

## Types

- **Interpersonal Attribution:** When telling a story to a group of friends or acquaintances, you are likely to tell the story in a way that places you in the best possible light.
- **Predictive Attribution:** We also tend to attribute things in ways that allow us to make future predictions. If your car was vandalized, you might attribute the crime to the fact that you parked in a particular parking garage. As a result, you will avoid that parking garage in the future in order to avoid further vandalism.
- **Explanatory Attribution:** We use explanatory attributions to help us make sense of the world around us. Some people have an optimistic explanatory style, while others tend to be more pessimistic. People with an optimistic style attribute positive events to stable, internal and global causes and negative events to unstable, external and specific causes. Those with a pessimistic style attribute negative events to internal, stable and global causes and positive events to external, stable and specific causes.
- **Dispositional attribution** assigns the cause of behavior to some internal characteristic of a person, rather than to outside forces. When we explain the behavior of others we look for enduring internal attributions, such as personality traits. This is known as the [fundamental attribution error](#). For example, we attribute the behavior of a person to their personality, motives or beliefs.
- **Situational Attribution** - The process of assigning the cause of behavior to some situation or event outside a person's control rather than to some internal characteristic. When we try to explain our own behavior we tend to make external attributions, such as situational or environment features.

## Theories

Jones and Davis' theory helps us understand the process of making an internal attribution. They say that we tend to do this when we see a correspondence between motive and behavior. For example, when we see a correspondence between someone behaving in a friendly way and being a friendly person.

Dispositional (i.e., internal) attributions provide us with information from which we can make predictions about a person's future behavior. The correspondent inference theory describes the conditions under which we make dispositional attributes to the behavior we perceive as intentional.

Davis used the term correspondent inference to refer to an occasion when an observer infers that a person's behavior matches or corresponds with their personality. It is an alternative term to dispositional attribution.

So what leads us to make a correspondent inference? Jones and Davis say we draw on five sources of information:

1. **Choice:** If a behavior is freely chosen it is believed to be due to internal (dispositional) factors.
2. **Accidental vs. Intentional Behavior:** Behavior that is intentional is likely to be attributed to the person's personality, and behavior which is accidental is likely to be attributed to situation / external causes.
3. **Social Desirability:** Behaviors low in sociable desirability (non conforming) lead us to make (internal) dispositional inferences more than socially undesirable behaviors. For example, if you observe a person getting on a bus and sitting on the floor instead of one of the seats. This behavior has low social desirability (non conforming) and is likely to correspond with the personality of the individual.
4. **Hedonistic Relevance:** If the other person's behavior appears to be directly intended to benefit or harm us.
5. **Personalism:** If the other person's behavior appears to be intended to have an impact on us, we assume that it is "personal", and not just a by-product of the situation we are both in.