CONSENSUS AND MODALITY IN THE ATTRIBUTION PROCESS:
THE ROLE OF SIMILARITY AND INFORMATION

GEORGE R. GOETHALS

Williams College

After groups of subjects judged the relative success of two students, an exchange of evaluations was arranged. Half of the subjects were led to believe that they would get an evaluation from a group member who had the same information about the students, half, that the group member had different information. Subjects were also led to believe either that the group member was similar or dissimilar in terms of his interpersonal orientation and style of judging other people. Then subjects received agreeing or disagreeing evaluations. A Similarity X Information within Agree interaction supported the attribution theory predictions that when the other had the same information, his agreement would increase confidence more if he were dissimilar than if he were similar, but when the other had different information, his agreement would increase confidence more if he were similar. A statistical trend suggested that similar disagreers reduced confidence more than dissimilar disagreers.

Whenever a person makes a judgment—about himself, about another person, or about an object—he runs the risk of being mistaken. Consequently, people are often concerned with discovering whether or not they are right. They frequently attempt to learn if their judgments are correct by comparing them with the judgments of others (Festinger, 1954). The information that a person receives through such a comparison typically affects the confidence with which he maintains his judgment. The present study is directly concerned with the way confidence is affected when a person finds that others agree or disagree with a judgment he has made.

The possibility that a person's judgment may be correct or incorrect may be rephrased in terms of attribution theory (Heider, 1944, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967). Attribution theory concerns the human tendency to see behavior, one's own and others', as caused primarily by the person or the environment. Any judgment, evaluation, or emotion may reflect the judge's peculiar characteristics or be attributed entirely to the compelling stimulus qualities of the entity being perceived.

In the realm of judgment, to say that a response reflects the entity implies the accuracy of the judgment. The response mirrors or describes the entity without distortion. Conversely, an inaccurate response is attributable either to the person or to misleading features in the context of judgment. The judge is either a flawed perceiver, or the entity is obscured by the qualities of its surround.

Thus, the person wanting to know whether his judgment is correct needs to know whether it is attributable to the entity. Kelley (1967) suggested that a person can attribute his response to the entity if he responds differentially or distinctively to the entity, if he responds in the same way over repeated interactions with it and through different modes of transaction, and if other people respond in the same way. That is, an entity response is marked by distinctiveness, consistency across time and modality, and consensus across others.

It is the dimensions of consensus and modality that concern the present investigation. Kelley's model implies that if a person wants to establish that a response accurately reflects an entity, he must find whether other people respond to the entity in the same way and whether it manifests itself in the same way through other modalities. If others agree, he can be more certain that the response is

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2 Requests for reprints should be sent to George R. Goethals, Department of Psychology, Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267.
entity caused. If not, it will be regarded as person caused, and if the person is to understand the response fully he must discover what personal characteristics led him to respond in the unusual way he did. Also, if other manifestations or other information lead to the same response, he can be more certain that the response is entity caused. If not, the person must discover what features of his original information distorted the true attributes of the entity.

These considerations make no mention of the characteristics of the person or persons constituting the consensus. While Kelley’s implications may be true in general, it would seem that one’s reaction to comparison information would depend in part on the characteristics of the other. The present investigation focuses on two dimensions that might affect the person’s response to agreement or disagreement: the other’s degree of similarity and his information about or modality of transaction with the entity. It asks how a person’s confidence in his judgment is influenced by feedback from others who vary in their similarity and their information.

Let us first consider the case in which another person is exposed to the same information about the entity that the subject has been and both reach the same conclusion about its essential characteristics. Assuming that the person feels some degree of uncertainty about his judgment, how might his confidence be affected when similar or dissimilar others agree?

The person’s uncertainty reflects his apprehension that his judgment is person caused. He may doubt his own objectivity or perceptiveness. If a similar person agrees with the uncertain judge, his confidence should be increased on the basis that another agrees. Yet, the similar other may share the characteristic which generates the inaccurate judgment. Thus, by comparing with similar others, the person runs the risk of discovering an agreeing consensus which will lead him confidently to make an entity attribution when in fact the consensus combines a number of person-caused judgments. If a dissimilar other agrees, there is a correction for bias, he is less likely to share the error-producing characteristic. Thus, his agreement helps to rule out the possibility that the judgment is person caused.

This reasoning suggests that if a person makes a judgment about which he is not entirely confident, his confidence should be more increased by agreement from a dissimilar other than from a similar other. The similar other may share the characteristics which could be generating an incorrect response; the dissimilar other is less likely to.

In other terms, if a person is unsure about a judgment, his confidence might be more increased if another person with a different perspective or viewpoint on the matter agreed. Such agreement would tell him that his judgment is not merely a function of his peculiar point of view. It suggests that people with a variety of different orientations reach the same conclusion, that the supporting consensus is a heterogeneous one.

This discussion omits consideration of modality, one of the key dimensions in Kelley’s (1967) attribution model. A response can be attributed to the entity if, among other things, it is consistent across modes of interaction with the entity. An uncertain judge should be more confident if he knows that his response is consistent across modalities, that is, that other information would lead him to the same judgment.

Suppose that the person himself has no exposure to other information but his judgment of the entity is supported by someone else who has been so exposed. If the other were similar, the person might be able to assume that since they share a common orientation, they would respond similarly to the different information. He would have reliable data suggesting that his response to the entity would be consistent across at least one other modality.

It should be noted that when a person finds that a similar other with different information agrees, he can increase his confidence on two counts. First, he has discovered that his response is consensual, and, second, he can assume that it would be consistent across modality.

The case where the agreeer with different information is dissimilar becomes fairly complex. The logical extension of the discussion above might be that confidence should be
maximally increased by agreement from a dissimilar other with different information. Wouldn't the person have bias-correcting consensus information in addition to consistency information? Such a conclusion overlooks an important new source of ambiguity.

It was said above that if the other is similar, the person can assume that he would respond to the new information as he did to the original. Their common orientation permits this assumption. If the other is dissimilar, the person simply cannot assume similar responses to the different information. Thus, the dissimilar other's agreement on the basis of different information tells him very little.

Since the two are dissimilar, the person could as well assume that if he had access to the other information, it would lead him to the opposite conclusion. He has no reliable way of approximating his response to that information.

Thus, under conditions where the other person has the same information, the judge's confidence should be increased more by agreement from a dissimilar other than from a similar other. Under conditions where the other has different information, the person's confidence should be increased more by agreement from a similar other than from a dissimilar other. These two predictions can be combined to yield a prediction of a statistical interaction among the four instances in which a judge receives agreeing feedback. This predicted interaction is referred to as the agreement hypothesis.

Let us next consider instances in which a person finds that another person reaches a different conclusion about an entity. If the disagreeer has the same information and is similar, he should greatly reduce the person's confidence in his judgment. The other's disagreement cannot be dismissed as a reflection of personal characteristics. To the extent that the two are similar, they share the same perspectives. By comparison, it should be easier for the person to handle disagreement from a dissimilar other. In such instances, people generally assume that their own responses accurately mirror the environment and that the other's response is idiosyncratic (Heider, 1958). The other's dissimilarity conveniently facilitates this assumption.

When the disagreeing other has different information, the situation is slightly more complex. As with same information, the similar other's disagreement cannot be discounted on the basis of personal biases. The possibilities that remain are that the original judge is correct, that the other person is correct, or that there is a complex entity-modality interaction giving rise to the divergent opinions of the two similar observers. In the latter instance, the judge might take the similar other's disagreement to imply that while the entity manifested itself in one way through the original modality, it looked distinctly different in the other modality. He would assume that if he had the other information he would see it as the other person did.

Thus, the person would have to make some judgment as to which manifestation is more truly reflective of the entity's attributes. Those who dismiss the other's source of information would not greatly reduce their confidence; those who begin to suspect the representativeness of their transaction modality would substantially decrease their confidence. A great deal of variability might be expected in this condition.

A dissimilar other's disagreement on the basis of different information would have no systematic impact on the person's level of confidence. First, because he is dissimilar, his disagreement can easily be attributed to personal characteristics. Furthermore, his dissimilarity makes it difficult for the person to make any assumption as to how he would respond to the other's information.

The above reasoning yields two predictions about the way a person's confidence in his judgment will be affected by disagreement from others. Under conditions where the other is similar, the judge's confidence should be more decreased than where the other is dissimilar. Also, disagreements based on the same information should result in larger decreases in confidence than corresponding instances where the disagreement is based on different information. Thus, the greatest decrease should be produced by similar disagreeers who have the same information. The smallest decrease should be produced by dissimilar disagreeers who have different information.
METHOD

Overview
As part of an alleged study of college admissions procedures, small groups of subjects were shown videotaped segments, purported to be excerpts from the interviews of two prospective students. After the subjects had judged the students’ relative subsequent success, an exchange of evaluations was arranged. Half of the subjects were led to believe that they would get an evaluation from a group member who had seen the same segments; the others were led to believe that their evaluation came from a group member who had seen different segments. Before they read the other’s evaluation, the subjects were given their score and the other’s score on a fictitious test measuring interpersonal judgment style. Half of the subjects were led to believe that the other subject was similar in judging others; half were led to believe that he was markedly different. The evaluations that the subjects received either agreed or disagreed with their own. Thus, the design was a 2 (similar versus dissimilar) \( \times \) 2 (agree versus disagree) \( \times \) 2 (same information versus different information) factorial.

Subjects
One hundred and twenty-one undergraduate men enrolled in introductory psychology classes at Duke University served as subjects in the experiment. Subjects were scheduled in groups of four and five for an experiment entitled “student selection study.” When only three subjects arrived, the group was run in same-information conditions.

Experimental Materials

Videotapes. The experiment required the subjects to decide which of two Duke students was more successful academically. The theoretical discussion in the introduction assumes at least a modicum of uncertainty. Furthermore, if initial confidence levels were too high, there would be a ceiling on possible increases. Consequently, the tapes were designed not to favor one student so much that initial confidence ratings would be too high.

The tapes consisted of eight interview segments, four of one student and four of another. The scripts were written to make one student appear more intelligent and creative. However, he appeared to be someone who might pursue a variety of extracurricular interests. The other, in contrast, seemed like one who would study diligently without concerning himself with other matters. Thus, while the first appeared to have more potential, the subjects could choose the second on the basis of his self-disciplined single-mindedness.

Similarity manipulation. Specially prepared “Personal Judgment Profile” sheets were used to manipulate similarity. The subjects were given two profiles, their own and that of the subject whose evaluation of the two students they received. The profiles allegedly indicated their standing on a test which measured one’s orientation toward other people or style of evaluating personal characteristics. Subjects were told that they could compare the two profiles to determine how similar their own style was to that of the other subject. The profiles were almost identical in the similar conditions and very divergent in the dissimilar conditions.

Procedure

The experimenter greeted the subjects and ushered them into a room with several chairs and a videotape monitor and recorder.

The experimenter explained that the study concerned college admissions procedures: how admissions decisions were made and especially what the role of interviews was in such decisions. It was explained that in order to explore these questions, they would be asked to make some judgments about two Duke applicants whose admissions interviews had been recorded.

He added that only short segments of the tape would be played, showing the two applicants discussing such issues as coeducation and curriculum relevance. Then he explained that both applicants had been accepted and were presently juniors at Duke. Both were doing well, but in terms of grades, faculty evaluation of independent work, and faculty assessment of each one’s potential for contributing superior work to his major field, one student was clearly better. The subjects’ task would be to identify the better student. The experimenter said he was interested in seeing how accurate they could be, individually and as a group, in making judgments.

In the same-information conditions, the experimenter started the videotape without further comment. In the different-information conditions, he explained that when committees considered various applicants, it often happened that not all committee members had precisely the same information. The experimenter said that in an attempt to duplicate this feature of committees, he was showing some of them, chosen at random, a different tape. He added that the second tape merely showed different segments of the same two interviews.

Then he led two subjects into an adjoining room. Both subjects were then in fact shown the same segments in different rooms. After six interview segments were shown, all subjects were brought together in the main room.

After the tapes were played, the subjects were asked to complete an evaluation sheet indicating which student they thought was better and explaining their choice. After collecting these evaluations, the experimenter explained that he was interested in which student the group thought was more successful and that one of the ways that the group’s choice would be determined was on the basis of their individual preferences. Each of their preferences would be counted as a vote, but not all the votes would be weighted equally. He explained that each choice would be weighted according to the confidence with which it was held. The experimenter emphasized the importance of each subject indicating exactly how confident he felt. He said preferences held with certainty should be weighted.
heavily, but uncertain preferences should be weighted lightly to avoid misleading the group.

The subjects were told that they could indicate their confidence using numbers from 1 to 100. Finally, they were reminded that this was a preliminary indication, that they would be asked to indicate their confidence later when they had more information, and that the later rating would be used in determining the group's choice.

The measure of confidence change was presented with rather lengthy instruction in order to achieve two goals. First, it was hoped that the experimenter's explanation would make it plain to the subjects that this confidence rating was important. Second, by tying the ratings to real consequences, the group's chances of performing relatively well, it may have provided motivation for the subjects to use care and honesty in indicating their level of certainty.

After collecting the ratings, the experimenter told the subjects that it was rare for committee members to go to a group discussion without having any indication of the feelings of the other members. Usually, they had discovered informally how others felt. He said that this feature of group process was going to be duplicated in the present experiment and that each subject would be given the evaluation of one of the other group members.

The experimenter added that in real groups when a member received another's opinion, he did not merely get a written evaluation from a stranger. He generally knew the other person and knew whether that other judged people in the same way that he did. Again, they were told that a feature of group process would be simulated. Each subject would be given his own score, and the other subject’s score, on a test embedded in the series of questionnaires that they had all taken at the start of the semester. The experimenter explained the scale and how by carefully comparing profiles they could determine how similarly they and the other subject judged people.

After explaining the profiles, the experimenter asked the subjects to read the other person's evaluation sheet. Subjects assigned to the agree conditions received an evaluation, prepared ahead of time, favoring the same student they had chosen. Disagree subjects received an evaluation favoring the other student.

After the subjects had read the other person's evaluation, the experimenter said he would show them another short tape segment that might be useful in helping them resolve any final questions about the two students. This segment was included so that subjects could change their confidence ratings without admitting being directly influenced by the other person.

When the last tape segment was finished, the experimenter distributed a questionnaire containing the final measures of preference and confidence. The experimenter instructed the subjects to be especially thoughtful in answering the confidence rating since this time it would be used to weight their vote in the group decision.

The completion of the questionnaire marked the conclusion of the experiment. There was a final discussion in which the true purpose of the experiment was fully explained.

**Results**

Ten subjects were excluded from the data analysis. Three subjects were suspicious of the experimental procedures, and two did not understand all of them. Two subjects changed their original judgment before receiving the other's evaluation, and one could not accurately recall his original judgment. Finally, two subjects reported that they deliberately misused the confidence rating so as to influence the group's decision in a way which did not at all reflect their level of certainty. Of the 111 subjects included in the analysis, 75 judged the first stimulus person to be better, and 36 chose the second.

**Manipulation Checks**

Bearing on the effectiveness of the similarity variation was an item on a postexperimental questionnaire asking whether the other’s evaluation was about what the subjects expected or different from what was expected. An analysis of variance performed on the data from this measure shows two significant results. First, there is a main effect for agreement ($F = 58.63, df = 1/103, p < .001$), indicating that agreeing evaluations were expected more than disagreeing evaluations. More germane at present is the significant Similarity X Agreement interaction ($F = 25.38, df = 1/103, p < .001$). This comparison shows that the subjects expected a similar other to agree and a dissimilar other to disagree. Thus, the subjects who received an agreeing evaluation from a dissimilar other were mildly surprised. Also, while the subjects were moderately surprised when the dissimilar other disagreed, disagreement from the similar other was totally unexpected. In sum, these data suggest that the similarity manipulation

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3 Since there was no theoretical reason to expect the predictions of the study to apply differentially on the basis of the subjects' choice of stimulus person, the subjects were assigned to conditions regardless of their choice, and the data were analyzed and are presented without regard to choice of stimulus person. However, if the data are analyzed separately, it can be seen that the agreement hypothesis receives slightly stronger support from the majority of subjects who chose the first stimulus person. The hypotheses for the disagree conditions are somewhat more strongly supported by the 2-4 subjects per condition choosing the second stimulus person.
had impact—specifically, it created an expectancy as to whether the other subject would agree or disagree. There were no other effects or trends on this measure. Another item asked whether the other subject was similar or dissimilar. All subjects correctly recalled the manipulation.

Subjects were also asked to recall whether or not the other's opinion agreed. All subjects correctly grasped the agreement variation. Postexperimental questioning indicated that without exception, the subjects perceived the information manipulation as intended. All subjects in the different-information conditions realized that the evaluation they received came from a subject who had seen different interview segments. Subjects in the same-information conditions naturally assumed that the evaluation was based on the tape the group had just seen.

**Changes in Confidence**

A factorial analysis of variance and the Newman-Keuls procedure (Winer, 1962) revealed no significant differences on the initial confidence ratings. The only trend was toward a main effect for information ($F = 2.94, df = 1/103, p < .10$). Subjects in the different-information conditions tended to be initially less confident than those in the same-information conditions. This may have been due to the fact that different-information subjects knew of the existence of other interview segments before they indicated initial confidence levels. The knowledge of other information may have slightly increased uncertainty.

The means for changes in confidence are presented in Table 1. The analysis of variance performed on these data is presented in Table 2. Table 2 reveals a main effect for agreement ($F = 36.76, df = 1/103, p < .001$). Not surprisingly, subjects who received agreeing evaluations showed greater increases in confidence than did subjects receiving disagreeing evaluations. There is also a significant Similarity $\times$ Agreement interaction ($F = 4.96, df = 1/103, p < .05$), indicating that subjects were on the whole more influenced by similar others. Overall, changes in confidence were more increased by similar agreers and more decreased by similar disagreers. Only among the agree–same-information conditions is there a reversal, with the dissimilar other being more influential than the similar other. The trend toward a Similarity $\times$ Agreement $\times$ Information interaction ($F = 3.00, df = 1/103, p < .10$) reflects the Similarity $\times$ Information interaction within the agree conditions and the lack of such an interaction in the disagree conditions.

The Similarity $\times$ Information within Agree comparison tests the agreement hypothesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Same information</th>
<th>Different information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>Dissimilar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>$\bar{X}$</td>
<td>$\pm 7.94$</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$s^2$</td>
<td>100.06</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>$\bar{X}$</td>
<td>$-10.00$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$s^2$</td>
<td>104.17</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
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**TABLE 2**

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<th>Source</th>
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<th>$MS$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
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<tr>
<td>Similarity (A)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>36.76**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement (B)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5909.94</td>
<td>4.96*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information (C)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>140.57</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>A $\times$ B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>808.07</td>
<td>4.96*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A $\times$ C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>97.23</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B $\times$ C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<td>162.98</td>
<td>4.12*</td>
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<tr>
<td>A $\times$ C (B1)*</td>
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<td>545.56</td>
<td>4.12*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error (B1)*</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>132.26</td>
<td>4.12*</td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Tests the interaction of the similarity and the information variables for subjects in the agree conditions.

** $p < .001$.

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4 Before conducting the experiment, it was decided that if any subjects in the disagree conditions changed their judgment from one stimulus person to the other, their confidence would be treated as having changed from the level of confidence in their first judgment to zero, no confidence. Only one subject changed his judgment.
Using the error term for the agree subjects only (Winer, 1962), the comparison is significant \((F = 4.12, df = 1/55, p < .05)\). Under same-information conditions, the dissimilar other's agreement yields a slightly larger increase in confidence; under different-information conditions, it is quite clearly the similar other's agreement that most strengthens confidence.

The evidence bearing on the role of the similarity and information variables in the case of disagreement is not particularly supportive. Table 1 indicates that the means are ordered as expected, but the predicted effects are not significant. However, there is some support for the hypothesis that disagreement from similar others reduces confidence more. If the error term for the entire analysis is used, there is a trend in the predicted direction \((F = 2.99, df = 1/103, p < .10)\). Also of interest is the predicted large variance in the similar-disagree-different-information condition. It is significantly larger than the pooled variance in the other seven conditions \((F = 1.98, df = 11/92, p < .05)\).

**Discussion**

While the present investigation was not designed to test directly Kelley's (1967) statement of attribution theory, it seems appropriate to consider the bearing of the results on his original formulation before considering evidence for the extensions of that formulation proposed in the introduction.

Kelley's statement with regard to the consensus dimension is that if the perceiver finds that others agree with him, that his response is consensual, his confidence that the response is entity caused will be increased. The experiment provides direct support for this hypothesis. Agreeing others produced more of an increase in confidence than disagreeing others.

With regard to the modality dimension, Kelley reasoned that a perceiver will be more confident that his response is entity caused if it is consistent across more than one modality. Although the subjects in the present experiment have direct experience with only one modality, those in the different-information conditions do receive such information secondhand. If these subjects were fully convinced that they would process the different information as did an agreeing other, Kelley's model would unequivocally predict an increase in confidence.

Assuming the equivalence of self and similar other, it might be argued that a comparison of the similar-agree–same-information condition and the similar-agree–different-information condition tests the consistency-across-modality notion. In the former cell, subjects have only consensus information; in the latter, they have both consensus and consistency information. This simple effect is in the right direction (see Table 1) but is not significant \((t = 1.53, df = 28)\). With this comparison, then, we have only marginal support for the Kelley hypothesis that information from more than one modality increases confidence in entity attribution. This is not too surprising, however, since the subjects could not be entirely certain that their own response would match that of the similar other. It can be noted, however, that the increase in confidence in the one cell where the subjects have fairly reliable consistency information, the similar-agree–different-information condition, is greater than the average increase in the other three agree conditions \((F = 4.53, df = 55, p < .05)\).

Proceeding to the experimental hypotheses extending Kelley's model, one prediction was that when an agreeer has the same information as the judge, he will be more influential when he is dissimilar than when he is similar. This prediction constitutes half of the agreement hypothesis that was supported by the Similarity X Information within Agree interaction. Here, the person should welcome support from different perspectives. They permit the best triangulation. The relevant comparison is in the right direction, but does not approach statistical significance. Nevertheless, the effect stands in contrast to the other three comparisons of similar and dissimilar others where the greater influence of the similar other is substantial enough to yield the overall Agreement X Similarity interaction. Furthermore, it is distinct enough to generate a trend toward a three-way interaction. Thus, the predicted effect is not in itself significant, but is in clear contrast to what is happening in other cells of the experiment.
Perhaps dissimilar others are influential because of the triangulation they provide, but for other reasons their agreement is not as impressive as it theoretically should be. One problem is that triangulation is only relevant, theoretically, when a verifiable belief about the true attributes of an entity are at issue. However, when a value is in question, there is no attribute to be correctly judged, no entity to be objectively perceived. Rather, the person's interest is in discovering whether he has reasons for favoring or opposing the entity. Here he should be more influenced by a cooriented peer (Jones & Gerard, 1967), a person who has the same basic interests and perspectives, that is, a similar other rather than a dissimilar other.

Although the issue in question in the present study was intended to be clearly a belief issue, some subjects may have taken a more evaluative stance. As a result, they may not have been impressed by the dissimilar other's agreement, or they may have been impressed by the agreement of a cooriented peer even though it provided little correction for bias. Perhaps people generally find themselves in situations where values are at issue and triangulation is therefore irrelevant. If so, they may not "shift gears" fully enough to conform to the logic of the triangulation situation.

In sum, the agreement hypothesis is supported by the predicted interaction, but the simple effect bearing on an important part of the overall hypothesis is not significant. (The simple effect favoring the similar other in the agree-different-information conditions is significant; $t = 2.40$, $df = 26$, $p < .05$.) Thus, the triangulation notion must be viewed with caution, but something is going on that reverses a more general trend favoring the similar other, and triangulation would appear to be responsible. The hypotheses for the disagree conditions are not supported by any significant effects, although the means are ordered as predicted. There is a trend supporting the prediction that similar disagreers are more effective in reducing judgmental confidence.

How do the predictions and results of the present study relate to existing literature? First, the overall Similarity $\times$ Agreement interaction supports the position that has characterized most social influence research, namely, that people are more influenced by similar others than dissimilar others. As noted above, however, this interaction conceals a reversal within agree-same-information cells where the dissimilar other has at least the same if not greater influence.

In searching for additional support for the triangulation hypothesis, there is little research bearing directly on the present problem. In question is the relative impact of agreement from similar and dissimilar others. However, most of the social influence research—on conformity, attitude change, and social comparison—considers instances of disagreement. Subjects typically are exposed to judgments that are different from their own so that the amount of change from the subjects' initial stand can be measured. It should be noted that the present study's predictions about disagreement are entirely consistent with positions such as social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) which suggest that similar others are more influential in changing a person's attitude.

There are, however, a few relevant studies. Berscheid (1966) conducted a study to show that if a subject found that a dissimilar other agreed, he would experience dissonance. She predicted that subjects would reduce dissonance by moving away from their own initial position. She found that subjects diverged from the dissimilar other only when the dissimilarity was on values directly relevant to the experimental issue. It is important to note that Berscheid's experimental issues were value-related policy issues.

There is at least one study that can be interpreted as supporting the triangulation notion of the present study. Wheeler and Levine (1967) conducted a study showing a dissimilar model to be more effective in inducing the contagion of aggression. Consistent with Berscheid's results and the belief-value discussion, they suggested that it might be dissonant to agree with a person with different values but perfectly consonant to agree with another person of different background and experience. Thus, if neither the issue (belief-value) nor the dimension of similarity (background-values) suggest that the person and the
dissimilar other should have opposing interests in a question, that other's agreement would not seem inconsistent. It would simply be taken to indicate the broad consensus on which the judgment in question rests. If, on the other hand, due to differing value orientations, the person feels that he and the other should disagree, the other's agreement might cause dissonance and eventually divergence.

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