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Using One's Experience as Hypothesis Testing Strategy

Snyder and Swann argue that individuals use social interaction to test hypotheses about other people and that individuals will adopt confirmatory strategies to test these hypotheses. These hypotheses confirming actions are present in the movie "Being There" when a man of low intelligence that looks good, dresses in fine suits and speaks directly is mistaken for someone confident and of deep contemplation. Even though the strategies are present throughout the movie, they are only used when characters lack information regarding the context of the other person and therefore fill in with what is familiar to them.

In the movie, just because Chance the gardener is well-groomed, dressed in tailored suits and speaks like an educated man, he is automatically presumed to be a person of substance and looks like a successful businessman to both Eve and Ben, her husband. The first evidence for this is when Chance presents himself as "I'm Chance, the gardener" and Eve understands "I'm Chauncey Gardiner." Due to a lack of knowledge about Chance's background and just receiving information from how Chance looks, Eve makes this assumption because he looks someone from her social status just by the way he's dressed.

Moreover, when Eve introduces Chance to her husband Ben, Chance mentions that his house has been shut down and because Ben is a businessman, he immediately says, "you mean your business" and innocently Chance responds "yes, by attorneys." At this moment, Ben confirms his hypothesis that Chance is a successful businessman because

Ben has been submerged in the business world his whole life and therefore thinks Chance has lived just like him. Not understanding Chance's limitations, Ben and the President, interpret Chance's gardening statements as metaphors for politics and economics confirming their hypothesis that Chance is a wise businessman just like them.

Furthermore, when Chance appears on TV, Louise claims to have raised him and says " you only need to be a white man to succeed in America." Since Louise is black she immediately perceives that it's a white man's world not knowing that Chance is where he is by pure accident. Another scenario where we see how characters use hypothesis confirming strategies and perceive Chance as someone relatable to them, is when the Russian diplomat assumes he knows Russian just because Chance laughs at his joke.

As it has been shown, all of the characters make their own interpretation of reality and have their own perception of Chance. As these examples show, they take Chance's responses and apply them to the context of the conversation or their own background. In the last scene of the movie, the audience is able to see Chance the way all the other characters saw him throughout the movie; we think he's walking on water because that's what it looks like to us and we have no more information on the context, just like it happened to every character who interacted with him.