(^1\) This is also consistent with work by Schul, Mayo, and Burstein (2004) who suggest that messages within a “suspicious context” (p. 668, although suspicious is not defined) are encoded differently. They suggest that suspicious contexts increase the cognitive complexity of encoding, and that the integration of messages into a single framework is delayed.

Again, state suspicion is a person’s simultaneous state of cognitive activity, uncertainty, and perceived malintent about underlying information. Note that simultaneity is an important part of this definition. For example, there are many things in organizations that involve uncertainty -- Will this be the busiest retail day of the year? Will the train be delayed and will I be late for work? Will my boss support my request? This uncertainty does not mean we are necessarily suspicious; nor do any of the other two facets by themselves imply suspicion.

However, the juxtaposition of these three facets (a three-way interaction in a statistical sense) is suggested as the operational definition of being in a state of suspiciousness.

\(^1\) A reviewer made the interesting point, also in Bobko et al., that cognitive activity may be an immediate consequence of suspicion. However, it is being suggested that heightened cognitive activity is an integral part of being suspicious, although it may then foster even greater increases in cognitive activity. We hope this article motivates basic research that helps unpack the causal feedback chain of cognitive activity begetting further cognitive activity.
Another important facet of the above definition is the generality of its referent. For example, many models of trust (e.g., Mayer et al., 1995) focus on trust in other individuals (i.e., interpersonal trust). However, in our conception of suspicion, the entity generating suspicious information is purposively left general. Thus, useful research might involve suspicion about another person (supervisor, co-worker, client, leader, computer operator), a group (workgroup, current organization, competitor organization, political organization), or an inanimate object (computer itself, information/automated systems).

Towards a research model of suspicion. Bobko et al. (2014) provide a brief model about state suspicion which helps motivate the associated *Journal of Business and Psychology* Call for Papers on this topic. Precursors of increased suspicion include missing (or disparate or unexpected) information. The model also indicates that the influence of these disparities on suspicion can be buffered by pre-existing individual differences (such as trait level trust). Or, suspicion may be exacerbated by individual differences (such as propensity to be suspicious, a lack of faith in humanity, etc.). Also noted in that model are potential outcomes of being in a state of suspiciousness (e.g., increased cognitive load or anxiety), as well as more distal outcomes (e.g., increased detection of deception).

There are many individual differences and contextual factors which determine the nomological net associated with both trait and state suspicion. For example, it is expected that distrust will be correlated with state suspicion, but not necessarily in a substantial manner. As noted, conceptually speaking, distrust is a judgment/decision while suspicion involves uncertainty and suspended judgment. Indeed, Lyons et al. (2011) report rs between suspicion and distrust that range from .29 to .58; they also report rs between suspicion and trust that range from -.06 to -.33.

As a further example of possible correlates, individuals who are creative might, on average, be more suspicious. That is, the cognitive component of suspicion is focused on the generation of alternative explanations for perceived events. Creative individuals might be better able to generate more alternative explanations and thus become more suspicious. As another example, individuals who have substantial levels of faith in humanity might be less state suspicious than others (because their general trust might buffer a motivation to perceive malintent). In sum, regarding trait suspicion, Bobko et al.’s correlates included trust/distrust,
need for conformity, creativity, cynicism, and so forth. For state suspicion in IT contexts, their correlates included system reliability, familiarity with technology, individual fatigue, and so forth. We suggest that such variables and their inter-relationships serve as a good starting point for much of the research outlined in the current article.

How suspicion might inform organizational research - a more in-depth set of examples

One elegant feature about the study of the construct of suspicion in business and psychology is its ubiquity of application to (i) many organizational contexts at (ii) many levels of analysis. In this section, we outline several possible research domains which could benefit from consideration/incorporation of the construct of suspicion. The list is not exhaustive, but suggestive, and was generated by examining recent articles in issues of several journals as well as recent conference presentations. These efforts were chosen because they were useful in their own right, yet had the potential to motivate even more research. We then added a few more suggestions based on different content domains. Overall, the suggested efforts demonstrate the substantial usefulness and application of the construct of suspicion to organizational studies. In order to help present the examples, they are categorized into micro (individual) level and macro (dyadic, group and organizational) level topics.

Individual level examples:

- McNall and Stanton (2012) conducted a study to explore fairness reactions to location sensing devices (LSTs). Two variables were manipulated - ability to control the LST ($X_1$) and framed purpose of the LST ($X_2$). Regarding ability to control the LST, the LST was either on 24/7 or could be turned off when not at work. The framed purpose of the LST was either punitive (checking for those who broke company policy purpose) or customer service oriented (provide better/faster service given the capacity to find a representative). The authors found hypothesized links between control ($X_1$) and perceived fairness, but not between purpose ($X_2$) and perceived fairness. It may be that there is a relationship between $X_1$ and $X_2$ that involves the concept of suspicion – and this may
help explain the differential findings. More specifically, perhaps being able to turn off the LST while not at work reduced the overall influence of punitive versus service purposes, because such control removed state suspicions that the employer was using the LST for any nefarious purposes. Regardless, suspicion seems to make sense as an additional variable in this theoretical context. Indeed, in the discussion section (see p. 306), the authors note that trust (and, in our mind, suspicion) of supervisor or management is a variable in need of research attention in future investigations of LSTs.

- Chang, Rosen, Siemieniec, and Johnson (2012) looked at the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics (POP) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). They also considered two individual difference moderators of this relationship – conscientiousness and self-monitoring. We suggest that the role of suspicion might help further develop such models. For example, the authors note that POP often carries a negative frame – and we note the parallel to our definition of suspicion (i.e., the malintent facet). They provide a sample POP item that involves the political nature of promotions in the organization. The issue underlying this item is likely not just the political nature of any decision, per se (i.e., politics is a natural way of life, and not necessarily bad). Rather, the issue is the potential for nefarious decision making and suspicion about motives underlying promotional decision making. Perhaps the empirical effects reported in such research can best be understood by the degree of saturation of “suspicion” in an individual’s assessment of political behavior.

- The construct of suspicion might also help researchers interested in decision making heuristics and cognitive biases (e.g., work derivative of Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) or researchers interested in trust in automation, including work on automated decision aides. For example, Burgoon, Blair, and Strom (2008) considered the role of confirmation bias, truth bias, and anchoring bias when individuals attempted to detect deception from information being presented via automated systems. An interesting related issue is - How can automated systems provide information in such a way that the system is highly trusted during normal routine operations, while providing the transparency and data
necessary for users to become suspicious at appropriate times? For example, Lyons (2013) outlined a model for generating human-robot transparency (which included shared awareness and shared intent between the person and the agent). Further, the literature on affective computing demonstrates that the influence of emotional displays by agent-based systems on human behavior is mediated by a cognitive process through which humans appraise the intent of the agent’s display (see deMelo, Carnevale, Read, & Gratch, 2012). Thus, suspicious individuals may appraise a particular emotional display differently than non-suspicious individuals. In general, given the proliferation of robotic and agent-based systems, understanding when humans become suspicious of non-human “workers” will be important to researchers and practitioners.

- Regarding measurement, neurological techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI; e.g., Dimoka, 2010 or Bagozzi et al., 2013) or functional near infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS; e.g., Hirshfield et al., 2014) might be used to assess suspicion relatively more objectively than self-report surveys, as well as in real-time. These expanded experimental tools might help researchers answer questions such as, What are the neural correlates of suspicion or what brain regions are recruited when an individual becomes suspicious? How do these correlates manifest themselves in the brains of different groups of people (high/low IQ, high/low situational awareness, high/low emotional intelligence)?

**Dyadic, group, and organizational examples:**

- Baysinger, Schere, and LeBreton (2014) reported on an empirical study that tested a theoretical model about group personality (specifically, group psychopathy and aggression) and group effectiveness. The conception of group personality in their study was thus focused on negatively-associated constructs (e.g., deceitfulness, callousness, and erratic behavior, p. 49). The underlying model was that group personality (X) leads to a reduction in task participation (M, the mediator) which leads, in turn, to a reduction in group effectiveness (Y). Support was found for the model, and the introduction of the concept of suspicion might further clarify some of the findings. For example, it might be
that the negatively-oriented group personality caused members to be more suspicious of other group members. In turn, the reduction in task participation could be explained by a re-allocation of cognitive resources - focused on generating suspicious thoughts. That is, it would be interesting to know if the reduction in the mediator of task participation was associated with an overall reduction in effort or a re-allocation of effort and cognitive resources to suspicious thoughts.

- The leadership literature might also benefit from incorporation of the construct of suspicion. Will leaders who are more or less suspicious of followers be perceived as more or less transformational? Are suspicious leaders (individuals who show greater levels of trait suspiciousness or are primed to increase their state suspicion levels) better able to detect subtle environmental cues and discern hidden agendas/motivations behind observed changes, or might they overcompensate and look for ulterior motives when none exist? Can generally suspicious individuals effectively engage in servant leadership, given that trust is an important mediator of the effects of servant leadership (van Dierendonk, 2011)?

- Leadership theory and suspicion may also be linked at the neurological level. In particular, Becker and Cropanzano (2010) suggest there is an emerging domain of organizational cognitive neuroscience (see also Lee, Senior, & Butler, 2012 for a similar trend and some limitations). Our own review found that, for example, (i) Dimoka (2010) and Krueger et al. (2007) measured correlates of trust and distrust using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), (ii) Bagozzi et al. (2013) looked at Machiavellianism using fMRI, and (iii) Hannah, Balthazard, Waldman, Jennings, and Thatcher (2013) demonstrated that measures of neurological complexity can have unique predictive capacity for leader behavior over and above more traditional measures of leader proclivity.

- At the organizational (and country) level, the role of suspicion in theories of culture is unknown, yet likely important. It is possible that some cultures are characterized by individuals who will exhibit, on average, more suspiciousness than individuals in other
cultures. For example, one facet in the definition of suspicion is “uncertainty,” while one of the primary dimensions of globally-based culture is labeled “uncertainty avoidance” (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Thus, it may be that cultures associated with high uncertainty avoidance also have reduced average levels of individual suspicion. As another example, Huff and Kelley (2003) found that collectivistic cultures have a stronger in/out-group effect, which may reduce inter-agency trust between heterogeneous organizations in such cultures. Suspicion might be the cognitive catalyst driving these in/out-group effects. As yet another example, Maynard and Ferdman (2009) discuss challenges faced by marginalized workers (e.g., immigrants, young employees, and contingent workers). Those authors suggest that one important factor is cultural differences -- which may spark intergroup conflict due to lack of understanding, suspicion, or stereotypical beliefs.

We hope the above examples motivate researchers to incorporate the construct of suspicion in their studies of organizational phenomena. The examples illustrate the wide array of topics to which suspicion is relevant, as well as the wide array of relevant levels of analysis (from individuals to groups to cultures). Again, the list is illustrative and many other examples exist. For example:

- Kantrowitz and Guitierrez’s (2005) work on security concerns during web-based employment testing might benefit from such a construct (e.g., suspicion of cheating).
- The concept of job insecurity might benefit from consideration of such a construct. For example, although the study of the perception of job insecurity is extensive, Huang et al. (2013) note that “research on how individual employees actively respond to job insecurity is limited” (p. 853). Increased suspicion (of subsequent organizational events, other employees, etc.) may be an important set of reactions that are worthy of study.
- The incorporation of an understanding of how suspicion operates might improve the overall 50-50 chance rates currently found in detection of deception studies (Bond, 2012).
- At the group level, the concept of polarization of attitudes as a function of group processes has been studied (e.g., Isenberg, 1986). It may be that group processes also polarize levels of suspicion, such that initially high individual levels of suspicion breed more suspicion, while initially low levels of suspicion breed acceptance and complacency.
Other examples abound. In sum, the construct of suspicion (whether at the state or trait level) has much utility for theoretical research in, and applications to, business and psychology. Furthermore, the above examples are at both the micro and macro levels of analysis. To increase the quality of efforts in any of these areas, it would be important to have psychometrically sound measures of suspicion. To that end, the next section provides an initial theory-based, self-report measure of state suspicion.

**The measurement of suspicion: A twenty-item scale**

As noted, the items in this section are offered to help encourage the scientific measurement of suspicion – which should provide some generalizability of studies/papers on this construct. Bobko et al. (2014) found that the literature on suspicion was sparse, and the measurement of suspicion in prior studies was often non-existent or simply consisted of seemingly ad-hoc, manipulation-check items. Thus, there has been little psychometric development and/or validation of a measure of suspicion. Two recent exceptions are Lyons et al. (2011) and a master’s thesis by Olson (2009), although both of these measures were in IT/cyber contexts (e.g., the 2011 items generally invoked the referent of “computer”).

To generate a scale for a more general measure of state suspicion, items in the existing literature that assessed suspicion were collated. Using the definition of state suspicion noted above, items were chosen which appeared to represent overall levels of state suspicion, as well as the three facets of (i) cognitive activation (generation of alternative explanations), (ii) perceptions of malintent, and (iii) uncertainty. Additional items were also written, based upon the definition, in order to fill out the scale. A version of the resulting twenty-item scale is presented in Table 1.

To highlight several aspects of the twenty items in Table 1, note that:

- The items are theory-based (chosen and developed based on the above definition of state suspicion).

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2 The items were collated and sorted with the assistance of Dr. Heather Odle-Dusseau.
- Some items measure overall state suspicion; others target the three components noted in the definition (uncertainty, perceived malintent, cognitive activation). These targeted differences are also denoted in Table 1 (see the symbols, S, U, M, C).

- 25% of the items were adapted from Lyons et al. (2011) and Olson (2009); 40% of the items were adapted singularly from various studies in the social science literature; 35% of the items were generated specifically with the definition of state suspicion in mind.

- It is important to note that the items are provided using generic wording, and that their context can be changed/adapted from study to study without losing fundamental links to the above definition (see Table 1 for examples of adaptations).

- Regarding scoring, we suggest there are two ways to obtain a measure of the level of state suspicion. First, simply sum the 20 items using unit weights. Second, given the definition of state suspicion as the simultaneous occurrence of the three facets, compute the function CxMxU for facets-related items and add the resulting score to the score for all S items. We encourage research that evaluates the efficacy of these two approaches, or other variants. Table 1 also indicates that, regardless of method, some of the items are reverse-scored.

- Bobko & Odle-Dusseau (unpublished manuscript) used a version of the twenty-item measure in a study of bank employees (tellers, security officers, etc.). Although the sample size was small (n about 50), the results were encouraging. The item-total correlations were generally good (total scores were based on unit weights, as well as the S + CxMxU method), and almost all of the items demonstrated discriminant validity – in regard to distinguishing between reactions to “extremely suspicious” and “mildly suspicious” situations.

Again, researchers are encouraged to use these twenty items (or some variant) – in order to generate psychometric stability and enhanced integration of results across studies. We also encourage research on other ways of assessing state (as well as trait) suspicion. For example, additional self-report items or scoring methods might be developed. Further yet, other variables in the suspicion nomological net could be assessed to investigate their correlation with, and separability from, suspicion. For example, as suggested earlier, potential correlates of trait suspicion include trust propensity, need for conformity, creativity, cynicism, etc. Potential
correlates of state suspicion include antecedents such as fatigue, cognitive load, system reliability, or familiarity with the technology, as well as consequences such as emotional reactions and task performance. Additionally, as mentioned in the above listing of research examples, there may be other methods of measurement, including those which are physiologically-based or behaviorally-based (e.g., facial expression analysis, the monitoring of keystroke and mouse usage patterns). At the physiological level, measures from an fMRI or fNIRS could be used to spatially map cognitively-based, neural correlates of suspicion or thoughts about intention, while EEGs could be used to assess associated cognitive load or emotional reactions. Other physiological sensors like eyetracking, galvanic skin response, or heart rate monitors could also be used.

Summary

The investigation of the construct of suspicion can help researchers and practitioners understand behavior within and across organizations. We have suggested that the construct of suspicion is a unique, valuable, and understudied variable in organizational science research. It has been demonstrated that the concept of suspicion applies to a wide array of topics in business and applied psychology – and it applies to these topics at several levels of analysis.

We further suggest that such studies might help organizations better manage suspicion. For example, in some situations, levels of suspicion might need to be reduced. In other situations (e.g., negotiations and decision making, cyber security, entrepreneurial information seeking, interactions with imperfect automated decision aides) an increase in suspicion may be desirable. In either of these instances (a desired increase or decrease), factors such as individual predispositions, organizational structure, leadership behaviors, or the introduction of new technology may all be relevant and exciting variables to study. Research is encouraged on any and all of these topics. To that end, please read the Call for Papers that appears simultaneously with this article. We look forward to submissions in these exciting domains.
References


deMelo, C., Carnevale, P., Read, S. & Gratch, J. (2012). Reverse appraisal: The importance of appraisals for the effect of emotion displays on people's decision-making in a social


Table 1
Twenty-Item Self-Report Scale for State Suspicion

Response scale:
(1) disagree strongly
(2) disagree
(3) neither agree nor disagree
(4) agree
(5) agree strongly

Items:

1. I wasn’t sure if the people I was dealing with were completely truthful with me. (U)

2. At several points in the process, I wondered what was really going on behind the scenes. (C)

3. I tended to believe any of the assurances of security that were provided. (M, reverse scored)

4. I was on my guard when interacting with this entity. (S)

5. During the event, I was uncertain as to what was really going on. (U)

6. I kept thinking that some behaviors were unusual. (C)

7. I had confidence in the integrity of the whole process. (M, reverse scored)

8. I was suspicious of things during the event. (S)

9. During the event, I was uncertain as to what would eventually happen. (U)

10. I spent time thinking of alternative possibilities about what was going on during the event. (C)

11. I felt like I was being taken advantage of. (M)

12. I was not suspicious about what was being presented to me. (S, reverse scored)

13. It was clear what was going on at all stages of the process. (U, reverse scored)

14. There were many times when I found myself wondering about the information being provided. (C)
15. I was very concerned about some of the things that occurred during this event. (M)

16. I became increasingly suspicious during the event. (S)

17. Nothing seemed unusual about the process. (U, reverse scored)

18. I believed I wouldn’t be asked for any information that wasn’t really needed. (M, reverse scored)

19. I was not suspicious of anything during the event. (S, reverse scored)

20. I felt they would be up-front with me. (M, reverse scored)

Note: Items are identified by the facet of the definition that is targeted. The item types are overall suspicion (S), cognitive activity (C), malintent (M), and uncertainty (U). Reverse scoring is also noted.

Note: The items above are provided using generic wording, and their context can be changed/adapted from study to study without losing fundamental links to the definition of suspicion. For example, when the items were written in the context of conducting an online purchase, item #4 (“I was on my guard when interacting with this entity”) was adapted to be “I was on my guard when interacting with this website to make a purchase.” As another example, the scale is being used to assess state suspicion while research participants make hypothetical decisions about troop movements. During this experiment, participants receive and incorporate information from an intelligence officer. Thus, item #12 (“I was not suspicious about what was being presented to me”) has been adapted to be “I was not suspicious about what the intelligence liaison officer was presenting to me.”