8-1-1982

# Consensus Information in the Newspaper Advice Columns

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## Recommended Citation

CONSENSUS INFORMATION IN THE NEWSPAPER ADVICE COLUMNS

by

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Bachelor of Science

University of California at Los Angeles, 1978

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota

August
1982

This Thesis submitted by Daniel E. Rubanowitz in partial ful-
fillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts from the
University of North Dakota is hereby approved by the Faculty Advisory
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help of the three professors who served on the thesis committee. Dr. Beulah Hedahl acted as chairman of the committee and managed all administrative details. Dr. Paul Wright guided the data analysis and served as a statistical consultant. Dr. Thomas Schoeneman supervised all theoretical, methodological and interpretive aspects of the project. All three committee members were particularly supportive regarding the time constraints surrounding the preparation of the thesis.

Special thanks must also go to the three undergraduate volunteers who served as advice column raters: Paula Bergloff, Nickie Shafer and Laurie Stephens.

# ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the naturalistic use of consistency, distinctiveness and consensus information, which are the three information variables in Kelley's (1967) covariation model of attribution. Newspaper advice columns were used as a naturalistic source of social data.

The first question addressed in this study was whether or not Kelley's (1967) three information variables are ecologically valid. If perceivers in the "real world" actually use covariation information to support or defend their attributions, then it should be possible to reliably locate these pieces of information. If the information is used, it would be possible to examine whether perceivers prefer individual items of information or combinations, as well as which combinations are most commonly used. Student raters were trained in the use of coding manuals which helped standardize their advice column searches for attributions and the three information types.

The second question addressed in this study concerned perceiver's relative preferences for the three information types. A controversy in the literature regarding the use of consensus information began with several findings that consensus information is underutilized (Kassin 1979a). Researchers have demonstrated that under certain laboratory conditions consensus will be utilized. Up to now, the question of the underutilization of consensus has not been approached naturalistically. For the present study, consensus information was

defined as both implicit (e.g., norms, stereotypes) and explicit (e.g., base rates, observed covariation across actors). It was hypothesized that consensus may not be underutilized when such a broad definition is used.

The third area of concern to the present study was an attempt to demonstrate that consensus information, defined as both implicit and explicit, is associated with internal-external attribution in the way that previous theory and research would predict. High consensus should be associated with external attribution and low consensus should be associated with internal attribution.

The results of this study indicate that Kelley's (1967) three information variables may be ecologically valid because at least one of them was used with over half of all attributions examined. The information types were used significantly more often alone than in combination form ($p = 0.0004$). No one combination was used more than any other. Consensus information was found to be significantly underutilized in terms of perceiver preference, for overall use ($p = 0.0005$) as well as for individual use ($p = 0.0074$). A marginally significant result ($p = 0.0578$) was obtained for the predicted relationship between level of consensus and the direction of attribution. Implicit and explicit forms of consensus contributed equally to the overall use of consensus information, but it was found that consensus was overwhelmingly used in high (e.g., much covariation across actors) as opposed to low (e.g., little covariation across actors) form ($p = 0.000002$). These results were discussed and various interpretations were offered.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

If someone acts aggressively in a particular setting, is this because he/she is an aggressive individual or because he/she is responding to situational pressures? The way people formulate an answer to a question like this is the concern of the area of cognitive social psychology called attribution theory (Schneider, Hastorf & Ellsworth 1979). Attribution theory deals with how people perceive the causes of their own and other people's behavior. The origin of attribution theory as well as a continuing source of new ideas is Fritz Heider's (1958) seminal work, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations.

### Heider's (1958) Theory of Naive Psychology

Heider (1958) believed that scientific psychology has much to learn from studying naive or common-sense psychology. This is perhaps particularly true in studying social cognition and interpersonal relations. By understanding the psychology of naive social perception we may be able to make explicit some of the common-sense assumptions that underlie scientific thinking in this area.

According to Heider, naive social perceivers are like intuitive or implicit scientists. They are motivated to predict and control their environment. It is undoubtedly adaptive to be able to anticipate the causes and effects of one's own and other people's

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behavior. People accomplish this by organizing and structuring their perceptions in causal terms. This was demonstrated in one study (Heider & Simmel 1944) in which subjects were shown a film depicting geometric objects moving around a rectangular area. Subjects tended to perceive causality in these events. One larger geometric figure was seen as "chasing" some smaller ones. Some subjects even said that the larger object was a "bully" and therefore caused the smaller ones to run away.

One of Heider's basic notions is that people perceive the causal locus of a behavior as either internal to the person performing the behavior (e.g., some disposition, trait or attitude) or external to the person performing the behavior (e.g., some environmental or situational factor). Perceivers tend to attribute the cause of a behavior to that factor which seems to be invariant.

To explain this idea, Heider drew an analogy between person perception and object perception. When someone perceives a door, for example, they see it as invariantly rectangular no matter what perspective they might observe it from. Even though various shapes actually impinge on the retina from different viewing angles (e.g., rectangular, trapezoidal), the door is still perceived as rectangular. Perceivers attribute the property "rectangular" to the door. This phenomenon is known as shape constancy (Coren, Porac & Ward 1979). Similarly, if a person is perceived as behaving aggressively in a number of different situations, perceivers will attribute the cause of the behavior to that factor which appears to be invariant. In this case, the person who behaves aggressively across situations would appear to be the

invariant factor. Perceivers are willing to attribute the property
"aggressive" to the person just as they are willing to attribute the
property "rectangular" to the door.

In social perception it is sometimes difficult to tell where the
locus of causality lies. For example, if Ruth is arguing, is the cause
of the behavior internal to her (e.g., Ruth has an argumentative per-
sonality) or external to her (e.g., the person Ruth is arguing with is
obnoxious)? Heider realized that in order for a perceiver to decide
between internal and external causality, more information may be needed
than is available from one observation of a person interacting with the
environment.

> . . . behavior can be ascribed primarily to the person or to
> the environment; that is, behavior can be accounted for by
> relatively stable traits of the personality or by factors
> within the environment. Failure, for instance, can be attri-
> buted to lack of ability, a personal characteristics, or to
> the supposition that the task is very difficult, an environ-
> mental condition. Whether attribution to one or the other
> source will occur depends on a number of factors, for in-
> stance, on information concerning the success and failure
> of other people, and on the tendency to attribute the con-
> sequences of actions to the person.

> The problem of attribution also applies to thing percep-
> tion. In the perceptual constancies, for example, the retinal
> color may be attributed in varying degrees to either the ob-
> ject or to the illumination; the retinal shape may be as-
> cribed to the shape of the object or to the position of the
> object with respect to the observer. In other words, even
> though the stimulus pattern impinging on the organism may
> provide some information about the interaction between two
> entities--the object and its illumination, the person and
> the environment--additional data are required before one
> can determine which of the two poles of the relation is pri-
> marily responsible for the interaction. The additional data
> may take the form of further observations or of beliefs based
> upon information transmitted through previous proximal stimu-
> lus patterns (Heider 1958, p. 56).

Harold Kelley (1967, 1973) developed a model of attribution that describes the systematic use of further behavioral observations in deciding between internal and external causality.

## Kelley's (1967) Covariation Model of Attribution

Starting with Heider's (1958) theory of naive psychology, Kelley (1967) devised a covariation model of causal attribution, sometimes called "Kelley's Cube." This model deals with attributions for behavior that takes the form "person verb stimulus." The cause of an actor's behavior is believed to be attributed to that factor with which the behavior covaries. Perceivers presumably use three types of information in deciding whether the behavior in question was caused by factors that are internal or by factors that are external to the "person" or actor. Consistency information refers to how often in the past the actor performed the behavior toward the stimulus. Distinctiveness information refers to the number of other "stimuli" or targets (besides the target in question) toward which the person performs the behavior. Consensus information refers to how many other "persons" or actors also perform the behavior toward the given stimulus. Each of these information types can take high (i.e., much covariation) or low (i.e., little covariation) forms. The way the model works can be illustrated as follows:

Consider the following behavior: "Sue is afraid of the dog." In this case the "person" is Sue, the "stimulus" is the dog and the "verb" or behavior is being afraid. High consensus information would indicate that many other people are also afraid of the dog.

Person A — Person B — Person C — Sue — afraid of ————— the dog.

In this case the dog would appear to be the cause of Sue's fear, and therefore an external attribution would be made for the behavior. The dog's ability to provoke fear seems to be the cause of Sue's behavior, and this ability is reflected in the fact that many others respond the same way as Sue does. On the other hand, if no one besides Sue responds with fear to the dog, there would be low consensus on the behavior.

Person A
Person B
Person C
Sue — afraid of ————— the dog.

In this case, Sue is distinguished from the rest of the actors by virtue of her fear of the dog. The cause of the fear would therefore appear to lie within Sue, and an internal attribution would be made.

Distinctiveness information refers to the covariation of the behavior across different stimuli. Using the same example as above, low distinctiveness information would indicate that Sue responds with fear to many different dogs.

Sue ————— afraid of — dog A — dog B — dog C — stimulus dog
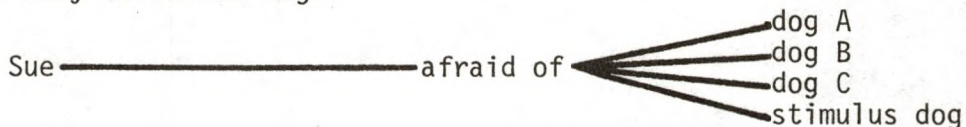
In this case, the cause of Sue's fear would appear to lie within Sue (e.g., internal attribution) simply because Sue's fear is not very distinctive and she is inclined to respond fearfully to many different stimuli. On the other hand, high distinctiveness information would

indicate that Sue is afraid of the specific stimulus dog but is not afraid of other dogs.

```
                                              dog A
                                              dog B
    Sue━━━━━━━━━━━━afraid of━      dog C
                                            ━stimulus dog
```
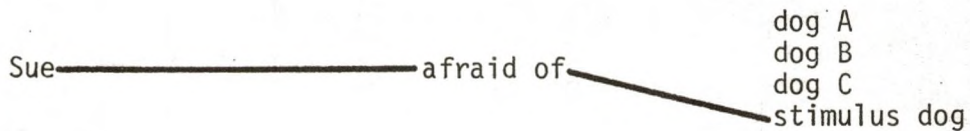
In this case it would appear as if Sue's fear is caused by characteristics of the one specific dog (e.g., external attribution), simply because she does not respond with fear to other dogs.

Consistency information refers to the covariation of the behavior across time and across situations. High consistency information on our example behavior might take this form: Sue has always been afraid of the dog in the past. In this case, because the relationship between Sue and the dog is highly consistent, perceivers will tend to believe that either Sue or the dog is the causal agent of the behavior. However, either consensus or distinctiveness information or both would be needed in order to decide between them, that is in order to make either an internal or an external attribution. Low consistency information might take this form: Sue has never been afraid of the dog in the past. In this case, because the relationship between Sue and the dog is very inconsistent (e.g., little covariation over time), perceivers would be directed to rule out both Sue and the dog as causal agents. Instead, they would be forced into making a circumstance attribution, which would indicate that the unique combination between Sue and the dog in the given setting was responsible for the behavior.

To summarize, Kelley (1967) suggests that perceivers attribute behavior internally, externally or to the circumstances, depending on

the levels of consistency, distinctiveness or consensus information available. High consistency indicates that either the person or the stimulus is the causal agent, whereas low consistency indicates that the behavior is caused by the unique circumstances. High distinctiveness indicates that the stimulus is the causal agent (i.e., external attribution), whereas low distinctiveness indicates that the person is the causal agent (i.e., internal attribution). High consensus indicates that the stimulus is the causal agent, whereas low consensus indicates that the person is the causal agent.

### The Consensus Controversy

The early tests of Kelley's (1967, 1973) model indicated that while consensus information is used in making causal attributions, it is underutilized relative to consistency and distinctiveness information (e.g., McArthur 1972). Other research involving category membership prediction or attribution indicated that consensus information is either greatly underutilized or that it is not used at all (Kahneman & Tversky 1973; Nisbett & Borgida 1975). These findings stimulated a consensus controversy in the literature. Researchers attempted to find the conditions under which consensus information is actually used by perceivers.

Contrary to the early findings, Kassin (1979a) cited several studies in his literature review which indicate that under certain conditions perceivers will be strongly affected by consensus information. Of particular relevance to the present study is the distinction Kassin (1979a) made between two types of consensus information that have appeared in previous research. Implicit consensus information

refers to norms, stereotypes and expectations, while explicit consensus information refers to actual observed covariation across actors and base rate data. Since there are a variety of consensus variables that are being investigated for a variety of purposes (e.g., attribution, category membership prediction, trait ascription), it is difficult for researchers to arrive at a "consensus on consensus" (Kulik & Taylor 1980). Perhaps the most neglected area of research has been the use of consensus and other attribution information variables in non-laboratory settings.

The issue of whether or not consensus information is underutilized remains a potentially important one. Central to Heider's (1958) notions about attribution is the idea that people perceive behavior as being caused by factors that are either internal or external to an actor. Consensus information, in theory, is one source of evidence by which perceivers can distinguish between internal and external attributions. The underuse of consensus information, if there is such an underusage among perceivers, could conceivably be one factor involved in biasing perceivers away from external attributions toward more internal attributions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

## Types of Consensus Information

### Implicit Consensus

Implicit consensus is the type of information that perceivers tacitly hold regarding norms, stereotypes and social constraints. High implicit consensus information is the belief that the majority of people would behave in a certain way in a certain situation or that the majority of people belonging to some group or category possess certain characteristics. Low implicit consensus information is the belief that the minority of people would behave in a certain way in a certain situation or that the minority of people belonging to some group or category possess certain characteristics.

Jones and Davis (1965) use a "social desirability" variable in their theory of correspondent inferences. This variable partially defines implicit consensus.

Society's norms provide implicit expectations for behavioral propriety. When an actor performs a socially desirable behavior, they are performing a behavior that everyone would be expected to perform. Such behavior is said to be high in implicit consensus. Someone performing such a behavior is revealing little that is unique or personal because everyone would probably do the same thing. To a perceiver,

the cause of this behavior would appear to lie in the demand character-
istics or constraints of the situation within which the actor is be-
having (i.e., external attribution).  On the other hand, when an actor
performs a behavior which is low in social desirability, he/she is per-
forming a behavior that few others would be expected to perform.  Such
behavior is said to be low in implicit consensus.  A person performing
such a behavior is revealing much that would distinguish himself/herself
from others, because virtually no one else would be likely to do the
same thing.  To a perceiver, the cause of this behavior appears to be
some factor unique to the actor (e.g., internal attribution).

According to Jones and Davis (1965) once an internal attribution
is made, perceivers can determine the specific internal causal factor.
This is accomplished through a non-common effects analysis, in which
the effects of behavioral choices are compared in order to locate any
that may be unique (e.g., non-common).  For example, suppose Milly was
going to buy one of two dogs, a German shepherd or a beagle.  If she
chose the German shepherd she would get a dog that eats a lot, is
friendly, and is big.  If she chose the beagle she would also get a
dog that eats a lot and is friendly, but in this  case the dog is
small.  The only non-common effect between the two choices involves
the size of the dog.  Therefore, if the German shepherd were chosen,
a perceiver could be sure that the cause of Milly's behavior was her
preference for a big dog.  If the beagle were chosen, a perceiver could
be sure that the cause of Milly's behavior was her preference for a
small dog.

In correspondent inference theory (Jones & Davis 1965) only the
social desirability variable (e.g., implicit consensus) is used to

determine global external versus global internal attribution. If a global internal attribution is made, then a subsequent non-common effects analysis can be used to determine the specific internal factor.

In a later formulation of correspondent inference theory Jones and McGillis (1976) suggest that implicit consensus can also be generated from category-based expectancies. Here, perceivers implicitly associate modal characteristics with such factors as age, sex, and occupation. High and low implicit consensus information are based upon what characteristics the majority or the minority of people in a given category possess, respectively.

Perceivers also hold implicit consensus information that takes the form of situation-based expectancies. In certain situations the majority of people (high implicit consensus) or the minority of people (low implicit consensus) are expected to behave in certain ways. It is this kind of implicit consensus information that makes so dramatic findings like those in Milgram's (1963) classic obedience study. Sixty-five percent of Milgram's (1963) subjects willingly obeyed an experimenter request to deliver severe sbock to a person who was ostensibly a helpless, protesting fellow participant (actually an experimental accomplice). People, in general, seem to underestimate obedience (relative to Milgram's (1963) original subjects) when predicting their own behavior in the same situation (Elms & Milgram 1966). In other words, people seem to hold high implicit consensus on non-obedience in the Milgram (1963) experimental situation.

For all types of implicit consensus, high consensus leads to external attributions and low consensus leads to internal attributions.

## Explicit Consensus

Whereas implicit consensus represents expectations about the behavior or characteristics of others, explicit consensus represents information about what others _actually_ do or are.

Kelley's (1967) covariation model of attribution contains an explicit consensus variable. If it is known that many people perform a given behavior, then there is high explicit consensus information on that behavior. If few people are known to perform a given behavior, then there is low explicit consensus information on that behavior. Explicit consensus is believed to direct attributional activity in the same way as implicit consensus. If the majority of people behave in a certain way toward a given stimulus then perceivers feel they have gained some knowledge about the power of that stimulus to elicit behavior (e.g., external attribution). If almost no one else behaves toward a stimulus the same way as a given actor, then perceivers feel they have gained some knowledge about the actor's inclinations (e.g., internal attribution).

The social judgment literature contains studies of base rate information, which is analogous to Kelley's (1967, 1973) consensus variable. Base rate information provides high or low consensus in the form of percentages or proportions of people behaving in a certain way or possessing certain characteristics. As with the other types of consensus information, high base rate leads to external attribution and low base rate leads to internal attribution.

## Underutilization of Consensus Information

### Tests of Kelley's (1967, 1973) Model

The predictions for attribution from Kelley's covariation model have generally been supported (McArthur 1972, 1976; Orvis, Cunningham & Kelley 1975; Karaz & Perlman 1975).

In the classic test of the model (McArthur 1972) perceivers were presented with behaviors of the form "person verb stimulus" (e.g., Sue is afraid of the dog). These behaviors were accompanied by supporting information in the form of high or low consistency (e.g., In the past, Sue has almost always/almost never been afraid of the dog), high or low distinctiveness (e.g., Sue is not afraid of almost any other dog/ Sue is also afraid of almost every other dog), and high or low consensus (e.g., almost everyone else/hardly anyone else is afraid of the dog). Subjects were required to make attributions for the behaviors to either the person, the stimulus, the circumstances, or to some combination of factors.

In terms of the amount of variance accounted for among attributions, consensus information (3%) affected attributional activity a great deal less than either consistency information (20%) or distinctiveness information (10%). Kelley (1967) suggested that consistency should be more powerful than consensus because "physical reality takes precedence over social reality information." He further suggested that consensus information may actually require further attributional tests regarding the trustworthiness of the information source. However, it remained unclear why consensus should be underutilized relative to distinctiveness.

Consistent with Kelley's (1967) theory, McArthur (1972) tested behaviors of the form "person verb stimulus." In each case some person performed some behavior (e.g., verb) toward some stimulus. McArthur (1976) reported that in her earlier study (McArthur 1972) the stimulus was sometimes an inanimate object or thing and sometimes was an actual person. An inspection of the earlier data revealed that consensus and distinctiveness information were equally powerful in directing attributions when both the "person" and the "stimulus" were persons (e.g., John laughs at the comedian). Distinctiveness information, however, was more powerful when the stimulus was a thing (e.g., George translates the sentence incorrectly).

McArthur (1976) hypothesized that people may be more likely to draw causal inferences when given information about things than when given information about persons. This could be due to the fact that inanimate things are perceived as relatively invariant entities, while people are perceived as highly variable entities. Psychologically, this hypothesis makes good common-sense, which would be consistent with Heider's (1958) orientation toward naive perception.

McArthur (1976) presented subjects with behaviors of the form "agent verb target" instead of "person verb stimulus." Half the time the agent was a person (e.g., The man protects the house) and half the time the agent was a thing (e.g., The tree protects the house). Also, half the time the target was a person (e.g., The girl holds the child) and half the time the target was a thing (e.g., The girl holds the flower). Subjects were presented with high or low consensus and high or low distinctiveness information. Consistency information was always presented in high form.

The results showed that consensus information is significantly stronger when it applies to persons rather than things. Distinctiveness information is significantly stronger when it applies to things rather than persons. Thus, McArthur's (1976) hypothesis was only partially supported. Overall, however, the results indicated that distinctiveness information had a significantly greater impact on attributions than did consensus information, even though the two information types pertained equally often to persons and things.

Orvis, Cunningham and Kelley (1975) looked at the way perceivers use consistency, distinctiveness and consensus in combinations. McArthur's (1972) findings indicated that three of the possible combinations seemed to be basic patterns. High consensus, high distinctiveness, and high consistency in combination (HHH) leads to the strongest stimulus attributions. Low consensus, low distinctiveness and high consistency in combination (LLH) leads to the strongest person attributions. Low consensus, high distinctiveness and low consistency in combination (LHL) leads to the strongest circumstance attributions.

Orvis et al. (1975) hypothesized that perceivers use the three basic combinations as templates or schemata when making attributions. If a perceiver encounters partial information (e.g., just one or two of the information types) they will relate the partial information to that data pattern with which it is most consistent. Then the attribution which the basic pattern predicts is made.

Half of the subjects were given a set of behaviors (both interpersonal and achievement) of the form "person verb stimulus." In addition, these subjects were given one or two pieces of information

consisting of high or low consensus, high or low distinctiveness, or high or low consistency. All possible combinations of partial information were sampled. These subjects could attribute the cause of the behavior to the person, the stimulus, the circumstances, or to any possible combination of these factors. The other half of the subjects were given the set of behaviors and partial information combinations, but instead of making attributions they were required to estimate the level of the missing information dimension on a seven point scale.

The results strongly indicated that perceivers do approach the task of attribution with the person, stimulus and circumstance information configurations in mind, and that they interpret partial information in terms of these basic patterns. Also, perceivers are quite willing to infer the level of missing information in terms of the pattern that the partial information approximates. One notable bias that perceivers demonstrate, though, is a tendency toward making more person attributions in the presence of high consistency (even though high consistency could lead to either person or stimulus attributions). Orvis et al. (1975) argued that this bias toward person attribution is not due to some special preference on the part of perceivers, but instead is due to the fact that high consistency may be more strongly related to the basic data pattern for person attribution (e.g., HHH).

Major (1980) studied perceiver acquisition preferences for Kelley's (1967) three information variables as well as the effects of the variables upon attributions. The procedure closely resembled McArthur's (1972). Subjects were presented with a target person's behavior and then were allowed to acquire up to 12 instances each of

consistency, distinctiveness and consensus information that related to the target's behavior. In each condition the 12 instances of information from a given category were either all high or all low. After acquiring as much information as they felt they needed to make an attribution for the behavior, subjects attributed the behavior to the person, the stimulus, the circumstances, or to some combination of factors. Among the analyses performed, Major (1980) looked at the amount of information of each type acquired, the order of acquisition and the direction of attribution. Subjects acquired less than a third of all available instances of information. They acquired significantly more consistency information than either distinctiveness or consensus. Distinctiveness was acquired significantly more often than consensus. Consistency was generally acquired first, followed by distinctiveness and then consensus. In the two experiments performed, the first showed significant main effects for the information types in the predicted directions (with the exception of stimulus attributions with consistency). In the second experiment only main effects for distinctiveness were found. These results indicate that consensus information seems to be underutilized relative to consistency and distinctiveness in terms of attributor's preference in acquisition.

Another study that addressed perceiver's relative preferences for consistency, distinctiveness and consensus information was performed by Garland, Hardy and Stephenson (1975). They argued that in natural situations, perceivers are often asked to make attributions to either the person or to the stimulus before reviewing any supporting information. An example of such a situation would be where a professor is

asked to evaluate the ability or initiative of a student. In this situation the professor is asked in advance to make various person attributions, and the professor would no doubt be expected to assemble supporting information for these attributions.

Garland et al. (1975) provided subjects with statements of behaviors that fell into four different categories based on pre-testing. These categories were accomplishments, opinions, emotions and actions. Each behavior was followed by a question. The question asked what further information would be required in order to make a specific attribution. Half the time the attribution was to the person and the other half of the time it was to the stimulus. An example behavior that was used is "Mary got an A on the chemistry exam." An example of a person attribution question that was used is "What further information would you require in order to say that Mary is intelligent?". The subjects in the experiment provided the answers to such questions. These answers represented free-lance requests for specific information. The requests were coded into four categories: consistency, distinctiveness, consensus or uncodable (93% inter-coder reliability was achieved using this coding scheme on pilot data).

The results indicated that requests for both consistency and distinctiveness information occurred significantly more often under person attribution than under stimulus attribution. Consensus information was requested significantly more often for stimulus attribution than for person attribution. Overall, however, only 23% of the information requests could be categorized as consistency, distinctiveness or consensus. Seventy-seven percent of the data fell into the uncodable

category. Consistency requests accounted for 3% of the total, distinctiveness requests for 13%, and consensus requests for 7%.

Because so little of the data could be classified into consistency, distinctiveness, or consensus, Garland et al. (1975) concluded that Kelley's (1967) three information categories do not adequate account for the types of information that perceivers would freely choose to use in a naturalistic attribution situation. They further stated that Kelley's (1967) model may represent a significant departure from Heider's (1958) notions about "naive psychology" and that the model itself may reflect rigorous scientific thinking more than it does "the psychology of the non-psychologist."

## Base Rate Research

An interesting parallel to the underutilization of consensus (McArthur 1972, 1976; Major 1980) emerged in the social judgment literature. In Kahneman and Tversky's (1973) classic study, subjects were presented with base rate information on a fictitious sample of professionals. Specifically, one group was told that the sample was composed of 30% engineers and 70% lawyers. Another group was told the sample was composed of 70% engineers and 30% lawyers. Subjects were then given very short personality descriptions of a number of members of the sample. Half the descriptions were designed to be "lawyerlike" and half were written so as to appear "engineerlike." For each target case, subjects were required to rate the probability that the person was either a lawyer or an engineer. The results showed that subjects seriously violated the normative statistical standards for prediction based on the given prior probabilities (e.g., 30%-70% or 70%-30%).

They seemed to base their predictions upon the individuating information contained in the description of the target. However, even when totally non-diagnostic or neutral descriptions were given (only age, physical appearance, etc.) subjects still underutilized the base rate. Only when no descriptive information whatsoever was given did subjects make accurate use of the base rates in their predictions. Kahneman and Tversky (1973) argued that predictions are often governed by "representativeness." Subjects may predict category membership based upon the resemblance between the target case and the subject's implicit prototypes for various categories.

Kelley (1967) suggested that consensus information effects can be used to explain the results of cognitive dissonance studies (Aronson 1978). In cognitive dissonance studies, a subject will typically be asked to do something that they do not really want to do or do not really believe in. If the subject complies with the request he/she is liable to infer that his/her true attitude is actually quite in line with his/her behavior (e.g., "Since I'm doing this I must really like it."). This will be true mainly when the subject is given little external inducement (e.g., "I'm doing this without much reward so I must really like it."). Kelley (1967) argued that dissonance experiments always involve the subtle manipulation of social cues that make the subjects believe that there is low consensus on their behavior. Kelley's (1967) theory predicts that low consensus should lead to an internal attribution (e.g., "I'm doing something that nobody else would do, therefore I must really like it."). The greater attitude change of low justification subjects reflects the internal attribution. High justification

subjects do not undergo such attitude changes because there is much external inducement for them to behave the way they did (e.g., "I'm doing this because I'm getting a big reward."). If subjects were led to believe that most everyone would do the same thing in the same situation (i.e., high consensus) then they would be able to realize that their behavior was caused by something about the situation (i.e., external attribution). It could be predicted that such subjects would not undergo the typical attitude change of low justification subjects.

Cooper, Jones and Tuller (1972) asked subjects to write a "pro" viewpoint essay on a subject about which their true attitude was "con." Subjects were offered either a large or small reward for doing this. Each subject was led to believe that either 15-20% (low consensus) of the other subjects complied with the request or that 90% (high consensus) of the other subjects complied. After writing the essay, the subjects rated their personal attitude on the subject of the essay. This was compared to a pre-essay attitude rating. The results indicated that subjects did not differ in their attitude change as a function of how unique they felt in complying with the request. In other words, the consensus manipulation was ineffective.

Miller, Gillen, Schenker and Radlove (1974) gave subjects a description of Milgram's (1963) obedience study. Half the subjects were given the information that 65% of the original subjects delivered maximum shock to a helpless, protesting confederate. The other half of the subjects were given no such information. The base rate information did have an effect upon predictions for the behavior of a fictitious sample of participants in the Milgram study situation. However, it affected only one out of eleven trait ratings for people delivering shock.

Subjects made trait ratings based almost exclusively upon the amount of shock delivered by an individual.

Nisbett and Borgida (1975) tested the effects of base rates by providing subjects with what amounted to the procedure sections of two previous studies. They were then given consensus information on the behavior of subjects in the original studies. The base rates for these original subjects were presented in percentage form. Subjects were then given information and descriptions of several target cases. The exposure to target cases took several forms: videotaped interviews, written descriptions, self-generated descriptions (subjects imagined and then described several "typical" cases), or no target case information. Subjects were then asked to predict how the target cases behaved in the experiments, to make situational versus dispositional attributions for the target's behavior, and to rate the targets on several personality scales. None of the measures were affected by the consensus manipulations.

In another study Nisbett, Borgida, Crandall and Reed (1976) tried to use consensus manipulations to shift the locus of causality from internal to external for two types of mild depression. They used college students who experience the "Sunday blues" and new college faculty members who experience a type of letdown during their first academic year. In some conditions subjects were provided with base rate information which indicated that their feelings were widely shared (e.g., high consensus). This manipulation should, in theory, enable them to make external attributions for their feelings. Such external attributions could conceivably lessen any negative personal implications for the subject's condition and possibly improve functioning.

However, neither mood measures nor behavioral measures were affected by the consensus manipulations.

In another experiment in the same study subjects were asked to taste a variety of crackers and then rate them on several dimensions. Subjects were allowed to drink a "neutralizing solution" between crackers in order to eliminate previous tastes as well as thirstiness. At the end of the "experiment" subjects were asked to place their own container of solution on a shelf with the other bottles supposedly used by previous subjects. The amount of liquid in these other bottles was manipulated so that subjects would think they drank either more or less of the solution than all the other participants. This consensus manipulation had no effect upon subject's ratings of how much they liked the taste of the solution, how thirsty they felt prior to the experiment, or how thirsty they felt the crackers had made them.

### Effective Manipulations of Implicit Consensus

#### Actor-Based Expectancies

Jones, Davis and Gergen (1961) studied the effects of in-role and out-of-role behavior in a simulated job interview. In-role behavior was defined as acting consistently with the demand characteristics of the situation. Out-of-role behavior was defined as acting inconsistently with such demand characteristics. When a person behaves in an in-role fashion, they reveal that they are responsive to the implicit normative requirements of the situation. Because the context of the behavior is a job interview, there would be high implicit consensus on in-role behavior and most people would be expected to be responsive

to the requirements of the situation. With such in-role behavior a person reveals nothing about their true inclinations or dispositions and an external attribution (i.e., to the situation and its demands) would be made. When behavior is out-of-role, however, the person is behaving in a non-normative manner. There would be low implicit consensus on such behavior and few people would be expected to violate the job interview demand characteristics. Out-of-role behavior would lead to internal attributions, that is, the person reveals his/her individuality.

Jones et al. (1961) tape recorded carefully scripted simulated job interviews. Two different jobs were represented, astronaut and submariner. Astronauts were expected to be inner directed (e.g., "When planning something, I like to work on my own."). Submariners were expected to be other directed (e.g., "I like to know how other people think I should behave."). An in-role and an out-of-role interview were recorded for each job type. Subjects were given detailed descriptions of in-role and out-of-role behavior appropriate for each job type. This can be interpreted as an implicit consensus information manipulation. The subjects then rated each job applicant on a 16-item bipolar adjective rating scale. Job applicants who were behaving out-of-role were rated more extremely on traits (i.e., stronger internal attributions) and were rated so more confidently by subjects. Therefore, the consensus manipulation was effective.

The Kahneman and Tversky (1973) study cited above was used as evidence for the underutilization of explicit consensus information. However, it is just as clearly a demonstration of the strength of

implicit consensus information. The subjects who read the descriptions
of target cases carried implicit consensus information on the charac-
teristics generally ascribed to lawyers and engineers. This implicit
consensus information was ostensibly more powerful than the base rate
information in terms of subject's predicting the probability of the
target case being either a lawyer or an engineer.

In the Miller, Gillen, Schenker and Radlove (1974) study cited
above it was found that explicit consensus information did not affect
trait ratings for target persons in the Milgram (1963) obedience study.
Other results from the study showed, however, that sex and attractive-
ness (based on ratings of stimulus persons taken from yearbook photo-
graphs) of the target case did affect predictions about how much shock
would be administered. Specifically, males and unattractive people
were predicted to deliver greater amounts of shock. Also, there was a
significant sex by explicit consensus interaction. Apparently per-
ceivers carry implicit consensus information on the behavior of men,
women and their relative attractiveness that can be related to the situa-
tion that was investigated.

Situation-Based Expectancies

The sex and attractiveness results in the Miller et al. (1974)
study related to actor-based implicit consensus. On another level
the whole obedience study paradigm (Milgram 1963) generates expecta-
tions that perceivers hold about how a typical person should behave in
that situation. Some subjects in the Miller et al. (1974) study were
told about a target case who went "all the way" to shocking a pro-
testing fellow participant with maximum shock. Even when exposed to

this target case information, the subjects made non-obedience predic-
tions for their own behavior almost 90% of the time. Milgram's (1963)
subjects were actually obedient 65% of the time. Clearly, perceivers
carry implicit consensus information about situation specific behavior.

In the Nisbett and Borgida (1975) study cited above, explicit
consensus had virtually no effect upon subject's predictions about the
behavior of original subjects in previous studies. One of these previ-
ous studies was Darley and Latane's (1968) bystander intervention ex-
periment. In that study, subjects communicated to each other from
separate rooms over an intercom system. One subject at a time was
"turned on" for two minutes and was required to talk about the problems
of college life. One of the speakers was actually an experimental
accomplice who faked a serious seizure and asked for help during his
turn to talk. In the original study some 69% of the subjects (in
groups of four subjects plus one accomplice) never moved to help the
victim, even after 2-1/2 minutes had expired. Even when Nisbett and
Borgida's (1975) subjects were given this base rate information, they
still overwhelmingly predicted that a sizeable majority of people would
have made some move to help the victim. Apparently the implicit con-
sensus information of these subjects regarding the helping behavior
in that situation was much more optimistic than the actual behavior of
participants justifies.

Lowe and Kassin (1977) also described an experimental situation
to subjects that involved a form of helping behavior. In their
description, subjects were supposedly asked to wait for participation
in an unspecified experiment. Each subject was asked to wait for

either a long, medium or short period of time. While waiting, each subject was asked by a confederate for help with stapling papers together. The conditions surrounding this request were varied in a manner that generated high, medium and low implicit consensus information regarding compliance with the request. Almost everyone would be expected to help (i.e., high implicit consensus) when the confederate was well-dressed, polite, and expressed urgency and when the subject had a long wait anyway. Few people would be expected to help (i.e., low implicit consensus) when the confederate was disheveled, rude and appeared to be in no hurry. An intermediate number of people would be expected to help (i.e., medium implicit consensus) when the confederate was polite and in a hurry, but when the subject had little time to spare. Perceivers were given one of these three descriptions or they were given no such description (i.e., no implicit consensus control group). Each of these levels of implicit consensus was crossed with high, low or no explicit consensus information on the helping behavior. The results indicated that explicit consensus significantly affected predictions for target case compliance. Implicit consensus only affected predictions in the absence of explicit consensus. However, only implicit consensus affected person versus stimulus attributions as well as trait rating and predicted future helping behavior. Overall, these findings suggest that implicit consensus may be more important than explicit consensus for making attributions and evaluations. In contrast to previous research (Nisbett & Borgida 1975), explicit consensus did affect behavioral predictions for the particular situation being investigated. Lowe and Kassin (1977) argued that situation-based

expectancies do not necessarily interfere with perceiver's use of explicit consensus information.

## Self-Based Consensus

Heider (1958) postulated that social actors are egocentrically biased toward seeing their own behavior as normative. Ross (1978) suggested that if people are prone to see their own behavior as situationally caused, as proposed by Jones and Nisbett (1971), then they must carry high implicit consensus information on their own behavior since it should theoretically lead to situation attributions.

Ross, Greene and House (1977) conducted a series of experiments on this so-called "false consensus effect." In one study they presented subjects with a series of stories depicting situations involving some behavioral choice. Subjects were required to indicate what their own choice would be as well as the percentage of people who would choose each of the two behavioral options. They rated both themselves and the typical person choosing each option on a number of bipolar trait scales. In a second experiment subjects rated themselves on a number of personal dimensions (e.g., traits, views, preferences, problems, activities) and then indicated the percentage of college students in general who share the particular trait, view, problem, etc. The third and fourth experiments in the study presented subjects with a hypothetical conflict situation or with the same conflict situation in vivo, respectively. The conflict was whether or not to agree to an experimenter request to wear a sandwich sign for 30 minutes purportedly to collect data on other people's reactions to the sign. Subjects either agreed or refused to participate and then rated the percentage

of other subjects who would also agree or refuse. In addition, subjects rated a typical agreeing or refusing subject on a number of dimensions.

The results from all four experiments indicated a significant tendency for subjects to view their own choices or traits as being high in consensus. This implicit consensus information apparently operated in the predicted manner. Persons behaving differently from the subject (low implicit consensus, internal attribution) were rated more extremely on the personality dimensions.

Two of the experiments conducted by Hansen and Donoghue (1977) dealt with a comparison between the effects of self-based consensus (implicit) and sample-based consensus (explicit). In one experiment they tested the hypothesis that perceivers generate inferences about population performance from their own behavior. Self-attributors sampled a beverage in what was supposedly a survey testing the marketability of a new snack drink. The consensus manipulation was similar to that of Nisbett et al. (1976). Self-attributors were asked to replace their own containers of liquid in a cabinet where they confronted the containers of other "subjects." In one condition the other containers were filled to a level similar to the subject's (e.g., high consensus) and in another condition the containers were filled to a level much less than the subject's (e.g., low consensus). Other-attributor subjects did not drink the liquid. Instead they watched a videotape of a confederate playing the role of subject. The subjects in all conditions were able to accurately report the amount consumed compared to the simulated population amounts. This indicated that

subjects did perceive the consensus manipulation. The results indicated that explicit consensus (i.e., sample-based) had little impact on person versus environment attributions for the self-attributors. However, other-attributors significantly utilized explicit consensus in their attributions for the confederate's behavior. When predicting general population performance, self-attributors based their predictions upon their own behavior (i.e., implicit consensus) while other-attributors based their predictions upon what their own behavior would have been (i.e., also implicit consensus).

In a second experiment, Hansen and Donoghue (1977) provided both self-based and sample-based consensus information to subjects using a different procedure. Subjects were randomly assigned to high, low and no self-based consensus conditions. The high and low condition subjects were asked to choose which of two photographs represented the more "sincere" person. Subsequently, all subjects were shown a videotape of other subjects choosing either the same (e.g., high self-based consensus) or the other (e.g., low self-based consensus) photograph. The no-self-based consensus subjects did not choose a photograph but only viewed the videotape. Sample based consensus was manipulated by providing subjects with high or low population performance in tabular form. The no-sample-based consensus subjects did not receive such data. It was predicted that congruent sample and self-based information would enhance the expected effects of consensus. Conflicting information was predicted to attenuate the effects of consensus. The results indicated that either sample-based or self-based consensus alone was sufficient to affect person and environment attributions for

picture choosing as well as estimates of general population perfor-
mance. However, the effects of sample-based consensus were signifi-
cantly diminished in the presence of self-based consensus. Contrary
to predictions, congruent self and sample-based information did not
enhance consensus effects, nor did conflicting information attenuate
it. Overall, the results indicate that self-based consensus (i.e.,
implicit) is more powerful than sample-based consensus (i.e., explicit).

Kulik and Taylor (1980) believed that the photograph preference
procedure used by Hansen and Donoghue (1977) contributed to an arti-
ficially greater impact of self-based consensus. One problem with the
procedure was that there might have been substantial consensus among
subjects regarding which photograph depicted a more "sincere" person.
If one of the two pictures was clearly perceived as being more sincere,
then high sample-based consensus for the less sincere picture would be
viewed with suspicion by subjects and would therefore be discounted.
Another problem is that Hansen and Donoghue (1977) had subjects watch
a videotape of others either agreeing or disagreeing with the sub-
ject's own choice. This was supposedly the self-based consensus manipu-
lation. Technically, this is really sample-based or explicit con-
sensus. Self-based consensus is defined as the actor's normative in-
ferences based on his/her own behavior, and not based upon his/her own
behavior plus the behavior of others. Also, the vividness of the
videotaped information may have rendered less salient and less impor-
tant the subsequent sample-based tabular consensus information.

Kulik and Taylor (1980) had their subjects listen to a comedy
audio-tape and then rate their own perceptions of the humorousness of

the tapes. The subjects were divided into high and low groups based on how funny they thought the tape was. This would serve to generate self-based (implicit) consensus. A no-self-based consensus group did not listen to the tape. Subjects were randomly assigned to groups given tabular data indicating either high or low consensus information regarding how funny other subjects had found the tape. A no consensus information group was also used. Subjects were required to make general population estimates on how funny the tape was to people, as well as trait ratings on target cases who supposedly listened to the tape. Similar to Hansen and Donoghue (1977), either self or sample-based consensus alone was sufficient to affect population estimates and trait inferences in the predicted directions. In contrast to Hansen and Donoghue (1977), congruent self and sample-based information did enhance the consensus effects and conflicting information did attenuate the effects. Kulik and Taylor (1980) concluded that any "consensus on consensus" would be premature in terms of the relative effects of self-based (implicit) and sample-based (explicit) types.

## Effective Manipulations of Explicit Consensus

The original tests of Kelley's (1967) model (e.g., McArthur 1972) reported main effects of consensus information, but consensus was found to be underutilized relative to distinctiveness and consistency information. The base rate research indicated that consensus information may be underutilized in a statistical sense. The comparisons with self-based (implicit) consensus also show that explicit consensus may be underutilized. These results stimulated researchers to find

conditions under which consensus information strongly affects predictions or attributions.

## Neutralization of Expectancies

Hansen and Lowe (1976) suggested that some previous attempts which failed to show consensus effects may have been unsuccessful because socially undesirable behaviors were used in predictions and attributions. Miller et al. (1974) used Milgram's (1963) obedience paradigm and Nisbett and Borgida (1975) used Darley and Latane's (1968) bystander failure to intervene situation. In these types of circumstances it is unlikely that observers would imagine themselves behaving negatively; therefore they would not hold high implicit consensus on the negative behavior and they may or may not hold high implicit consensus on positive behavior in the situation. In order to study the effects of explicit consensus it would be important to neutralize these types of potentially interfering expectancies.

It is also possible that actors and observers have different preferences for consensus and distinctiveness information. Kelley (1967) suggested that actors typically have access to a great deal of historical data on their own behavior (i.e., distinctiveness) which should theoretically affect attributions. Observers, on the other hand, are not privy to such historical information about an actor's behavior and therefore should be more sensitive to consensus information.

Hansen and Lowe (1976) studied the effects of high and low explicit consensus and distinctiveness on both actor's and observer's attributions. They attempted to neutralize the potentially biasing

effects just described. They used a relatively neutral behavior, the rating of musical selections, in order to help control the generation of socially desirable implicit consensus. They also presented distinctiveness and consensus information on computer T.V. monitors in order to provide actors and observers the same access to information. Subjects were led to believe that their physiological responses to the music would be recorded because the experimenters attached equipment to them, such as galvanic skin response recorders. Each subject sat at his/her own computer monitor. Some subjects were told that they would view their own reactions to the music plus the reactions of several others (actor condition). Other subjects were told that they would view only the reactions of other subjects (observer condition). The information was presented to the subjects on the computer monitors in the form of numbered scales with lights indicating the strength of reactions to the music. Actually, all information in the presentations was set-up in advance by the experimenters. After listening to a musical presentation, subjects recorded the information from the monitor onto log sheets and then used this information to fill out a number of attribution measures. The results indicated that both consensus and distinctiveness strongly affected person versus environment attributions in the predicted directions.

Zuckerman (1978a) suggested that Nisbett and Borgida (1975) failed to obtain consensus effects for two reasons. First, they used socially undesirable behaviors and second, they presented informative target case descriptions for use in making behavioral predictions. Both of these factors could have contributed to the generation of implicit consensus information which could have interfered with

subject's use of the explicit consensus. Like Hansen and Lowe (1976),
Zuckerman (1978a) felt that if subjects learn that most people (i.e.,
high consensus) behave in a socially undesirable way, they may have
difficulty in forming a meaningful "script" which accounts for the be-
havior. Subjects may fall back upon some "self script" which would
be based upon how they themselves would behave. Zuckerman (1978a) also
noted that Kahneman and Tversky (1973) reported strong base rate ef-
fects when no target case descriptions were presented. With target
case information, people tend to rely on the diagnostic data in the
descriptions to make predictions, rather than use the base rates.

Like Nisbett and Borgida (1975), Zuckerman (1978a) presented sub-
jects with the procedure of Darley and Latane's (1968) bystander inter-
vention study. Subjects were given either high or low base rate in-
formation for helping (i.e., either socially desirable or socially un-
desirable consensus) and they were either given target case descriptions
or not. Subjects were required to predict the distribution of people's
behavior in the bystander intervention situation. Those subjects with
target case descriptions were required to predict the behavior of the
target case. The results indicated that subjects who received so-
cially desirable consensus were significantly affected by such informa-
tion in their predictions. Socially undesirable consensus did not
affect predictions. Subjects who did not receive target case descrip-
tions were more influenced by the consensus information, whether
socially desirable or not, than the target case information subjects.

Feldman, Higgins, Karlovac and Ruble (1976) studied two vari-
ables that could potentially affect subject's use of consensus

information. One of these variables was whether observers had direct
information or not regarding the target of an actor's behavior.

Subjects viewed a series of videotapes showing people choosing
from an array of pictures. One person in the videotape was designated
as the actor. Subjects were required to make causal attributions re-
garding the actor's choice. In some cases the videotape was filmed in
such a way as to allow full view of the potential choices. In other
cases the subject watching the videotape could not see the actual items
but was still fully able to see which item the actor signaled as
his choice. High consensus information was operationalized by show-
ing all the other people in the tape making the same choice as the
actor. Low consensus information was operationalized by showing all
the other people in the tape choosing a different item from the actor.
The results showed that subjects made the predicted use of consensus in
their attributions only when they had no direct visual information
about the various pictures that could be chosen. This could possibly
be the result of the neutralization of implicit self-based consensus.
Subjects who could see the items could decide which one they themselves
would choose. The no direct information subjects could not see the
items and therefore would have no opportunity to generate implicit
consensus based on their own preference.

## Order Effects

The other variable investigated by Feldman et al. (1976) was
the temporal presentation of consensus information. The videotapes
showed consensus information being presented either simultaneously
or sequentially. Simultaneous consensus was where all the other

people in the tape besides the actor signaled their choice at the exact
same time. If they all made the same choice as the actor, there was
high consensus. If all the others chose differently from the actor,
there was low consensus. In the sequential presentation tapes, the
people signaled their choices one at a time. They all either agreed
with the actor's choice (high consensus) or they all chose a different
picture from the actor (low consensus).

The results indicated that the effects of consensus were signifi-
cantly greater with sequential presentation than with simultaneous
presentation. The researchers suggested that the simultaneous con-
sensus was processed by perceivers in a single unit, whereas the se-
quential consensus involved several independent bits of information.
In the latter case there would seem to be "more" consensus information
and therefore stronger causal attributions would be made.

In the early research on Kelley's (1967) model (e.g., McArthur
1972) consensus information was found to account for significantly
less of the variance in causal attributions than either consistency or
distinctiveness information. However, consensus information was al-
ways presented to subjects first followed by distinctiveness, and
then consistency.

Ruble and Feldman (1976) investigated the possible order effects
in the use of consensus. They followed McArthur's (1972) procedure
by presenting subjects with a series of behaviors, such as "Sue is
afraid of the dog." For each such behavior, the three information
types were also presented and varied along the high-low dimension.
Subjects then attributed the behavior to the person, the stimulus,

the circumstances or to a combination of factors. The results showed main effects for all three information variables. More importantly, when the order was fully counterbalanced, the three information types accounted for approximately the same percentage of variance among attributions.

Kassin (1977) had subjects read a description of an aggression experiment in which participants delivered either severe, moderate or mild shock to a confederate. One of the participants was designated as the actor. The actor delivered shock either before or after all the other participants. Consensus was manipulated by having the other participants deliver the same shock level (high consensus) or deliver a different shock level (low consensus) than the actor. The actor always delivered the severe shock. Subjects were required to attribute the actor's behavior to the actor, to the confederate, or to the circumstances. There was a main effect for consensus and a main effect for order. However, the actor was seen as more personally responsible when he delivered shock before the other participants. Apparently, the behavior of others can be seen by perceivers as a situational influence independent of the focal stimulus.

Overall, these results on order effects suggest that the type of consensus information which actually affects attributions may be picked up gradually over many observations of others.

## Translatability of the Base Rate

It is conceivable that many perceivers might make use of base rate information if they only knew how to use it. If subjects are asked to predict category membership they may have difficulty

translating the base rate percentages into numbers that are directly applicable to the sample they are predicting from. An example would be where 70% of the population belongs to one group, 30% belongs to a second group, and the perceivers must apply these base rates to a sample of five people. Subjects may simply see no way to separate the sample of five people along a 70%/30% division.

Carrol and Siegler (1977) investigated this issue. They gave subjects the base rate information on a sample of 20 people or on a sample of 400 people. This information indicated either that 70% were lawyers and 30% were engineers, or that 70% were engineers and 30% were lawyers. The subjects were asked to predict the category membership of 20 target cases using the base rates as well as non-diagnostic personality descriptions. With the sample of 20 people, the number of target descriptions exhausted the sampled population (20/20 condition). With the sample of 400 people, the number of target descriptions did not exhaust the sampled population (20/400 condition). It was assumed that the base rates would be more directly translatable in the 20/20 condition.

Base rates affected predictions in both the 20/20 and the 20/400 conditions, but the effect was significantly greater in the 20/20 condition. The combination of a small sample, exhaustive sampling and directly translatable base rates yielded substantial use of the base rate information.

In another experiment, Carrol and Siegler (1977) included informativeness of the personality descriptions as one of the variables. Subjects were asked to categorize, as either a lawyer or an engineer,

10 people taken from a population of 20. The translatable base rate
was 70%-30% and the non-translatable base rate was 75%-25%. Five of
the descriptions were "lawyerlike" and five were "engineerlike" based
on pre-testing. The presence of diagnostic personality descriptions
eliminated any effect of translatability, but there was a main effect
for description type. Overall, these findings indicate that trans-
latability, exhaustive sampling, uninformative descriptions of target
cases and small sample size are favorable circumstances for the use
of base rate information.

## Representativeness of the Sample

Wells and Harvey (1977) argued that according to Kelley's (1967)
covariation model, consensus will be effective only insofar as it is
informative regarding the covariation of some internal or external fac-
tor with a particular behavior. If a sample upon which consensus in-
formation is based is perceived as being biased in some way, it is pos-
sible that a behavior will be seen as covarying with the sample or
with the sampling techniques, and not with some factor either internal
or external to the actor.

Wells and Harvey (1977) replicated Nisbett and Borgida's (1975)
procedure by giving subjects a description of the behavior in a shock
taking study. High, medium and low consensus information were given
to subjects on the behavior of participants in the original study.
Half of the subjects were told that the original sample of participants
were selected using strictly random sampling techniques. The other
half of the subjects were given no such information. Subjects were
required to make population estimates, causal attributions and trait

ratings for target cases. Consensus was significantly more effective for predictions and attributions in the knowledge of random sampling condition. There were no significant effects on trait ratings.

Hansen and Donoghue's (1977) study, reported above, manipulated self-based consensus by having subjects sample a beverage, after which they confronted the containers of beverage from other "subjects." This manipulation enabled actors to compare their amount sampled with that of others. Observer subjects did not sample the beverage but instead watched the actor's behavior and the consensus manipulation on video-tape. All the subjects were given either high or low sample-based consensus in tabular form. Half of the subjects were told that the sample of people whose beverage containers were encountered were a representative, randomly sampled population. The other half of the subjects were given no such information. The results showed that the knowledge of random sampling influenced only observer's use of sample-based consensus in making attributions. Actors based their attributions on their own, self-based consensus, whether they were aware of the random sampling techniques or not.

## Sample Size

Kassin (1979b) tested the hypothesis that the impact of explicit consensus should be enhanced when such information is based upon a large sample instead of a small sample. If the consensus information indicates that 30 out of 40 students failed an exam, this should be more influential than the knowledge that 3 out of 4 students failed the exam.

Kassin (1979b) had subjects read the description of the helping behavior experiment that he used in his earlier study (Lowe & Kassin 1977). The description indicated that students were asked to wait for participation in an undisclosed experiment. A confederate approached the waiting subject and asked for help with stapling papers together. In the earlier study (Lowe & Kassin 1977) the description of the confederate was manipulated in order to generate high, medium and low implicit consensus on the behavior of helping the confederate. In this study, only the medium implicit consensus description was used (e.g., the confederate was polite and in a hurry, but the participant had only a few minutes to spare).

Subjects were told that the experiment was conducted twice, and they were given the results from two sample sizes (e.g., 50 and 10). Half the time the large sample was reported to have high consensus on the helping behavior while the small sample had low consensus. The other half of the time the large sample had low consensus and the small sample had high consensus. Four levels of base rate data (e.g., explicit consensus) were used. They varied from 60%/40% to 90%/10%. Subjects were required to predict the percentage of people who would help the confederate if the experiment was again replicated. They also predicted the behavior of a hypothetical target participant.

The results indicated that increasing levels of base rate did not significantly increase population or target predictions. However, the predictions were significantly higher when the high base rate was presented with the large sample instead of the small sample. In other words, subjects used the base rate of the large sample to guide their predictions.

## Actions vs. Occurrences

Zuckerman (1978b) tested the effects upon attribution of Kelley's (1967) three information variables, following McArthur's (1972) procedure. Two types of behaviors were compared, actions and occurrences. Actions were defined as behavior under the actor's voluntary control, such as "Jerry attended the Sunday meeting." Occurrences were defined as behavior not completely under actor control, such as "Sue was afraid of the dog." Since actions are under voluntary control, they should automatically be internally caused, which would rule out external or stimulus attributions. Anderson (1974) has argued that consensus information provides data about other actors' reactions to a stimulus. This tells perceivers about the power of a stimulus to elicit behavior. Since actions, by definition, rule out stimulus attributions, consensus should be less important for actions than for occurrences. With occurrences, internal and external attributions are both possible.

Zuckerman (1978b) provided subjects with actions and occurrences followed by high or low consensus, distinctiveness, and consistency information in counterbalanced order. Some subjects received no information. Subjects were required to attribute the behavior in question to the person, the stimulus, the circumstances or to some combination of factors. Consensus information accounted for significantly more variance among attributions for occurrences than for actions. In fact, consensus accounted for the greatest amount of variance among attributions to the stimulus for both actions and occurrences.

## The Present Study

### An Integrated Consensus Information Variable

It is apparent from the literature survey that perceivers do use consensus information in making causal attributions and predictions. It is also apparent that some conditions are more favorable than others for the use of consensus. In addition, there is evidence that consensus may be less important to attributors than other information types, like consistency and distinctiveness (McArthur 1972, 1976; Kahneman & Tversky 1973; Major 1980).

Kassin's (1979a) division of consensus into explicit and implicit types provides one way of conceptualizing an integrated consensus variable which may provide a common denominator for the research on normative expectancies, observed covariation and base rates. It would appear as if both implicit and explicit consensus yield the same predictions for internal and external attribution. When an individual stands out from the group with his/her behavior (low consensus), the cause of that behavior is attributed by perceivers to forces internal to the individual. When an individual behaves the same way as most other people (high consensus), then perceivers locate the cause of the behavior in forces external to the individual. Evidence regarding the behavior of others can be based upon what others actually do (explicit) or upon what others are believed to do (implicit).

Jones and McGillis (1976) discussed some similarities and differences between correspondent inference theory (Jones & Davis 1965) and the covariation model of attribution (Kelley 1967). In describing the possibilities for integrating the two attribution models, Jones and

McGillis (1976) suggested that Kelley's (1967) three information types represent prior probability variables within a correspondent inference framework.

One prior probability variable is target-based expectancies. This refers to inferences about another person's behavior based upon the knowledge of that person's behavior at other times. Consistency and distinctiveness information could be seen as generating target-based expectancies. Consistency provides data regarding a person's behavior in past identical situations. Distinctiveness provides information about a person's past behavior toward other entities or stimuli in similar situations. Expectancies for the person's behavior would be generated from such information.

The other prior probability variable in Jones and McGillis' (1976) formulation is category-based expectancies. This refers to inferences about another person's behavior based upon that person's membership in a particular social class, age group, sex or occupation. Expectancies for the person's behavior would be generated from such category memberships. Category-based expectancies are quite similar to what Kassin (1979a) calls implicit consensus. Jones and McGillis (1976) do not make any provisions in their formulation for inferences derived from the actual, observed behavior of others. This, of course, would be Kelley's (1967) explicit consensus variable. A fully integrated consensus variable would have to include both implicit and explicit consensus. Such an integration would be theoretically valid insofar as implicit and explicit consensus, in their high and low forms, yield identical predictions for attribution.

## Laboratory vs. Naturalistic Study

Virtually all research in the areas of consensus information and Kelley's (1967) covariation model have been conducted using laboratory based techniques, such as questionnaires. One area that has been neglected is the study of the ecological validity of Kelley's (1967) three information variables. Although main effects have been reported for all three types of information (e.g., McArthur 1972), it is not known whether perceivers freely choose to select the three information types (or whether they are of equal importance to perceivers) in order to derive attributions for behavior in non-laboratory settings.

Major's (1980) research is probably the only well-controlled study of attributor's acquisition preferences for the three information types. Major's (1980) experiments, like the other related research, used a laboratory based technique. Unlike the real world, attributors were allowed access only to information specified by Kelley's (1967) three information variables. In addition, the behaviors that were used were performed by people who were unseen strangers to the subjects.

The study by Garland et al. (1975), which attempted unsuccessfully to classify free-lance requests for information into consistency, distinctiveness and consensus categories was a step toward studying naturalistic perceiver preferences for the three information variables. However, the task they used must still be classified as a laboratory technique. The perceivers in their study were "force-fed" behaviors to-be-attributed. Despite the negative results, the coding format used by Garland et al. (1975) is the method of choice for studying data acquired in a free-lance or open-ended fashion. Other researchers have studied the attribution process using this technique.

Elig and Frieze (1975) developed a coding scheme for categorizing causal attributions relating to success and failure. Following Heider's (1958) notions about success-failure attributions, Elig and Frieze (1975) divided attributions along three dimensions. The stability dimension divided attributions into those that are fixed and unchanging across situations (stable) and those that are situational and variable (unstable). The source dimension divided attributions into those that are internal to the actor, external to the actor, or mutual, in which causality is shared between the actor and external objects or other people. The intentionality dimension divided attributions into unintentional (e.g., ability, task difficulty, mood, luck), intentional (e.g., effort) or mediate, in which there is a combination of intentional and unintentional factors.

Elig and Frieze (1975) applied this coding scheme to attributions for success or failure from open-ended questionnaire answers. Their test of validity of the coding scheme was to see whether attributions for different situations (e.g., academic or social) and outcomes (e.g., success or failure) do differ on the three dimensions. They reported significant differences using Chi-square analyses on frequency counts of attributions categorized according to the three dimensions.

Lau and Russell (1980) compared motivational and cognitive explanations for success-failure attributions using archival data as their source. They developed their own coding format which divided attributions along two dimensions, stability (e.g., stable or unstable) and locus of causality (e.g., internal or external). They applied this coding scheme to 107 articles from the newspaper sports pages.

The articles covered 33 major sporting events during 1977 including the baseball World Series. The two authors independently coded and categorized explanatory statements and then compared their results as a reliability check. They initially agreed 88% of the time. Any discrepancies were discussed for one minute each in an attempt to come to an agreement on the proper categorization. If after one minute the coders still disagreed, the explanatory statement was discarded. The final pool of statements accounted for 96% of the original explanations. The percentage of attributions of each type were compared using Chi-square statistics. The results supported a motivational explanation for success-failure attributions.

The use of archival data from the sports pages is undoubtedly a more ecologically valid technique for studying attributions than the typical forced-choice, closed-ended laboratory procedure. The players, coaches and sportswriters who made the attributions had a much wider range of possible responses and were not constrained in their use of possible information variables.

## The Newspaper Advice Columns

Another potentially ripe source for studying attributions in a natural setting is the newspaper advice columns. Advice columns have been in existence for over 75 years and may possibly be a very real source of help for those in need. One popular columnist is reported to receive over 1,000 letters daily and is estimated to have a readership of over 54 million (Dibner 1974). In one analysis of letters to an advice columnist regarding old age issues, it was found that 73% of the letters dealt with "problems" (e.g., loneliness, death,

rejection) and 27% dealt with "other aspects" (e.g., information requests) (Gaitz & Scott 1975).

In another analysis (Dibner 1974), 77% of the letters dealt with "personal problems."  In terms of the type of advice sought, 54% of the letters requested explicit instructions on how to act and 36% requested general information about human behavior.  Attributions are no doubt involved in an advice column's discussions of human behavior.  Since the consequences and determinants of attribution processes based on laboratory findings may or may not be generalizable to real-world settings, the advice columns could possibly be one source for studying such attribution processes naturalistically.

Questions Addressed in the Present Study

The newspaper advice columns were used as a natural source of attributional activity.  A coding manual was devised to enable raters or coders to go through a random sample of advice column letters and reliably find attributions.  Another coding manual was devised for raters to identify Kelley's (1967) three information variables--consistency, distinctiveness and consensus--as they are used to support, defend, justify or explain the located attributions.  Three questions were addressed in the present study.

The first question is:  Do people freely use consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus information in their attributional activity in a natural setting?  If these three variables are ecologically valid attribution information categories, then they can probably be detected in the context of attributions.  Frequencies of attributions that use each of the three information types, either alone or in combinations,

can be compared to the frequency of attributions that are not accompanied by any of the three information variables. If Kelley's (1967) variables are actually used, then it will be possible to analyze which particular types or combinations perceivers prefer.

The second question is: Is consensus information in a natural setting underutilized relative to consistency and distinctiveness, as some previous research suggests? Utilization in this study will refer to the selection of a given information type to support, defend, justify or explain a given attribution, independent of the predicted direction of attribution (i.e., internal versus external based upon high or low form of the information type). It is conceivable that when consensus information is defined as both implicit and explicit (Kassin 1979a) it may not be underutilized. In other words, the underutilization findings may be due to the fact that consensus has been defined too narrowly. Frequency counts of the use of the three variables can be compared, which will be informative regarding attributor preferences.

The third question is: Does an integrated consensus information variable, defined as both implicit and explicit (Kassin 1979a), operate in a natural setting in the way that previous research and theory predicts? High consensus information should lead to external attribution (e.g., locating the cause of a behavior in forces external to the actor) whereas low consensus information should lead to internal attribution (e.g., locating the cause of a behavior in forces internal to the actor). Each piece of consensus information can be classified as either implicit or explicit. This will be informative regarding the relative importance to perceivers of the two types. Each piece of

consensus that is used alone (i.e., without consistency or distinctiveness) can be categorized as either high or low. Also, each attribution that is accompanied by consensus alone can be rated as either internal or external. These last two classifications can be used to test the predicted relationship between direction of attribution and consensus information.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

## Overview

In order to study the use of Kelley's (1967) three information variables in the advice columns, it was first necessary to locate attributions or explanatory statements. Next, it was necessary to identify instances of consistency, distinctiveness and consensus information that were used in the context of the explanatory statements. Several steps were needed in order to accomplish this.

1) Find explanatory statements; simplify them to the form "Referent Because Explanation."

2) Identify the person who is performing the behavior in each referent.

3) Identify the referents of interest in the present study.

4) Simplify the referents to the form "person verb stimulus."

5) Construct test questions for use in a structured search of the advice columns for the three information variables.

6) Locate the three information types as they are used in the context of the explanatory statements.

7) Classify the instances of consensus information and the explanations to which they refer in order to test the predicted effects of consensus.

Detailed descriptions of the theory and procedure for each of these steps are contained in two coding manuals. One manual, the Scoring Manual: Explanatory Statements in the Advice Columns (ESAC) (see Appendix A) was devised by Schoeneman and Rubanowitz (Note 1) for use

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in another advice column study. The other manual, the Scoring Manual: Consistency, Distinctiveness and Consensus Information in the Newspaper Advice Columns (CDCNAC) (see Appendix B), was prepared for the present study.

## Step 1

The first step was to realiably locate explanatory statements in the advice columns. This was accomplished through the use of the scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A). Teams of student raters were thoroughly trained in the use of the scoring manual, which contained numerous examples and a detailed procedure for locating explanatory statements. Then the raters were given a random sample of advice column letters to process. A large sample of explanatory statements was found by the raters. Only those explanatory statements that were agreed upon by at least two out of three teams of raters (including the main team, described below) were used in subsequent analyses. This insured that the final sample would be reliable.

Each explanatory statement was reduced or simplified to the form "Referent Because Explanation." The explanation part referred to the attribution or explanation for some behavior, thought, feeling, etc. The referent part referred to that which was being explained in the statement, that is, it referred to the behavior, thought or feeling itself. The following explanatory statement can be used as an example:

Andrew said that Ruth laughed at the comedian because she has a good sense of humor.

The explanatory statement can be simplified to the following form:

REFERENT:  Andrew said that Ruth laughed at the comedian

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION:  she has a good sense of humor.

Each of the reliably located explanatory statements was reduced or sim-
plified in this way.

## Step 2

The second step in the procedure involved identifying whose be-
havior in the referent was being explained or attributed.  This step was
necessary because in some referents there is more than one person per-
forming a behavior.   In order to analyze the attribution process it
is necessary to establish whose behavior is being attributed in the ex-
planatory statement.

In the example above, there were two people (e.g., Andrew and
Ruth) who were involved in the referent behavior.  It is necessary to
identify what the explanation refers to.  In the example, the referent
behavior could be what "Andrew said," or it could be the fact that
"Ruth laughed."  It is apparent from the explanation that Ruth's be-
havior of laughing at the comedian is what is being explained.  There-
fore, Ruth is the referent subject, or the person whose behavior the
explanation refers to.  The correct referent then becomes "Ruth laughed
at the comedian" while "Andrew said" is dropped.

The example just presented involved a referent in multi-subject
form.  If all referents began with the name or pronoun of a person
performing a behavior, the task of identifying the "person" would be
relatively easy.  However, many referent subjects are not presented

so simply. Some are presented in the passive voice (e.g., "They should
not be blamed for his misdeed." The person performing a behavior here
is "the blamer."), some in the imperative (e.g., "Tell me what to do."
The person performing the behavior is the implicit "you," as in you
tell me what to do.), some as a dangling particple or gerund (e.g.,
"Going to his house, this would be unfair to her." The person perform-
ing the behavior here is the person who is going to the house in ques-
tion.), and some as an indirect object (e.g., "The abortion issue
burns me up." The person performing the behavior here is "me," as in
I am burned up by the abortion issue.). For each of these complicated
referent types it was necessary to identify who is performing the be-
havior.

Part II.A. of the scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A) contains a
detailed procedure along with numerous examples. Raters used this pro-
cedure to identify the referent subject in each of the reliably located
explanatory statements. Identifying the referent subject or "person"
amounted to establishing the correct referent behavior which was being
explained.

Step 3

Once the correct referent was established for each explanatory
statement, the referents themselves could be categorized. This step
was necessary because not all referents are applicable to Kelley's
(1967) covariation model of attribution. Those that are applicable
needed to be identified.

The referents of interest were those which could be simplified
to the form "person verb stimulus." Kelley (1967) stated that his

model applies to referent behaviors which specifically take this form. Tests of Kelley's (1967) model (e.g., McArthur 1972) had subjects make attributions only for these types of statements. In these referents, the "person" refers to who is performing the behavior, the "verb" refers to the behavior itself, and the "stimulus" refers to the target, recipient or focus of the behavior. The example explanatory statement from above can be used to illustrate the three referent components. The referent in the example can be simplified to the following form:

```
PERSON:     Ruth
VERB:       laughed at
STIMULUS:   the comedian
```

Part II.B. of the scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A) contains a detailed procedure for categorizing referents. There are three basic types of referents:  enduring personal characteristics, transient personal characteristics, and contextual characteristics.

Enduring personal characteristics include such things as social identities (e.g., He is a Mormon.), personal dispositions (e.g., She is an aggressive person.), and physical characteristics (e.g., You are muscular.). Transient personal characteristics include such things as behaviors (e.g., I fought with John.), affective states (e.g., We were happy about the election results.), and motivational states (e.g., He needs Sue's love.). Contextual characteristics include such things as interpersonal relations (e.g., Our marriage is poor.) and impersonal physical contexts (e.g., The day was stormy.).

Neither enduring personal characteristics nor contextual characteristics could be simplified to the form "person verb stimulus" and therefore had to be excluded. Although these two referent types

contain a "person" (except impersonal physical contexts) and a "verb,"
there frequently is no "stimulus" toward which the "person" is be-
having (e.g., With the example "He is a Mormon," "he" is the person,
"is a Mormon" is the verb or behavior, but there is no particular stimu-
lus toward which "He is a Mormon."). Moreover, impersonal physical
contexts do not involve a person's behavior, so they would obviously be
excluded.

Only transient personal characteristics can be simplified to the
form "person verb stimulus" (e.g., With the example "I fought with
John," "I" is the person, "fought with" is the verb or behavior, and
"John" is the stimulus.).

Raters used Part II.B. of the scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A)
to categorize the entire sample of referents from the explanatory
statements. Only those with transient personal characteristic referents
were selected for further analysis.

## Step 4

Once the appropriate explanatory statements were identified,
each of their referents could be simplified to the form "person verb
stimulus." Identifying the referent components was important because
Kelley's (1967) information variables (e.g., consistency, distinctive-
ness and consensus) are defined by them.

Consensus information provides data on the variance among people
performing some behavior. For the present study, this refers spec-
ifically to the variance across the term "person." Consensus infor-
mation tells us about how many other "persons" perform the behavior in
question:

```
Person A? ──────┐
Person B? ──────┤
Person C? ──────┼──── Verb ─────────────── Stimulus
Referent Person ┘
```

Distinctiveness information provides data on the variation across the term "stimulus." Distinctiveness specifically tells us about how many other target objects or persons are the focus of the "person's" behavior:

```
                                          ┌── ?Stimulus A
                                          ├── ?Stimulus B
Person ────────────────── Verb ───────────┼── ?Stimulus C
                                          └── Referent Stimulus
```

Consistency information provides data on how frequently or how often a given "person" performed a given behavior toward a given "stimulus," either in the past or across situations.

Part II of the scoring manual CDCNAC (Appendix B) contains a detailed procedure for simplifying referents to the form "person verb stimulus." Raters used this procedure to simplify the explanatory statement's referents. The simplified referent components were used to structure a search of the advice columns for Kelley's (1967) three attribution information variables, as described in the next step.

## Step 5

The main purpose of the present study was to reliably locate instances of Kelley's (1967) information variables (e.g., consistency, distinctiveness and consensus) that are used to support, defend, justify or clarify naturally occurring attributions. Locating these pieces of supporting information required a search of the advice columns from which the explanatory statements were taken. In order to insure

that specific pieces of information were actually used to support a given attribution, and to insure that the located pieces of information were reliable, a method of structuring a search of the advice columns was devised.

A set of three questions was constructed for each explanatory statement. The questions were designed to test for the presence of consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus. The questions basically asked for the following:

> How consistent is the behavior?
> How distinctive is the behavior?
> How much consensus is there on the behavior?

Raters searched the advice columns for answers to the questions. An answer represented an instance of the given information type.

As noted above, it was important to insure that the rater's search of the advice columns was both valid and reliable. To accomplish this, very detailed versions of the above three questions were constructed for each explanatory statement from the three simplified referent components (person, verb, stimulus). Consensus referred to the information about the variation across the "person" of the referent (i.e., the number of other people who also perform the behavior). Distinctiveness referred to information about the variation across the "stimulus" of the referent (i.e., the number of other targets toward which the person performs the behavior). Consistency referred to the variation of the behavior across time or situations (i.e., the frequency of the person's past behavior).

The example explanatory statement from above can be used as an example.

REFERENT:  Andrew said that Ruth laughed at the comedian

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION:  she has a good sense of humor.

The referent was simplified to the following form:

PERSON:    Ruth
VERB:      laughed at
STIMULUS:  the comedian

The three test questions would take the following form:

CONSISTENCY:       How often in the past (or, in how many settings)
                   has Ruth laughed at the comedian?

DISTINCTIVENESS:   How many different comedians does Ruth laugh at?

CONSENSUS:         How many other people (do, would, should) laugh
                   at the comedian?

A rater would search the advice column for specific answers to these
questions.

A standardized format for question construction is presented in
Part III of the scoring manual CDCNAC (Appendix B).  In addition to the
referent components (person, verb, stimulus), three other terms were
needed to construct test questions.

The Person Label referred to the category to which the "person" be-
longs.  The person performing the behavior will always be a member of
some group such as "men," "Republicans," "car owners," etc.  If the
"person" in the referent is just described as an individual, then they
belong to the category "people."  The Stimulus Label referred to the
category to which the "stimulus" belongs.  Since the "stimulus" can be
a thing or a person, it can belong to any number of categories such
as "dogs," "cities," "movies," "airplanes," or "people."  The Verb

Label referred to the general behavioral category to which the "verb"

belongs. For example, "giving someone $100 for their birthday" belongs

to the general category of "gift giving." Not all "verbs" will have a

Verb Label because many "verbs" are already in general form.

The various referent components were inserted into "skeleton ques-

tions." This insured that each explanatory statement's test questions

would be both customized and standardized. The actual skeleton ques-

tions were as follows:

CONSISTENCY:     How often in the past (or, in how many settings)
has (would, should) Person Verb (or Verb Label)
Stimulus (or Stimulus Label)?

DISTINCTIVENESS:   Toward (at, to, with) how many different Stimulus
Label does (would, should) Person Verb (or Verb
Label)?

CONSENSUS:      How many other Person Label (did, would, should)
Verb (or Verb Label) Stimulus (or Stimulus Label)?

The consensus test question was designed to test for the presence of both

implicit and explicit consensus information (Kassin 1979a). The label

terms, "helper" verbs and prepositions provided enough flexibility to

insure that each question was gramatically correct and made sense.

## Step 6

Undergraduate psychology majors were thoroughly trained in the use

of the scoring manual CDCNAC (Appendix B) which contains numerous ex-

amples and a detailed procedure for searching through the advice columns

for Kelley's (1967) three information variables. The raters were pre-

sented with the set of explanatory statements along with three test

questions for each. They searched individual letters to the advice

columns for answers to the test questions. Answers to the test questions were instances of consistency, distinctiveness and consensus information which were used in the context of the naturally occurring attributions. A total of three raters were used in this step and only those located pieces of information that were agreed upon by at least two out of three raters were considered reliable. Only the reliable pieces of information were used in the analyses.

Figure 1 displays a typical stimulus sheet presented to the raters. Each explanatory statement had its own stimulus sheet and each of the raters processed the entire sample of explanatory statements and test questions.

## Step 7

The reliable instances of consensus information that were found by raters were analyzed further. Each piece of consensus information was classified as either implicit or explicit (Kassin 1979a). Those pieces of consensus information that were used alone (i.e., without either consistency or distinctiveness being used also) with a given explanatory statement were classified as either high (e.g., many other people performing the behavior) or low (e.g., few other people performing the behavior). The explanations which these lone pieces of consensus referred to were classified as either internal or external to the person performing the behavior. These last two classifications allowed for a test of the predicted relationship between consensus information and the direction of attribution (e.g., high consensus is associated with external attribution and low consensus is associated with internal attribution).

Figure 1

Example Stimulus Sheet

Name_____          13A-P2-1 3T

Andrew said that Ruth laughed at the comedian, because she has a good sense of humor.

REFERENT:  Andrew said that Ruth laughed at the comedian

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION:  she has a good sense of humor.

Person:    Ruth
Verb:      laughed at
Stimulus:  the comedian

CONSISTENCY:            How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has Ruth laughed at the comedian?

DISTINCTIVENESS:        At how many different comedians does Ruth laugh?

CONSENSUS:              How many other people (do, would, should) laugh at the comedian?

## Materials

A random sample of newspaper advice columns was obtained. Fifteen columns from 1980 were randomly selected from Ann Landers, a syndicated column appearing in the Grand Forks Herald. Fifteen columns were also randomly selected from Dear Abby, a syndicated column appearing in the Los Angeles Times. Each column contained approximately three letters to the advice columnist plus a reply to each. Letters that were devoted solely to poems, prayers, songs and other non-attributional activity were excluded. The final sample contained 61 letters. Each letter was typed onto a separate numbered sheet. Each paragraph was also numbered for easy identification.

A total of 537 explanatory statements were located by the raters using the scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A). Of these, 200 were considered reliable by virtue of the fact that they were agreed upon by at least two out of three teams of raters. Of the reliable explanatory statements, 178 were found to be applicable to Kelley's (1967) covariation model of attribution (e.g., transient personal characteristics).

For each of the 178 explanatory statements, an individual stimulus sheet was prepared. Each sheet contained the following: letter and paragraph I.D. numbers, the statement excerpt, the simplified explanatory statement (Referent Because Explanation), the simplified referent (person verb stimulus) and the three test questions. A typical stimulus sheet is presented in Figure 1 (p. 63).

When conducting their search for Kelley's (1967) information variables, each of the raters had available the following materials:

a copy of the scoring manual CDCNAC, the set of 178 stimulus sheets, and the sample of 61 original advice column letters.

## Raters

For the first step of finding explanatory statements, four teams of two raters each were used. The main team consisted of a Ph.D. in clinical psychology plus the present author. The other three teams consisted of upper division undergraduate volunteers. The main team applied the scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A) to the entire sample of advice column letters. The other teams each applied the coding manual to approximately two-thirds of the sample. In this way, each advice column letter was processed by three teams. Essentially, the undergraduate teams served as a reliability check for the main team's findings.

The second step involved identifying the referent subject or the "person" in each explanatory statement. The third step involved identifying the referents of interest in the present study (e.g., transient personal characteristics). The fourth step involved completely simplifying referents to the form "person verb stimulus." Two raters were used for each of these steps. They were the main team, described above, consisting of a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and the present author.

The fifth step was to construct test questions for each explanatory statement. Since this was a relatively mechanical procedure involving the insertion of terms into skeleton questions, there was no need to assess reliability. Therefore, only one rater was used, the psychology graduate student from the main team.

The sixth step involved searching the advice columns for reliable instances of Kelley's (1967) three information variables. Three upper division psychology undergraduates volunteered for this assignment. Each rater in this step worked independently.

The seventh and last step involved classifying instances of consensus information as implicit or explicit and as high or low. Also, the explanations that the consensus information referred to were classified as either internal or external. The main team of raters, described above, accomplished this step.

## Procedure

The first six steps of the study were outlined in the Overview section and are detailed in the scoring manuals (Appendices A and B). Therefore, these steps will only be briefly summarized here.

### Finding Explanatory Statements

The six undergraduate raters used in this step were thoroughly trained in the use of Part I of the scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A). They were given a written quiz on the material contained in the manual. Two training sessions were also conducted during which the procedure was reviewed and numerous examples given. To ensure competence, each team of two raters was given a practice sample of letters on which to exercise the procedure under supervision. Then the experimental sample was tested. Each team conducted seven sessions in a private testing room for one hour each, during which time they processed five to seven letters. The procedure used is outlined as follows:

1) Each team member worked independently on the experimental sample, one paragraph at a time. Both team members worked on the same sample of letters.

2) The located explanatory statements were recorded individu-
ally on a "finder's sheet." Space was provided for the
letter and paragraph I.D. number, the rater's name, the
statement excerpt and the components of the explanatory
statement. Each explanatory statement was recorded in a
simplified, two-part form (e.g., Referent Because Ex-
planation).

4) After completing their individual coding, the two members
of the team compared their findings. If the two members
agreed on both the referent and explanation of a given
explanatory statement, they marked "agree" (A) on their
respective finder's forms and then stapled them together.
If one team member found an explanatory statement that
the other member did not find, or, if the two members
identified different referents or explanations, then a
one minute discussion period was implemented in an at-
tempt to resolve the discrepancy [following Lau and Rus-
sel's (1980) procedure]. If after one minute the two
members had resolved their disagreement, they then marked
either "agree to include" (AI) or "agree to exclude" (AE)
on their finder's sheets. If after one minute there was
no resolution, the raters marked "disagree" (D) on their
finder's forms.

Five hundred and thirty-seven explanatory statements were found by all

four teams combined. Two hundred of these statements were agreed upon

by at least two out of three teams of raters (including the main team).

Only this final sample of explanatory statements was used in the subse-

quent steps.

Identifying Referent Subjects

The "person" in each referent refers to who is performing the be-

havior being explained. The procedure contained in Part II.A. of the

scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A) was used to identify the "person" in

each referent.

The two raters for this step were the members of the main team.

They worked independently and then compared their findings in order to

assess reliability. The raters initially agreed upon 95% of the

referent subjects. The items that the raters disagreed on were dis-
cussed and the discrepancies resolved. There was no time limit on the
discussions.

## Classifying Referents

The three types of referents (enduring personal characteristics,
transient personal characteristics and contextual characteristics) were
defined in the Overview section. Only transient personal characteris-
tics were applicable to Kelley's (1967) model (i.e., they can be simpli-
fied to the form "person verb stimulus"), so these explanatory state-
ments needed to be identified.

The two raters for this step (i.e., the main team) each classi-
fied the entire set of referents using the procedure in Part II.B. of
the scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A).

Each of the raters worked independently and then compared their
findings in order to assess reliability. The raters initially agreed
on 92% of the referents classified into the three types. Any disagree-
ments were discussed and resolved, with no time limit on the discus-
sions. The final sample of transient personal characteristics con-
sisted of 178 explanatory statements. Only this final sample was used
in subsequent analyses.

## Simplifying Referents

Following Kelley's (1967) theory and McArthur's (1972) procedure,
all referents in the final sample were simplified to the form "person
verb stimulus."

A random sample of 50 of the referents were simplified according to the procedure in Part II of the scoring manual CDCNAC (Appendix B).

Each of the two raters worked independently on the sample of 50 referents. The raters already had the "person" identified for each referent because these were coded in the earlier step, Identifying Referent Subjects. Therefore, only the "verb" and "stimulus" needed to be established for each referent. The raters were given the set of explanatory statements, the list of referent subjects and the sample of original advice column letters. Each rater used the explanatory statement and the context of the original letter to identify the correct "verb" and "stimulus."

The raters initially agreed on the simplification of 84% of the 50 referents that were randomly sampled. Those simplifications that were not agreed upon were discussed and the discrepancies resolved, with no time limit on the discussions. A review of the discrepancies indicated that all the disagreements occurred for referents that were in multi-subject form (see Overview).

The remaining 128 referents were simplified by one rater only. In view of the disagreements just cited, this one rater was reminded to pay close attention to the context of the original letters to insure that the correct "verb" and "stimulus" would be identified.

## Test Question Construction

One rater was used to construct the three test questions (one each for consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus) for each of the explanatory statements. There was no need to assess reliability for this step because no coding was involved and the task was a perfunctory

placing of the referent components (e.g., person, verb and stimulus) into skeleton questions.

Part III of the scoring manual CDCNAC (Appendix B) contains a description of the skeleton questions and several examples. Also, instructions are presented for the use of Label terms (see Overview), "helper" verbs and prepositions which help insure that each question is grammatically correct and makes sense.

## Locating Consistency, Distinctiveness and Consensus Information

Three undergraduate raters were used for this step. They were required to study Part IV of the scoring manual CDCNAC (Appendix B). This scoring manual contains definitions and descriptions of explanatory statements and their components, referents and their components, the three information variables and the structured test questions. The raters were given a written quiz on this information to determine their level of mastery as well as to reveal any areas in which further training was indicated. Two training sessions were conducted during which the scoring manual was reviewed. Raters were given supervised practice in locating the three information variables in the context of explanatory statements. Numerous trial runs were conducted using sample advice column letters and stimulus sheets like the one shown in Figure 1 (p. 63).

Part IV of the scoring manual CDCNAC (Appendix B) contains a detailed procedure for locating the three information variables using the stimulus materials. This procedure, which was used by all the raters, can be summarized as follows:

1) Read the excerpt, the simplified explanatory statement (e.g., Referent Because Explanation), the simplified referent (e.g., person verb stimulus) and the three test questions.

2) Locate the correct letter and paragraph from the selection of original letters using the I.D. number at the top of each data sheet.

3) Read the entire original letter in order to become familiar with its contents.

4) Do one question at a time.

5) Start from the beginning of the letter (not just the beginning of the paragraph) for each question.

6) If you find information that enables you to answer a question, write in that information under the question that it refers to.

7) Write in the supporting information just as it appears in the original letter. If you feel you need to explain your choice of information, or show why it is correct, place your clarification in parentheses next to the piece of information.

8) If you find more than one piece of supporting information that answers a given question (e.g., two instances of Consistency), then number your pieces of information (e.g., 1, 2, 3, etc.). Present instances of information in the order in which they appear in the original letter.

9) If you are not able to locate a piece of information that will answer a question, write in the words "NO INFO" under the question.

Raters worked at their own pace on their own time. Emphasis was placed upon accuracy and thoroughness.

After completion, the stimulus sheets for each rater were collected and the findings tabulated. Only those pieces of information that were found by at least two out of three raters were used in the analyses.

## Coding Consensus Information and Explanations

Those pieces of consensus information that were agreed upon by at least two out of three raters were considered reliable and were analyzed further. The main team of raters (e.g., a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and the present author) were used for these additional coding steps.

Each piece of consensus information was classified as either implicit or explicit (Kassin 1979a). Explicit consensus refers to actual or observed covariation of the referent behavior across actors. It can take the form of base rate information (e.g., One out of six doctors endorse the drug), expert testimony (e.g., The professor also agreed with my point), or any other form of social or consensual support (e.g., Many of us enjoyed the movie). Implicit consensus refers to the expected covariation of the referent behavior across actors. It can take the form of norms (e.g., Children should learn to read at a young age), stereotypes (e.g., Men like to exert their dominance), or other types of behavioral expectations (e.g., Couples love to dance).

In coding the reliable pieces of consensus information as either implicit or explicit, the raters achieved 83% agreement (i.e., 25 out of 30). The discrepancies were discussed and resolved, with no time limit on the discussions.

The pieces of consensus information were also classified as either high (e.g., many other people perform or would perform the behavior) or low (e.g., few other people perform or would perform the behavior). For this coding step, the raters achieved 93% agreement (i.e., 28 out of 30). The discrepancies were discussed and resolved.

Ten pieces of consensus information were used alone (i.e., without either consistency or distinctiveness being used also). The explanations with which the lone pieces of consensus were used were coded as either internal to the person performing the behavior or external to the person performing the behavior, according to the procedure contained in Part II.B. of the scoring manual ESAC (Appendix A). This procedure actually contains three coding categories: internal, external and interpersonal. Only the internal and external categories were of interest in the present study. For this coding step, the raters achieved 100% agreement (i.e., 10 out of 10).

## Data Analysis

### Ecological Validity of Kelley's (1967) Information Variables

If Kelley's (1967) model is generalizable to the "real world," then naturalistic attributions should be accompanied by the information variables a substantial portion of the time. The frequency of attributions supported by any of the variables, either alone or in combination, were compared to the frequency of attributions that were not accompanied by any of the variables. In the advice columns, if the frequency of usage were significantly greater or equal to the frequency of non-usage, then there would be evidence for the ecological validity of the three variables. This type of evidence would indicate that perceivers use the variables with their attributions either half the time or more than half the time.

If the three variables are used significantly, then it would be of descriptive interest to see whether perceivers prefer to use them

alone or in combinations. Previous research indicated that the variables actually do direct attributional activity whether their effects are analyzed individually (McArthur 1972) or whether particular configurations are used (Orvis et al. 1975). The frequencies of usage of the information types, alone and in combinations, were tabulated and compared.

## The Underutilization of Consensus

Previous theory (Kelley 1967) and research (McArthur 1972) has indicated that consistency may be a more valuable and informative variable than either distinctiveness or consensus. It is still not completely clear why under some conditions consensus is so greatly underutilized relative to the other two types of information. It is possible that Kelley's (1967) definition of consensus as explicit or observed covariation across actors may be too limited. Such a definition does not incorporate the implicit forms of consensus (e.g., norms, stereotypes or expectations) which may be quite influential in natural attribution situations. To investigate the possibility that consensus may _not_ be underutilized when it is more broadly defined, the overall frequencies of usage of the three information variables were compared, with consensus defined as _both_ implicit and explicit.

## An Integrated Consensus Variable

If it is reasonable to define consensus information as both implicit and explicit (Kassin 1979a), then each of these types should contribute to the overall use of consensus. Each piece of consensus that accompanied an advice column attribution was classified as either

implicit or explicit, and the frequencies of the two types were com-
pared.

Previous research (Kassin 1979a) has indicated that implicit and
explicit consensus similarly affect the direction of attribution.
Each piece of consensus that was used alone (i.e., without consistency
or distinctiveness being used also) was classified as either high or
low. Each attribution that was accompanied by one of these pieces of
consensus was classified as either internal or external. These clas-
sifications yielded a 2 X 2 matrix. It is important to note that only
the lone pieces of consensus had to be used in order to prevent the
confounding effects of consistency and distinctiveness upon the direc-
tion of attribution.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Ecological Validity of Kelley's (1967) Information Variables

Three raters were used to search the random sample of advice columns for instances of Kelley's (1967) three information variables. The over-all performance of each rater is presented in Table 1. One rater (Rater A) located much more covariation information than either of the other two raters. It is possible that the extreme rater was too liberal in her coding of information. It is also possible that she may have been more sensitive than the other raters to subtle examples of the three in-formation types. In either case, the reliability of the method used to locate covariation information cannot be determined from the perfor-mance of the three raters used in this study. However, only those pieces of information that were agreed upon by at least two out of three of the raters were considered reliable. Only these reliable, unambigu-ous pieces of information were used in the data analyses.

The frequency of attributions that were accompanied by at least one of Kelley's (1967) three information variables (e.g., something) was compared to the frequency of attributions that did not use any of the three information variables (e.g., nothing). The expected cell frequencies were 0.50. Although the frequency of at least something being used was greater than the frequency of nothing being used, this difference was not statistically significant (see Table 2). This

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Table 1

Overall Rater Agreement

| Rater | Number of Pieces of Information Found | | |
| | Consistency | Distinctiveness | Consensus |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | 99 | 85 | 65 |
| B | 44 | 46 | 28 |
| C | 50 | 61 | 34 |
| 2 out of 3 agreement | 31 | 22 | 9 |
| 3 out of 3 agreement | 24 | 33 | 21 |
| Total | 55 | 55 | 30 |

Table 2

Overall Use of Covariation Information

| Information Used | Number of Attributions | Chi-square | Probability |
|---|---|---|---|
| Something | 97 | 1.438 | 0.2300 |
| Nothing | 81 | | |
| Total | 178 | | |

result indicates that Kelley's (1967) information variables appeared with approximately one-half of all the attributions in the sample.

The attributions that were accompanied by Kelley's (1967) variables were divided into those that used an individual piece of information and those that used information combinations. The results indicate that perceivers significantly prefer to use the information variables individually (see Table 3). The expected cell frequencies were 0.50.

No one information combination seemed to be used more than any other (see Table 4). The expected cell frequencies were 0.25. The results involving pieces of information that were used alone are reported in the Underutilization of Consensus section.

## The Underutilization of Consensus

The overall frequencies of usage of the three information variables indicate that consistency and distinctiveness information were used equally often, and that consensus information was significantly underutilized (see Table 5). The expected cell frequencies were 0.333.

Consensus information was also significantly underutilized relative to consistency and distinctiveness among those attributions that were accompanied by only one piece of information (see Table 6). The expected cell frequencies were 0.333. It is interesting to note that consistency and distinctiveness information were used equally often when used alone, which is the same result obtained with their overall use.

Consensus information was greatly underutilized relative to consistency and distinctiveness information even though consensus was broadly defined as both implicit and explicit.

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Table 3

Alone Versus Combination Use of Information

| Information Used | Number of Attributions[a] | Chi-square | Probability |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alone | 66 | 12.629 | 0.0004 |
| Combinations | 31 | | |
| Total | 97 | | |

[a]Out of 178 attributions

Table 4

Use of Information Combinations

| Information Combination | Number of Times Used[a] | Chi-square | Probability |
|---|---|---|---|
| Consistency + Distinctiveness | 12 | | |
| Consistency + Consensus | 5 | | |
| Distinctiveness + Consensus | 8 | 3.710 | 0.2946 |
| Consistency + Distinctiveness + Consensus | 6 | | |
| Total | 31 | | |

[a]Out of 178 attributions

Table 5

Overall Use of Kelley's (1967) Variables

| Information | Number of Times Used[a] | Chi-square | Probability |
|---|---|---|---|
| Consistency | 55 | | |
| Distinctiveness | 55 | 15.135 | 0.0005 |
| Consensus | 30 | | |

[a]Out of 178 attributions

Table 6

Individual Use of Kelley's (1967) Variables

| Information | Number of Times Used[a] | Chi-square | Probability |
|---|---|---|---|
| Consistency | 28 | | |
| Distinctiveness | 28 | 9.818 | 0.0074 |
| Consensus | 10 | | |

[a]Out of 66 attributions

## An Integrated Consensus Variable

When consensus information appeared in the context of an attribution it was used significantly more often in high form as opposed to low form (expected cell frequencies were 0.50). Consensus information was used about equally often in its implicit and explicit forms (expected cell frequencies were 0.50). When the implicit/explicit classification was crossed with the high/low classification, the four cell frequencies were significantly different (expected cell frequencies were 0.25). However, there was no interaction. These results are displayed in Table 7.

Ten pieces of consensus information were used alone (e.g., without consistency or distinctiveness being used also). The attributions that were accompanied by these items of consensus were classified as either internal or external to the actor. These attributions and the accompanying pieces of consensus were used to test the predicted relationship between consensus information and the direction of attribution. However, of the 10 pieces of consensus none were used in low form. Therefore, only the predicted relationship between high consensus and internal/external attribution could be tested. The results were in the predicted direction, that is, high consensus was associated more often with external attribution than with internal attribution. This difference achieved borderline significance (see Table 8).

Table 7

Forms of Consensus Information[a]

| Explicit | | Implicit | |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | Low | High | Low |
| 15 | 2 | 13 | 0 |

| Comparison | Chi-square | Probability |
|---|---|---|
| Overall | 22.80 | 0.00004 |
| Interaction | 0 | 1.0 |
| Explicit/Implicit | 0.5333 | 0.4652 |
| High/Low | 22.5333 | 0.000002 |

[a]30 pieces of consensus were used for these analyses.

Table 8

Relationship Between Consensus and Attribution[a]

| High Consensus | | Low Consensus | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Internal | External | Internal | External |
| 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 |

| Comparison | Chi-square | Probability |
|---|---|---|
| Internal/External[b] | 3.600 | 0.0578 |

[a]10 pieces of consensus were used in this analysis.

[b]This comparison was made only for high consensus.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

## The Ecological Validity of Kelley's (1967) Variables

The results of this project indicate that in a natural setting perceivers may make substantial use of social data corresponding to Kelley's (1967) three information variables. Over half of all the attributions in the present sample were accompanied by at least one piece of covariation information.

The method used in this study insured that each piece of covariation information which accompanied an attribution related specifically to that attribution. The advice column raters were guided in their search for supporting information through the use of carefully constructed test questions. Consistent with Kelley's (1967) theory, these test questions were designed to focus the rater's search upon covariation information (i.e., consistency, distinctiveness and consensus) that related to the particular behavior in question (i.e., person verb stimulus). The supporting information in the advice columns sometimes appeared before the explanatory statement (i.e., Referent Because Explanation), sometimes after the explanatory statement and sometimes as part of the explanatory statement. Therefore, it cannot be determined whether the supporting information was used to direct attributional activity or whether it was a by-product of attributional activity. Undoubtedly, it was used in both ways. Some of the research

reported earlier (McArthur 1972, 1976; Ruble & Feldman 1976; Major 1980) indicated that perceivers use consistency, distinctiveness and consensus information in order to determine where the locus of causality lies. However, other research (Zuckerman & Mann 1979) has demonstrated that once an attribution is made for a behavior, perceivers will make generalizations about the same behavior across actors (i.e., consensus), across other stimuli (i.e., distinctiveness) and across circumstances (i.e., consistency). These generalizations corresponded to the high and low levels of the three information variables that are associated with particular attributions. This effect can be viewed as Kelley's (1967) model in reverse.

Although the present study supports the ecological validity of Kelley's (1967) three information variables, the results do not address the ecological validity of the covariation model itself. In order to study this model in the advice columns it would be necessary to code all reliably located pieces of covariation information as either high or low. Each related attribution could be coded as either a person, stimulus or circumstance attribution. A prediction for attribution (e.g., person, stimulus or circumstance) could be derived from Kelley's (1967) theory for each individual item of information and for each combination of items. These predictions could be compared to the actual attributions. If the actual attributions correspond to a significant degree to the predicted attributions, then Kelley's (1967) model would be partially supported. The model would derive only partial support from such results because it could be argued that the procedure just outlined still fails to test the

covariation model. It could not be stated with certainty that the located pieces of information were <u>directing</u> attributions in the predicted manner. It could only be stated that the pieces of information <u>accompanied</u> the particular attributions. The method used in the present study (i.e., coding covariation information in the context of attributions) is limited to the extent that the cause/effect relationship between covariation information and attributional activity cannot be determined.

The subjects of this study were the people who wrote letters to the advice columns as well as the advice columnists themselves. These subjects were spontaneously making attributions and presenting supporting or clarifying information. In order to perform a full test of Kelley's (1967) model in this type of setting, it would probably be necessary to effect some type of control over the attributional activity or over the use of covariation information. However, once experimental control of this kind is exercised, the data source can no longer be considered naturalistic.

In the present study, no particular combination of information was used significantly more than any other. However, perceivers used significantly more individual items of information than combinations of items (p = 0.0004). This last result may reflect a genuine preference on the part of perceivers or it may reflect a physical limitation of the advice columns. Only a small space is allowed for each letter to the advice column. Therefore, it may be necessary for perceivers to be economical in their use of supporting covariation information. Future research might be devoted to developing an index of attributional

activity as well as a measure of usage of covariation information. In their study of sports page attributions, Lau and Russell (1980) used the number of attributions per inch of newsprint as a measure of attribution frequency. A comparable method for use in the advice columns might be an interesting complement to the present method of assessing the extent to which perceivers use Kelley's (1967) three information variables.

The pieces of consensus information that were included in the data analysis were considered reliable because they were agreed upon by at least two out of three of the raters. The raters were undergraduate psychology majors and they were not familiar with attribution theory. It can be seen from Table 1 (p. 77) that one of the raters (Rater A) found more pieces of covariation information than either of the other two raters. If a large number of raters had been employed (e.g., 25) then the presence of one or two extreme raters could be attributed to individual differences. However, since only three raters were used in the present study it is possible that the more productive rater was inclined to identify covariation information in ambiguous advice column passages (i.e., the additional pieces of information found by this rater were actually unreliable), or that this rater was simply more sensitive to subtle examples of the information types (i.e., the other two raters failed to find potentially reliable items). In either case, this situation highlights the importance of using more than one rater. Using a number of raters insures that the final sample of information items is highly reliable. Since the raters in the present study were naive regarding attribution theory and its

predictions, it is conceivable that some subtle examples of covariation information were overlooked. If this were true, then Kelley's (1967) information variables are even more ecologically valid than the present results indicate. The alternative to using naive raters would be to use raters who are educated in the area of attribution theory. However, it is possible that using such informed raters would introduce biases into the advice column searches. For example, if a rater is aware that consensus information is believed to be underutilized, this knowledge may influence the salience of consensus-like information in the advice columns.

If consistency, distinctiveness or consensus information are naturalistically used about half the time, as the present results indicate, then what factors are associated with attribution the other half of the time? It may be the case that Kelley's (1967) covariation model with its three information variables is reserved for particular attribution situations. Kelley's (1967) model is quite logical in its form and it is based on the idea that the naive psychologist, or the man in the street, used a naive version of the scientific method. Kelley (1967) drew an analogy between the analysis of variance F-ratio and the procedure uses in common-sense attribution. The variability of a person's behavior toward various entities (e.g., distinctiveness) is weighed against the stability of the person's behavior over time/situations (e.g., consistency) and across other actors (e.g., consensus). Distinctiveness represents the numerator of the F-ratio while consistency plus consensus represents the denominator. The attribution that an observer makes will depend upon his/her state of information

regarding these sources of variability. The use of this model is con-
tingent upon the perceiver having access to information regarding the
actor's behavior at other points in time, toward other entities or
across other social agents.

It is conceivable that Kelley's (1967) model may be most appli-
cable when automatic attribution proves to be problematic (Taylor &
Fiske 1978). There are probably times when attributors attempt to gen-
erate the sense that their perceptions and judgments are veridical.
In terms of knowing what caused an event, perceivers may want to "know
that they know." Kelley (1973) suggested that the processes governing
such "psychological epistomology" may be an important area related to
attribution theory.

Although the covariation model may be intuitively appealing to
the scientifically-minded perceiver, there are no doubt many attribu-
tion situations where the locus of causality is determined much more
reflexly. For example, there is evidence that perceivers sometimes
attribute causality to that factor which is simply the most salient
(Taylor & Fiske 1978). In addition, the covariation model is not the
only method available to attributors who are motivated to be rational
in their perceptions.

For situations where only a single behavioral observation is
available to perceivers, Kelley (1972, 1973) developed the causal
schemata model. A causal schema is a plan or template which perceivers
use in making causal attributions. The limited information available
from a single behavioral observation is fitted into an appropriate
schema. The schema provides a framework within which causes can be

inferred from effects.  Causal schemata presumably develop after much experience with everyday social situations involving cause and effect. Schemata enable a perceiver to construe and interpret a stable external world in the face of limited information.

One causal schema involves Multiple Sufficient Causes.  This is where a number of potential causes are available for a given effect. For example, if someone does well at their job, it may be due to their employer's pressure (i.e., external cause) or due to a high need to achieve (i.e., internal cause).  There are two rules or principles that aid in determining how the causes will be perceived.  The discounting principle states that if more than one plausible cause exists, the strength of any one cause will be reduced.  In the example just cited, the employer's pressure may be perceived as the most plausible cause, but if it is known that the individual also has a high need to achieve, then the attribution to the employer's pressure will be made less confidently.  On the other hand, if it is known that the individual does not have a high need to achieve, then a strong attribution to the employer's pressure can be made.  The other principle is the augmentation principle, which involves situations in which there is both a facilitative cause and an inhibitory cause.  If a person performs a behavior in the face of an inhibitory cause, then the strength of the attribution to the facilitative cause will increase.  For example, suppose someone wants to succeed at a task (i.e., facilitative cause), and yet the task is extremely difficult (i.e., inhibitory cause).  If the person succeeds, then this must have been due to a strong desire to succeed simply because the person had the difficulty of the task to overcome.

Another causal schema involves Multiple Necessary Causes. This schema refers to the situation where more than one cause is necessary for an effect to occur. If one or both of the causes are absent, the effect will not transpire. For example, in order to succeed at a task both effort (i.e., internal cause) and task easiness (i.e., external cause) may need to be present.

Another causal schema involves Compensatory Causes. This schema is similar to the Multiple Necessary Causes schema. The latter involves causes combined in an all-or-none fashion whereas the former involves causes combined in a graded fashion. Using the previous example, success at a task may depend upon both effort and task easiness. A compensatory schema would indicate that an actor will be progressively more successful as effort increases or as task easiness increases. If the actor succeeds in the face of a difficult task (i.e., low task easiness) then effort is inferred to be proportionally strong.

Kelley (1971, 1973) also suggested more complicated causal schemata for interpersonal and group effects.

Another procedure available to attributors would be Jones and Davis' (1965) correspondent inference model, which was discussed earlier in the section on Implicit Consensus. In this model perceivers use social desirability information and a non-common effects analysis to infer specific internal causes.

In summary, there are several attribution procedures available to perceivers. The fact that consistency, distinctiveness or consensus was used over half the time in the present study indicates that covariation information may be relatively important to naturalistic

attribution. In particular, Garland, Hardy and Stephenson's (1975) conclusion (discussed earlier) that Kelley's (1967) three information variables lack ecological validity may be incorrect.

It is important to remember that evidence for one model does not weaken the position of the other models. Kelley (1973) stated that future research must address when the various models are most applicable:

> . . . in the context of the last 15 years of thought within social psychology, the notion of a repertoire of thought models is rather radical in its implications. This period has been characterized by proposals that the layman has one model or another and by the attempt to demonstrate the operation of each model. . . . The present conception is, of course, that each and all of these models are reflected in the person's thinking--each at specific (and specifiable) times, and all, over a variety of occasions. . . . The research implications are probably also clear. Our initial problem is not one of proving or disproving the operation of one model or another. Rather it is one of identifying the entire set of models that are commonly or importantly used. Then, we must determine the conditions under which each of the set is evoked and the implications and consequences of its evocation. . . . These problems tend to be lacking in appeal because their answers depend on the specifics of time and place (pp. 118-19).

Naturalistic research may be the method of choice for determining these "specifics of time and place" regarding the use of attribution models. However, laboratory-based research may be the most effective way to study the machinations of each particular model.

### The Underutilization of Consensus Information

Overall, consensus information was significantly (p = 0.0005) underutilized (in terms of perceiver preference) relative to consistency and distinctiveness information in the present sample of advice columns. Among the attributions that used the information types individually,

consensus was also significantly (p = 0.0074) underutilized. These results support the findings of Major (1980), who found that consensus was the least requested of the three information types.

The underrepresentation of consensus occurred even though the definition of consensus was expanded to include both explicit and implicit forms (Kassin 1979a), instead of just the explicit form proposed by Kelley (1967). In view of the expanded definition, it is interesting that consensus was the least preferred of the three information types in the advice columns. The advice columns would seem to be a popular arena for the presentation of generalizations and stereotypes as well as a barometer for current trends, styles and social norms. These types of social data would all seem to be best represented by consensus information.

However, if the advice columns are in fact a forum for the presentation of the values of popular culture, then this may provide an explanation for why consensus information was underrepresented relative to consistency and distinctiveness information. According to Gergen (1968), Western culture is characterized by a "consistency ethic" and there is much social value placed upon personal predictability and consistency in behavior. Individuals are motivated to maintain a consistent self-concept and much importance is placed upon being "true to self." Personal inconsistencies are believed to produce discomfort, and therefore people strive to eliminate such inconsistencies (Festinger 1954). Interpersonally, consistent behavior is reinforced with "trust" and positive evaluations from others.

Both consistency and distinctiveness information refer to the amount of consistency in an individual's behavior, that is, they refer

to the consistency of an individual's behavior over time/situations
and across entities, respectively. Consensus information, on the other
hand, does not provide such personal consistency information since it
does not offer data on an individual's previous behaviors. If there is
a strong emphasis in our culture upon personal consistency, and if the
advice columns are a domain in which behavioral information is pre-
sented, then it is conceivable that perceivers in the advice columns
displayed a bias toward using personal consistency information (e.g.,
consistency and distinctiveness) as opposed to a bias against using con-
sensus information (Schoeneman, Note 2). In addition, the relative im-
portance to attribution of the three information types as they were
used in the advice columns cannot be determined, since the present
method does not permit such an analysis. It cannot be concluded that
consensus information was underutilized, only that it was underrepre-
sented relative to consistency and distinctiveness information.

Even before his model was tested empirically, Kelley (1967) sug-
gested that consistency may be more important than consensus. He
cited theoretical work by Festinger (1950, 1954) in which it was postu-
lated that "physical reality tests take precedence over social reality
information." The use of consensus may be mediated by "side" attribu-
tions regarding the expertness or trustworthiness of the information
source. This could make consensus a somewhat cumbersome information
type to use. Also, Kelley (1967) suggested that consensus may be most
valuable when physical reality information (i.e., consistency) is ab-
sent. In the present study, however, the frequency of consensus used
alone (i.e., without physical reality data) was still less than the
frequency of each other information type.

Some previous research has demonstrated that consistency information is used more than distinctiveness information in terms of affecting the direction of attribution (McArthur 1972; Zuckerman 1978b) and in terms of perceiver preference (Major 1980). It can be argued that consistency is the most economical of the three information variables. High consistency information tells us that either the "person" or the "stimulus" is the causal agent. Low consistency information rules out both the "person" and the "stimulus" as the causal agent simultaneously (i.e., circumstance attribution). Distinctiveness and consensus information, however, implicate only one causal factor at a time, either the "person" or the "stimulus."

The results of the present study do not support the preceding argument. Consistency and distinctiveness information were preferred equally by perceivers in the advice columns, overall and when used individually. It is conceivable that in the advice columns (and perhaps other naturalistic sources), consistency may be implied when distinctiveness is presented. If it is indicated that a person performs a behavior toward many different stimuli, this may imply some consistency in the behavior over time or across situations. Similarly, if a person is described as performing some behavior toward only a single stimulus, then this may imply that in other situations or at other times the person did not perform the behavior. In the advice columns, perceivers often report and attribute behavior in descriptive or everyday language. Pieces of covariation information are sometimes implied or are buried in the verbiage of the advice column letter. Therefore, it is possible that some letters were written in such a way as to

imply consistency information without ever actually reporting it. This may explain why consistency was not used more than distinctiveness, as previous theory and research would predict.

## An Integrated Consensus Variable

In the present sample of advice columns, explicit and implicit types of consensus contributed equally to the overall use of consensus information. This indicates that perceivers choose to present expectations for covariation across actors as well as actual covariation information. In other words, implicit consensus appears to be used for the same purposes as explicit consensus in the advice columns.

To test the predicted relationship between direction of attribution and level of consensus, the pieces of consensus information that were used alone were coded as either high or low while the related attributions were coded as either internal or external. Because consensus was greatly underutilized, only 10 pieces of consensus were available for this analysis. Six of these were explicit and four were implicit. All of these pieces of consensus were in high form and therefore should accompany external attribution. The results were in the predicted direction, although they were only marginally significant (p = 0.0578). A more adequate test of an integrated consensus variable (i.e., both implicit and explicit combined) would require a larger sample as well as a number or pieces of consensus in low form.

In the present study, consensus information was overwhelmingly used in the high form (e.g., much covariation across actors, either expected or observed). Twenty-eight pieces of consensus were high while only two were low (p = 0.000002). Kelley's (1967) covariation

model predicts that high consensus is associated with external or stimulus attribution while low consensus is associated with internal or person attribution.

One possible explanation for the prevalence of high consensus may involve the method used by raters to search for consensus information. The raters were instructed to use the test questions that accompanied each explanatory statement as a guide for conducting an advice column search for the three information variables. The raters were alerted to the possibility that some subtle instances of information may not represent an exact answer to one of the test questions. The following referent behavior can be used as an example:

Bruce enjoyed the movie.

The consensus test question for this behavior would be as follows:

CONSENSUS: How many other people (did, would, should) enjoy the movie?

An instance of consensus information in the advice column might be a direct answer to this question. For example:

HIGH: Many people enjoyed the movie.
LOW:  Few people enjoyed the movie.

However, it could be argued that a valid instance of low consensus might not be a direct answer to the test question. For example:

LOW:  Many people did not enjoy the movie.

This piece of low consensus tells us about how many people did not enjoy the movie, while the test question itself asks about how many people did enjoy the movie. If the raters were using the test questions

literally to guide them in their search for information, it might be argued that they were biased against identifying low covariation pieces of information. This would be true for all three of the information variables.

There are several arguments against this line of reasoning. First, there is no reason why a particular piece of high consensus information should be a direct answer to the test question. In the example above, high consensus might take this form: "Few people did not enjoy the movie." In terms of training, the raters were instructed to use the test questions only as a guide for conducting their searches. As stated earlier, the raters were alerted to the possibility that some subtle examples of information may not directly answer a given test question. The raters were given numerous practice examples involving these types of information and they were trained to use the scoring manual CDCNAC (Appendix B) as a reference. Part IV of this scoring manual contains descriptions and examples of subtle pieces of information that do not directly answer the test questions and yet are still valid and acceptable instances of the three information variables. The raters were also trained to use as a guide the simplified referent components (person verb stimulus) and the definitions derived from them for the three information types. Finally, a review of the reliable pieces of consensus information revealed that two of the 30 items located by the raters constitute valid instances of consensus even though these pieces of information did not directly answer their respective test questions, as described above. For both of these pieces of consensus, all three raters were in agreement.

This indicates that all of the raters were aware of the correct pro-
cedure to follow when confronting such subtle instances of information.

Another explanation for the prevalence of high consensus informa-
tion involves perceiver preference. According to Anderson's (1974)
multiplicative model, consensus information is used specifically to de-
termine the valence of a given stimulus, or in other words, the power
of a stimulus to provoke or elicit behavior from actors. Garland,
Hardy and Stephenson (1975) found that when requests for consensus in-
formation were made by perceivers, they were made significantly more
often under stimulus attribution as opposed to person attribution con-
ditions. Zuckerman (1978b) demonstrated that consensus information ac-
counted for the highest overall percentage of stimulus attributions
relative to consistency and distinctiveness information.

DiVitto and McArthur (1978) conducted a developmental study of
Kelley's (1967) covariation model, and their analysis provides a reason-
able explanation for why consensus information may have been used
almost exclusively in high form in the advice columns. In agreement
with Anderson (1974), DiVitto and McArthur (1978) argued that con-
sensus information provides evidence on the presence or absence of
some causal factor within the target or stimulus of a behavior. High
consensus tells us that the behavior covaries with the stimulus,
which of course leads to a stimulus attribution:



```
Person 1
Person 2
Person 3        Verb——————————Stimulus
Person 4
```
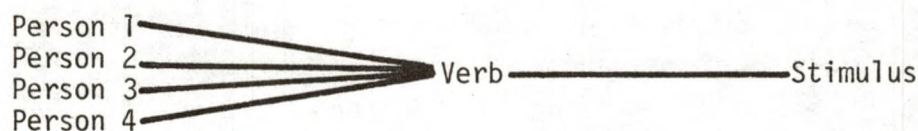
Low consensus tells us only that the behavior does not covary with the
stimulus, and it leads to a person attribution:

Person 1
Person 2
Person 3                                    Verb————————————Stimulus
Person 4
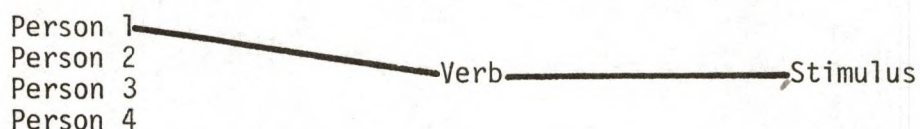
High consensus provides direct covariation evidence for stimulus causal-
ity whereas low consensus requires a second inferential step for person
causality.  With low consensus both the covariation principle and the
discounting principle (Kelley 1971) must be invoked in order to arrive
at a person attribution.  The covariation principle with low consensus
indicates that the stimulus, although present, is not the likely cause
of the behavior.  Since there is another potential causal agent present
(i.e., the person), the discounting principle is used to rule out the
stimulus in favor of the person as the perceived locus of causality.
Using consensus information to make a stimulus attribution (i.e., a one-
step analysis using covariation evidence) is a much simpler cognitive
task than using consensus information to make a person attribution
(i.e., a two-step analysis using covariation evidence plus the dis-
counting principle).  A similar analysis of distinctiveness information
can be performed to show why person attribution is a more simple task
than stimulus attribution.

In view of the increasing cognitive complexity of covariation-
based attribution as compared to discounting-based attribution,
DiVitto and McArthur (1978) hypothesized that there should be age
related trends in the use of the latter.  Various test behaviors along
with consistency, distinctiveness and consensus information were pre-
sented in the form of stories and pictures.  First, third and sixth
graders as well as college students were the subjects.  The results

indicated that younger subjects did not use consensus and distinctive-
ness to make person and target attributions, respectively (i.e., dis-
counting), but older subjects were able to. Almost all the subjects
were able to use the covariation principle to make attributions.

The overwhelming use of high as opposed to low consensus in the
advice columns suggests that perceivers were using consensus information
in its least ambiguous form. It is possible that perceivers prefer to
support their attributions with information about what other people do
or would do instead of what other people do not or would not do. Heider
(1958) might argue that perceivers in the advice columns were attempting
to make common-sense in the simplest and most straightforward manner.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SCORING MANUAL:  EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS IN THE ADVICE COLUMNS

# SCORING MANUAL: EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS IN THE ADVICE COLUMNS

## Introduction

The purpose of the study we are about to undertake is to describe people's explanations for their own and others' behaviors, characteristics, and so on. More specifically, we are interested in "why" explanations, notions about why someone acted in a certain way or why a person is the way he or she is. Advice columns will be our hunting ground, since they offer "naturally-occurring" data; when people write in to describe problems, and when the columnist gives advice, we may find explanations of behavior and persons embedded in these communications. The advantage of such naturalistic data is that they are very generalizable to social reality, that is, they are usually more representative of the complexities of social behavior and less artificial than data that come from a psychological test or laboratory task.

Naturalistic sources also present some difficulties. It is not easy to derive usable data from them (compared to questionnaires and lab measures) because they are so complex. In order to reduce complex materials to a form that is more easily grasped and utilized, investigators devise coding formats. These are sets of instructions which guide two kinds of activity. First, it is necessary to separate the wheat from the chaff, that is, to separate the things you want to study from the mass of irrelevant details. In our case, we need to find explanatory statements in advice columns. After the phenomena of interest have been isolated and identified, the investigator will want to characterize them further. He or she will devise a set of categories and ask a judge or rater to look at materials (such as a set of explanatory statements from advice columns) and make decisions about which categories they fit into most closely.

The coding formats will not be very useful, however, unless they are reliable. Reliability is an indication of the extent to which a measure (such as a coding scheme) yields the same result each time it is used. There are different types of realiability, but one of the most important for coding formats is interjudge or interrater reliability. If we devise a method to find explanations in advice columns and to characterize them, and then ask three people to use the method on the same set of letters and replies, will they all end up with the same set of results? If they did, we would have good interrater reliability; we would be confident that when they use our instrument, different observers see the same things. If interrater reliability is poor, however, we could have any number of problems. Our coding scheme may not describe the naturalistic materials very well, or it may be hard to apply consistently because the instructions or categories are vague. Or, our raters may not be familiar enough with the measure to use it well; they could be well-trained but fatigued; they may have particular idiosyncratic biases when they make ratings.

The purpose of this scoring manual is to describe how to use a coding method for explanatory statements in advice columns as precisely as possible. This should help to reduce error due to the instrument itself. Error due to raters' usage of the instrument will be reduced by careful training and monitoring of observers. If we can reliably isolate and describe explanatory statements in advice columns, we will have a gold mine of information on the ways in which people account for important facets of their daily life.

## Part I: Finding Explanatory Statements

### Definitions

Our first job is to scour the advice columns for explanatory statements. People make explanatory statements when they mention a behavior (or set of behaviors) or a personal trait or a social role or a temporary personal state and then explain it in some way by citing a cause, purpose, reason, intention, source, determinant, and so on. In a sense, explanatory statements are some form of a "because" statement.

Here are some examples of explanatory statements. Some are fairly straightforward, but others are not so obvious.

EXAMPLE 1: "She wants to be pregnant again because she believes it will be a valuable 'learning experience' for her children."

EXAMPLE 2: "For business reasons I cannot be seen in public with my lover."

EXAMPLE 3: "This morning your column made me see red."

EXAMPLE 4: "Kathy's self-righteousness is beginning to get to me."

Components of explanatory statements. Explanatory statements contain two parts: an explanation and what is being explained. The former we will call an explanation and the latter a referent. No matter what they look like in raw or natural form, explanatory statements can be reduced to the form "referent because explanation" (for example, "I hit him because he hit me"). Now we will take a closer look at referents and explanations, and define them further.

What are referents? Another way of phrasing this question is to ask what kinds of things people try to explain in their daily lives. For our purposes, we can identify five types of referents:

1. Personal and interpersonal behaviors (actions, reactions, things people do)
2. Personal and interpersonal traits (enduring characteristics or dispositions; labels for behaviors which are very consistent across time and situations; consistent behavior that is determined from within)

3.  Personal and interpersonal <u>states</u> (more-or-less temporary modes of being or conditions of existence)
4.  Social (interpersonal) <u>roles</u> (patterns of behavior shaped by external social situations or influences, not by internal behaviors, states or traits)
5.  Impersonal <u>situations</u> (the external world or environment; settings or external conditions)

Table 1 on the next page clarifies types of referents further by giving examples. Although the distinctions between types is sometime subtle, we will not really be concerned with them at this point; our job is to <u>find</u> explanatory statements, which will contain all sorts of referents. There is only one distinction which will concern us now, the distinction between situations and all other types of referents. <u>We will not be looking for explanations of situations; we will be concerned only with personal and interpersonal referents (states, traits, roles and behaviors)</u>. An easy way to keep this distinction in mind is to use two memory aids:  STROBE (for <u>s</u>tates, <u>t</u>raits, <u>r</u>oles and <u>be</u>haviors) and "Don't sit" (<u>Don't</u> worry about <u>sit</u>uational referents).

There are also different kinds of explanations. Again, we are concerned now only with finding explanations, not classifying them. I list types of explanations only to give you an idea of what to look for. There are two general kinds of explanations. The first is <u>mechanical or lawful cause-and-effect</u>, the notion that a current event was caused by some preceding occurrence in a regularly-observable manner (for instance, the direction and speed of billiard ball B was caused by the way billiard ball A hit it). Some examples:  He's a minister because of his upbringing; I hit you because I had a seizure; he is talkative because he is insecure. The second kind of explanation is <u>purpose or justification</u>, in which STROBEs are explained by referring to their purpose or intention (I hit you because I wanted to hurt you) or by citing some justification (He talks because he has good things to say; he is a minister because it was right for him).

To sum up, then, the explanatory statements we will be seeking will include something that is being explained (a <u>referent</u>) and an <u>explanation</u>. The referents we are interested in are behaviors, traits, roles and states. The explanations will cite cause-and-effect or purposes and justifications.

<u>Forms of explanatory statements</u>. As we said above, explanatory statements contain referents and explanations, and they can be reduced to the form of "referent because explanation." However, not all explanatory statements in their raw or natural forms will conform to this model to begin with. In this section we will consider various "raw types" of explanatory statement.

1. <u>Straight "referent because explanation."</u> This is the simplest and most obvious form of explanatory statement. Recall EXAMPLE 1:  "She wants to be pregnant again because she believes it will be a valuable 'learning experience' for her children."

Table 1

Types of Referents

| | Behaviors | Traits | States | Roles | Situations |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Definition | Actions, reactions, things people do. | Enduring characteristics or dispositions; labels for behaviors which are very consistent across time and situations and which are determined from within. | More-or-less temporary modes of being or conditions of existence. | Patterns of behavior shaped by external social situations or influences, not by internal behaviors, traits, or states. | The external world or environment; settings or external conditions. |
| Examples: | I went to the store. | I am bashful. | I am hungry. | I am a Democrat. | The world is a funny place. |
| | You are writing a letter. | You have always been friendly. | You are not usually this anxious. | You were a student. | The room was cold. |
| | Jack fell down. | Jill is a careful person. | Jack is alive and well. | Jill is a wife. | North Dakota is sunny. |
| | We went to school. | We are a quarrelsome pair. | We are married. | We are Jaycees. | The university is ivy-covered. |
| | The glee club sang 10 songs. | The Senate is lazy. | The university is hurting financially. | Parents are teachers. | My office is small. |

2. The "because explanation referent" variant. Sometimes people put the cart before the horse in explanatory statements so that referents follow rather than precede explanations. EXAMPLE 1 could be reworded in this form: "Because she believes it would be a valuable learning experience for her children, she wants to be pregnant again."

3. "Because" variations. "Because" can be said in a number of ways, using alternative wordings or synonyms. For instance: I'll get it, since I'm up; he can't talk, for he is busy; I think, therefore I am (that is, I am because I think); and EXAMPLE 2, "For business reasons I cannot be seen in public with my lover." Notice how subtle some of these examples compared to straight "because" statements. As we go down the list of explanatory statement forms, they become harder to detect and less obvious.

4. Implicit "because" statements. Sometimes explanatory statements are worded in such a way that "because" or its synonyms are left out or unnecessary. For instance, referents and explanations can be connected by the conjunction "and": It was cold out and I wore my heavy coat. The "and" could be dropped, too: It was cold out; I wore my heavy coat. Or, It was cold out. I wore my heavy coat. In addition, there are often "becauses" lurking in what appear to be simple statements; consider EXAMPLE 3, "This morning your column made me see red," and EXAMPLE 4, "Kathy's self-righteousness is beginning to get to me." All of these examples could be reworded in "referent because explanation" form: I wore my heavy coat because it was cold out; I saw red this morning because of your column; I am beginning to be 'got to' (bugged) because Kathy is self-righteous.

5. Implicit referent plus explicit explanation. Occasionally you will find, if you look carefully, explanations that have no explicit referent STROBEs. When this happens, it means that the referent is part of the context of the letter or reply. Here is an example: A woman writes in complaining that she found dirty pictures in her husband's desk. She describes all the horrors she discovered, and states her negative feelings on pornography. She notes that her husband says it's fun and does nobody harm, and then asks the advice columnist who is right and what to do about it. End of example. Did you find the explanation? It is "it's fun and does nobody harm." The referent, which is not explicitly stated, is "he collects dirty pictures" or "he thinks it is OK to have such filth." This referent is given in the context of the letter.

In summary, then, explanatory statements can be very obvious or quite obscure. In order to be able to find them reliably, you will need to know the following fairly well:

1. Definitions of referent, explanation and explanatory statement.

2. Types of referents and explanations.

3. The five forms of explanatory statements.

Thus, your first job is to study this "Definitions" section until you think you understand it.


## Instructions for Finding Explanatory Statements

You will be given a number of typewritten letters and replies from advice columns. Each letter + reply will have an ID number; paragraphs in each will be numbered in sequence (1, 2, 3, . . .). For each rating session, you will work on a packet of five letters and replies. Raters will work in pairs, at first independent of each other while locating explanatory statements, and then together in order to produce reliable statements. This section describes the work of finding explanatory statements.

Step 1. Take a letter + reply and read it through once for familiarity.

Step 2. Now start the letter again. Look at the first paragraph carefully; read it more than once; don't go on to the next paragraph until you are satisfied that you have located all explanatory statements or that there are none contained in the paragraph.

General strategy: Look for explanations first. When you search a paragraph for explanatory statements, evaluate each sentence or phrase as a possible explanation, that is, as an implicit or explicit "because" statement having to do with cause-and-effect or purpose/justification (review the section on Components of explanatory statements above). If you think you've found an explanation, then look for its referent (STROBEs only; remember, "Don't sit"). You will use this strategy because, after much trial-and-error, we have found it to be the best way to locate explanatory statements. There are other strategies, but they all have flaws: (1). You could search for the word "because." Unfortunately, this simple strategy will catch only the most obvious explanatory statements and miss many others that have "because" variations or implicit "becauses" (review the section on Forms of explanatory statements above). (2). You could widen your search to include "because" variations (since, for, and therefore, etc.), but there are many synonyms for "because" and they frequently have more than one meaning (e.g., "since" also refers to a time period, as in "since last Thursday"); you would also miss implicit "becauses." (3). Finally, you could look for possible referents (that is, notice any time a behavior, trait, state or role is mentioned) and then look to see if they are explained. This is inefficient, since many STROBEs are not explained; this strategy would also miss those explanatory statements which have implicit referents and explicit explanations.

To repeat, then, the strategy of choice for locating explanatory statements is to look for explanations first, referents second.

Step 3. When you have located an explanatory statement, record it on a Finder's Sheet (see the next page).

a. Put down the letter + reply ID number, the paragraph number, and your name.

b. Under Statement Excerpt, write down a direct quotation of the section from the paragraph that you have identified as an explanatory statement.

c. Under Statement Reformulation, interpret the explanation as you see it by rewording it into explicit "referent because explanation" form. Two examples are given on the sample Finder's Sheet on the next page.

Step 4. Go through each paragraph in the above fashion until the letter is completed.

## Instructions for Rater Agreement

As mentioned above, raters will work in pairs. You and your partner will receive an identical set of five letters in any one rating session. You will each search for explanatory statements independently, as outlined in the previous section. Then, when you are both finished, you will get together to compare notes, so that the final set of explanatory statements that you hand in will be those that you both agreed on. This section describes the procedure for rater agreement.

Step 1. Look at the first paragraph of the first letter + reply.

1a. If you both agree that there was no explanatory statement in this paragraph, go on to the next paragraph.

1b. If you both agree that there was an explanatory statement (or more than one) in this paragraph, compare your Finder's Sheets.

1). if you both put down the same (or very similar) Statement Excerpts, and if your Statement Reformulations are basically similar, circle the "A" next to Disposition at the bottom of each of your Finder's Sheets, staple or clip them together, and go on to the next paragraph.

2). if there is a major disagreement (e.g., different Statement Excerpts or Reformulations) proceed as in Step 1c below.

1c. If you and your partner disagree (one of you finds an explanatory statement but the other doesn't, or you both found different Statement Excerpts, or you disagree about the Statement Reformulations), discuss the disagreement and try to resolve it within one minute.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS IN THE ADVICE COLUMNS:   FINDER'S DHEET

Letter #___5___   Paragraph #___1___   Rater___U. Judge_____

1.  Statement Excerpt:__"For business reasons I cannot be seen in___

____public with my lover."_____

_____

2.  Statement Reformulation:

REFERENT_____I can't be seen in public with my lover._____

_____

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION___of business reasons_____

_____

Disposition (circle one):   A      AI      AE      D
**********************************************************************

Letter #___5___     Paragraph #___2___     Rater___U. Judge_____

1.  Statement Excerpt:____"Kathy's self-righteousness is beginning___

____to get to me."_____

_____

2.  Statement Reformulation:

REFERENT_____I am beginning to be bugged (got to)._____

_____

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION___Kathy is self-righteous._____

_____

Disposition (circle one):    A      AI      AE      D

1). start timing a minute _after_ you have located the disagreement; don't include discussion of _whether_ there is a disagreement in the minute.

2). Note:  when discussing disagreements, maintain an open but skeptical outlook.  Do _not_ give in to your partner every time there is a disagreement.  _Do_ give in if you see your partner's argument as reasonable and justified.  Your job in this discussion of disagreements is to ensure that the final sample of explanatory statements is a good, reliable sample.

3). by the time a minute is up:  if you both agree to include a statement that one of you missed, or if you agree that one of your Statement Excerpts or Reformulations should be revised, then take the _correct_ Finder's Sheet (make up a new one if you need to) and circle "AI" under _Disposition_; take the _incorrect_ Finder's Sheet(s), put a big "X" across it, and staple or clip it to the back of the correct sheet.

4). by the time one minute is up:  if you both agree to exclude or drop an explanatory statement that one of you found, circle "AE" on the relevant Finder's Sheet.

5). if you cannot resolve a disagreement by the time a minute is up, circle "D" on the relevant Finder's Sheet(s).

6). Note:  keep two piles of Finder's Sheets:  one for those marked A or AI, one for those marked AE or D.

   _Step 2_.  Go through each letter + reply on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis until you have completed the packet.

## Part II: Classifying Explanatory Statements

When you read this, Part I of this study (Finding Explanatory Statements) will be finished, providing us with a sample of statements of the form "REFERENT because EXPLANATION." Recall that the referent is some personal or interpersonal event which a perceiver might seek to explain (e.g., a behavior, trait, mood, interpersonal relationship, etc.), and that an explanation is the perceiver's notion about the cause, purpose, justification, or reason of the perceived event. In sum, we have a sample of explanatory statements that include what is being explained as well as how it is being accounted for.

What, then, do we do with such a sample? Part II of this study is concerned with classifying explanatory statements: Now that we have a number of explanatory statements, what are they like, how are they put together? Whose "personal events" are being explained? What kinds of explanations are being used? These are the kinds of questions we wish to ask.

In order to answer these questions, we will (as in Part I) devise a coding format, train some people how to use it, and assess the reliability of our coding format by looking at agreement between raters.

### A. Identifying and Categorizing Subject Persons in Referents

The first task is to answer a "Who?" question: Who is the person (or persons) whose behavior, mood, personality or other characteristic is being explained? Remember that explanatory statements are of the form "REFERENT because EXPLANATION." We are asking about the referent: Who is the subject in an explanatory statement's referent? Some personal or interpersonal event is being explained; whose is it?

First, let's discuss the ratings that need to be made and how to make them. Then we will consider the problem of interrater agreement.

### Making Ratings

Identifying referent subjects. Each explanatory statement that you will examine for subject persons will be printed on a separate 8-1/2 x 11" sheet of paper. Each explanatory statement has its own code number (e.g., 5A-P3-1 3T) which is printed in the top right corner of the sheet. An explanatory statement appears on each sheet first in "raw" form, as an excerpt from an advice column letter or reply: then it will be given in the "refined" form of "REFERENT because EXPLANATION." So these are the materials you will be rating. An example is given on the next page.

You will make your ratings on the "Referent Subject Rating Sheet" (see the page after the next).

## REFERENT SUBJECT RATING SHEET

Statement Code: _____

Referent Subject_____      Self      Other(s)      Both

---

Statement Code: _____

Referent Subject_____      Self      Other(s)      Both

---

Statement Code: _____

Referent Subject_____      Self      Other(s)      Both

---

Statement Code: _____

Referent Subject_____      Self      Other(s)      Both

---

Statement Code: _____

Referent Subject_____      Self      Other(s)      Both

---

Statement Code: _____

Referent Subject_____      Self      Other(s)      Both

---

Statement Code: _____

Referent Subject_____      Self      Other(s)      Both

---

Statement Code: _____

Referent Subject_____      Self      Other(s)      Both

---

Statement Code: _____

Referent Subject_____      Self      Other(s)      Both

She wants to be pregnant again because she believes it will be a valuable "learning experience" for her children.


REFERENT:        She wants to be pregnant again

                 BECAUSE

EXPLANATION:     she believes it will be a valuable "learning experience"
                 for her children.

First, fill in the code number of the explanatory statement you are working on.

Next, fill in the blank after the words "Referent Subject." Here's how to do this. Your job is to look at an explanatory statement (REFERENT because EXPLANATION) and decide whose personal or interpersonal events (in the referent) are being explained. Many of these referent subjects will be obvious; examples 1-7 in Table 2 are fairly obvious.

There are, however, some less obvious cases. Let's consider some of them.

1. Passive voice. Some referents are phrased in the passive rather than the active voice. An example of passive phrasing is example 8 (Table 2): "He should not be blamed for his misdeed." Is the referent subject "he," or is it the unnamed person or persons doing the blaming? As a rule of thumb, when you encounter the passive voice, translate it into some form of active phrasing (e.g., "The blamer/s should not blame him for his misdeed") and identify the grammatical subject (actor, doer) of the active sentence as the referent subject (thus, fill in "blamer/s" under Referent Subject).

2. Imperative mood. Referents may sometimes be requests or commands, as in example 9 in Table 2: "Tell me what to do." The imperative mood implies a "you": the example is short for "(You) tell me what to do." As another rule of thumb, with imperative forms, the implicit "you" is the referent subject (thus, fill in "you" for this example's Referent Subject).

3. Dangling participle. Whenever you encounter a construction like example 10, Table 2 ("Going to his house would be unfair to his wife") you have a participle that has no clear connection to a word it supposedly modifies. You should immediately ask "Who would be going to his house?" Then you can consider who the referent subject is.

4. Direct and indirect objects as referent subjects. As you may have noticed, referent subjects are quite often the grammatical subjects of the sentence that is the referent (i.e., subject verb object). There will be some cases, however, where it will be more prudent to identify the direct or indirect object of a referent as the referent subject. Consider example 11 (Table 2): "The abortion issue burns me up (because . . .)." What is being explained here? Certainly not the behavior, personality or affect of an issue: it is more likely that "my" anger over the issue is being accounted for. Thus, the referent subject is "me." We can make this a little more complex: suppose I say, "Jane burns me up (because . . .)." I could conceivably be trying to explain Jane's behavior ("Jane burns me up because

Table 2

Examples of Referent Subjects

| REFERENT | REFERENT SUBJECT[a] | R.S. CATEGORY[b] |
|---|---|---|
| 1. She can't do a thing with her hair. | She | Other(s) |
| 2. I'm at my wits' end. | I | Self |
| 3. You should say no to her. | You | Other(s) |
| 4. Johnny is never on time. | Johnny | Other(s) |
| 5. We can't get alone. | We | Both |
| 6. Several people called us. | Several people | Other(s) |
| 7. Our marriage is on the rocks. | Our marriage | Both |
| 8. He should not be blamed for his misdeed. | Blamer/s | Other(s) |
| 9. Tell me what to do. | You | Other(s) |
| 10. Going to his house would be unfair to his wife. | * | * |
| 11. The abortion issue burns me up. | Me | Self |
| 12. He said she is a snob. | * | Other(s) |

[a]The terms in this column are the ones you would write in after the words "Referent Subject" on your rating sheet.

[b]The terms in this column are the ones you would circle on your rating sheet. Remember that there are three possible choices: Self, Other(s), and Both.

*These are ambiguous examples. See pages 119 and 121 for discussions of these problems.

she likes to see me lose my cool") or I could be explaining my own emotions as caused by an external force ("Jane burns me up because she is so stuck-up"). This can get somewhat ambiguous and may depend, in part, on how you see the referent in relation to its context (the entire explanatory statement). As such, this case resembles the following type of nonobvious example.

5. Two or more possible subjects. Sometimes a referent will be worded in such a way as to have two or more plausible subjects, and it will not necessarily be clear which is the real subject. Look at the example 12 (Table 2): "He said she is a snob." Who is the subject? Is it the "he" who is saying something ("he said it because . . ."), or is it the "she" whose personality is in question ("she is a snob because . . .")? The answer may lie in the explanation. If the full explanatory statement is "He said she is a snob because he was upset," then "he" seems to be the correct subject. If it is, "He said she is a snob because she always ignores blue-collar workers," then "she" is apparently the more appropriate subject. But if the statement is "He said she is a snob because she insulted him," the subject is still ambiguous and you have to make an educated guess.

Categorizing referent subjects. After you fill in the blank following "Referent Subject," the last rating task is to circle one of the three choices which describe the referent subject: self, other(s), or both (see the Referent Subject Rating Sheet).

Self is the appropriate choice if the referent subject is also the author of the explanatory statement. If the writer is explaining himself or herself, the referent subject will be "I" or "me" or some equivalent. You should therefore circle "Self" (see examples 2 and 11, Table 2).

Other(s) is the appropriate choice if the author is accounting for a referent subject who is another person or other persons. If the referent subject is a you, he, she, they or equivalent (Mr. Jones, the Smiths, Joe, etc.), circle "Other(s)" (see examples 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 12 in Table 2).

The both category is for "we" and "us." Whenever the referent subject includes both the author/self and at least one other person, circle "Both" (see examples 5 and 7 in Table 2).

## Interrater Agreement

Referent subjects will be identified by a pair of raters. When each individual rater has completed rating all of the explanatory statements, the two will compare their ratings.

The rating team should go through each explanatory statement and compare notes. Whenever there is disagreement about a referent subject

of any kind (identity of subject, category, or both), raters should discuss it and resolve it one way or the other. For instance, consider "He said she is a snob": suppose one rater identifies "he" as the subject and the other rater identifies "she," but both circle "Other(s)." These two raters would discuss this until they reached agreement on whether "he" or "she" is the subject. Since they agree on the category of "Other(s)," this needs no discussion.

There is no time limit for discussion and resolution of disagreements.

When there is a disagreement and a resolution is reached, use a red pen or marker to correct the incorrect rating. (Obviously, raters should not make their initial ratings in red.)

When all ratings are compared and completed, turn in both raters' Referent Subject Rating Sheets, with corrections noted in red.

### B. Components of Referents

What kinds of personal events do people seek to explain? In order to answer this question, we will look at referents and sort them into various categories. Our first job will be to define the kinds of components; then we will discuss how to use these definitions to categorize referents.

## Definitions

Overview. Before defining the categories explicitly, let's take a look at the broad structure of the classification system (see Table 3 on the following page). There three large categories which organize eight smaller categories: the three are (a) Enduring Personal Characteristics, (b) Transient Personal Characteristics, and (c) Contextual Characteristics. Next, there are eight smaller categories distributed among the three larger categories (see Table 3). These smaller categories are the ones you will actually use in classifying referents. Finally, after a referent is assigned to one of the eight classifications, you will further characterize it as prescriptive or descriptive (see below).

Thus, there are three levels of classification, although you will actually use two. The first level of three large categories helps you to organize your thinking and narrow your search among smaller categories. The second involves selecting one of the eight smaller categories as best fitting the referent. The third level is an either-or choice: it's either descriptive or prescriptive.

Now, let's define the various categories more explicitly. Use Table 4 (page 125) as a guide.

1. The first large category is Enduring Personal Characteristics. As the title suggests, this large category deals with events which are (a) personal, that is, referring to individual persons (including oneself) rather than to interpersonal relationships or personal situations, and (b) relatively long-term, enduring characteristics. We use the term "relatively" because there are few (if any) personal characteristics that cannot change over the long run. Some are, however, more enduring than others. Social identities, personal dispositions and physical characteristics are generally more enduring than moods and emotions, single behaviors, and drives or motives. Let's look more closely at the small categories encompassed by Enduring Personal Characteristics.

First, there are social identity elements. These are categories or groups to which a person is socially recognized as belonging, and cover behavior that is consistent and determined socially, that is, by forces external to the person. These include such universal social

Table 3

Classification System for Referents


Enduring Personal Characteristics

      Social Identity Elements

      Personal Dispositions

      Physical Characteristics

Transient Personal Characteristics

      Behaviors                          Descriptive/Prescriptive

      Affective States

      Motivational States

Contextual Characteristics

      Interpersonal Relationships

      Personal Situations[a]


[a]This category was added _after_ raters had used the previous seven categories to classify referents.  Its addition is due to our finding that a number of referents did not fit any of the previous categories, but all seemed to refer to a person's current, past or future situation. We have added it here and in our manual for future users of this classification system.

Table 4

Examples of Categories of Referents

| | Descriptive | Prescriptive |
|---|---|---|
| Social Identity | He is a Mormon because . . . | He ought to be a Jaycee because . . . |
| Personal Disposition | She is aggressive because . . . | Be patient because . . . |
| Physical Characteristic | You are muscular because . . . | He should be thin because . . . |
| Behavior | I was fighting because . . . | You should have kept trying because . . . |
| Affective State | We were ecstatic because . . . | Stop being depressed because . . . |
| Motivational State | I want your advice because . . . | She shouldn't be thirsty because . . . |
| Interpersonal Relationship | Our marriage is very good because . . . | The party should have been a success because . . . |
| Personal Situation | I live in Oregon because . . . | I shouldn't come in for such abuse because . . . |

statuses as sex, age, occupation, social class, and so on; membership groups, including ethnic, religious, political, racial, and interest groups; and social labels, like alcoholic (used as a noun), thief, philanthropist, doctor, lawyer and Indian chief. There may be some overlap between social identity elements and personal dispositions (see below) that are social in nature (e.g., "martyr" vs. "self-sacrificing"), so be alert.

Second, there are personal dispositions, traits or behavioral tendencies. These are abstract labels for behaviors which are consistent over time and across situations, and which are determined from within the person, i.e., by an inferred personality structure or process. Dispositions often take the form of adjectives (e.g., outgoing, friendly, sneaky) and nouns (e.g., Don Juan, snake, extrovert). We have already noted that there is a fine line between trait nouns and social identities; you will have to use your judgment and the definitions of the two categories when you make your rating. Be careful not to confuse less enduring characteristics (like affects, behaviors and motivational states) with enduring dispositions. Examples: "she's depressed" (affect) vs. "she's depressive" (disposition); "he was outgoing at the party" (behavior) vs. "he's an outgoing guy" (disposition); "he was hungry" (motivational state) vs. "he's a hungry type" (disposition).

Finally, there are physical characteristics, which include relatively long-term aspects of physique, appearance and so on (e.g., muscular, fat, handsome). Do not include short-term physical aspects like manifestations of mood ("he blushed"), behavior ("she was out of breath from running") or motives ("his stomach was growling"); note that this and the previous two examples would all be classified as behaviors; see below.

2. The large category of Transient Personal Characteristics is like the first large category in that it deals with events that refer to individual persons and not to interpersonal or impersonal situations. It is unlike the first large category in that it deals with relatively short-term characteristics, personal events which have a perceivable beginning and end (or at least an inferrable beginning and a foreseeable finish). Transient events have a kind of on/off quality that enduring events don't seem to have. Let us consider the three kinds of Transient Personal Characteristics.

First, there are behaviors. Behaviors are actions and personal occurrences, things people do. There are many modalities of behaviors, including perceptual ("He saw the sign"), cognitive/ideational ("He thought . . .", "She imagined . . ."), motoric ("She ran"; "She picked the book up"), reflexive/involuntary ("her stomach growled"; "He tripped and fell"), verbal ("He said . . ."; "She yelled") and interpersonal ("They danced"). We are looking for accounts of past, present or future behaviors that do not make a leap into abstraction and infer enduring statuses and dispositions ("He runs" vs. "He is a runner"; "She was friendly to me" vs. "She is friendly"). Note that

qualifiers like "always" and "never" do not a disposition make. "He always runs" is still a behavior, but "He is a mover" comments on the person himself.

Next we have affective states. These are moods, emotions and feelings ("I felt good"; "She was mad"; "You'll be sorry"). Note that we are talking about mood and emotional states and not behaviors that accompany them. If I say "He was sad and he cried," the first part is an affective state and the second is a behavior. Also, affective states are more or less transient; anything that sounds like an emotion or has emotional overtones but refers to a stable disposition is either a social identity or a personal disposition (compare "She is depressed" with "She is a mental case of psychotic depression" or "She is depressive").

Finally, there are motivational states. These are needs, drives, motives and intentions, all of which are states which are terminated or alleviated, at least temporarily or partially, upon attaining some goal or end. Motivations can be physiological ("he is hungry"), psychological ("He wants to be effective"), or interpersonal ("She needed a hug"). Motviations can be chronic, as in the hunger of a starving man, but they always have some potential finish that could alleviate or terminate the state. Again, if motives are described as enduring, not in the sense of chronic, but as a social identity ("She's a beggar") or personal disposition ("She's dependent"), then they are not really motives.

3. The last of the three large categories is Contextual Characteristics. These are events that refer to contexts or situations, which may be interpersonal (a marriage, a date, a crowd) or personal (a life situation, a personal space). There are two smaller categories of Contextual Characteristics.

First, we have interpersonal relationships. This refers to a situation involving more than one person in some kind of relationship. It does not refer to identities, dispositions, behaviors, motives, etc., of individuals in a group. In other words, a "we" does not automatically signify an interpersonal relationship. Consider this: "We are married. Our relationship is on the rocks. We fight all the time. We are both sad a lot." The first two sentences refer to interpersonal relationships, the third to behaviors (of two people) and the last to their affect states.

Second, there are personal situations. These involve a person's context or existence in a particular setting, environment or place. The emphasis is not on someone doing, feeling, having a role, etc., in a particular situation, but on the situation itself. Consider this: "The university is my home." You could conceivably rate this as a behavior ("being at" a place, making a home), but the person is really describing his or her situation. Contrast this example with the following: "I am a student at the university" (social identity;

"I attend classes at the university" (behavior); and "I feel at home at the university" (affective state).

OK, we have now defined two of the three levels of categories of referents:  the three large categories and the eight smaller categories.  Let's look at the third level.

A referent can be presented in two ways, regardless of whether it is a social identity, personal disposition, physical characteristic, behavior, affective state, motivational state, interpersonal relationship or personal situation.  The first is the descriptive mode:  a behavior, mood, situation, disposition, etc., is described, characterized, portrayed, interpreted.  The second mode is prescriptive:  events are accompanied by shoulds, oughts and their equivalents.  Thus:  "He saw a doctor" vs. "He should have seen a doctor"; "She will never consent to it" vs. "She must never consent to it"; "I am running" vs. "I ought to be running."  Note that occasionally a "should" is implied or unstated: "See a doctor" is equivalent to "You should see a doctor."

One last note before we consider how to classify referents.  The eight smaller categories and the descriptive/prescriptive distinction refer equally to past, present and future events.  Thus, it makes no difference if he ran, he is running, he will run, he should have run, he should be running, or he ought to run tomorrow.  They are all in the category of behaviors; some are descriptive, some are prescriptive. The verb tense is irrelevant.

## Instructions for Classifying Components

Two raters will work on the task of classifying referents.  The first part of the job is to make individual ratings.  The second is to compare notes, and come to an agreement in cases where the two raters disagree.

Making ratings.  Individual raters should, of course, be very familiar with the categories that they will use.  So this is a rater's first responsibility.

Raters will receive a set of explanatory statements from advice columns, each one on a separate sheet.  Each sheet will contain the following information:  (a) an excerpt from the advice column which contains an explanatory statement; (b) a reformulation of the explanatory statement into "REFERENT because EXPLANATION" form; and (c) an indication of whose behavior, mood, etc. is contained in the referent.

Ratings will be marked on the "Referents Rating Sheet."  This form contains (a) a blank for the code number of the explanatory statement being rated; (b) a listing of the eight smaller categories to be used to classify the referent; and (c) a choice between "descriptive" and "prescriptive" for the referent.

The first step is to write down the code number of the explanatory statement you are working on. Now look at the referent. Decide which of the eight categories it best fits, and circle the appropriate choice. If a referent is compound, that is, if it covers two categories or more (e.g., "He is a friendly Democrat"; "She was happy and did an impromptu dance"), circle the appropriate choices.

Next decide whether the referent is in the descriptive or prescriptive mode. Circle the D or P located beneath the category (or categories) you selected above.

Comparing notes. After the raters have completed all excerpts, they will go through their "Referents Rating Sheets" and compare notes. Whenever there is a disagreement of any kind, raters should discuss it and resolve it one way or the other. There is no time limit for this discussion and resolution.

When there is disagreement and resolution, use a red pen or marker to correct the incorrect rating. (Do not make your initial ratings in red.) When all ratings are compared and completed, turn in both raters' "Referents Rating Sheets," with corrections noted in red.

C. Components of Explanations:  Locus and Stability

In the preceding section we sorted referents into various cate-
gories.  Now we will turn our attention to the other half of an ex-
planatory statement:  the explanation.

We are interested in two characteristics of explanations.  First,
when a cause is cited, is it located internal to the actor, in some ex-
ternal circumstances, or in some relationship the actor has with another
person?  Second, is the cause stable (enduring) or unstable (variable)?
The first part of this section is concerned with locus of causation,
and the second with stability of causes.

1.  Locus of causation

This study is interested in the causes people give for what we
have termed personal events.  The referents of all of our explanatory
statements are personal events, and in the previous section of this
manual we said that there were eight categories of referents:  social
identities, personal dispositions, physical characteristics, behaviors,
affective states, motivational states, interpersonal relationships,
and personal situations.  Thus, we are looking at explanations of a
person's (or persons') behaviors, moods, etc.  We will call this person
the actor.  (Note that we are not concerned, at this point, about the
identity of the person who is offering the explanation; we are inter-
ested in the person who is being explained.)

One way of categorizing explanations refers to locus of causa-
tion.  This is illustrated in Table 5.  Let's look at each type of
causal explanation more closely.

Explanations can focus on some process or characteristic internal
to the actor.  That is, the actor's personal events are seen as due to
something which is inseparable from the actor, something about the ac-
tor, something inherent in the actor.  All of the following could be
cited as internal causes:  abilities and capacities, efforts, motiva-
tions, enduring personal characteristics (including traits, roles,
physique, temperament, etc.), and transient psychological states (in-
cluding behaviors and affects).  Examples are given in Table 5.

Explanations can, alternatively, emphasize events external to
the actor.  Personal events can be seen as caused not by the actor but
by the situation or circumstances or other people.  The following are
examples of external explanations:  task difficulty, characteristics
of the physical setting, coercion, social influence, outside interven-
tion, accident, chance, luck, and so on.

There is a third kind of explanation which involves interper-
sonal factors.  The reason or cause for some personal event can be

Table 5

Examples of Three Types of Locus of Causation

| INTERNAL | EXTERNAL | INTERPERSONAL |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ..because he has a tremendous capacity for work. | ..because the job was so simple. | ..because my wife doesn't love me any more |
| ..because she is intelligent. | ..because her mother made her work hard. | ..because we cooper- ated. |
| ..because she tried the hardest. | ..because of sheer luck. | ..because you and I see eye-to-eye. |
| ..because I wanted to. | ..because the path was quite rough. | ..because they are in love. |
| ..because you are too heavy. | ..because it was so warm in there. | ..because they have a rotten marriage. |
| ..because he is a lucky guy. | ..because of an accident. | ..because I can't make it without her. |
| ..because I am shy. | ..because people intimidate me. | ..because we didn't hit it off. |
| ..because he was hopping mad. | ..because she insulted him. | ..because she and her dad always fight. |
| ..because he lifted it too high. | ..because it was God's will. | ..because we all refused to go. |

Note:  for internal examples, assume the person cited as a cause is the
        person who is being explained;
      for external examples involving persons, assume that the caus-
        al person is not the person who is being explained;
      for interpersonal causes, assume that at least one of the per-
        sons involved is the person who is being explained.

attributed to an actor's involvement with another person, to a relationship. Thus, the explanation is not internal, because another person is involved; nor is it external, because the actor cannot be left out or excluded. The explanation encompasses a "we." Note that there are certain kinds of internal and external explanations which look interpersonal but which really aren't. On the internal side, if I say that person A did such-and-such because he is friendly, I am referring to a trait that directs his behavior when he is around other people. I am not referring, however, to his relationship to a particular person or group. Social traits are internal causes. On the external side, I can say that person A did such-and-such because person B had a gun on A or because B jostled A. In this case, person A's behavior is a result of person B as an external force, and not to some relationship in which the contributions of A and B are intertwined. Again, refer to Table 5 for examples of these types of explanations.

Rating task. Raters will first categorize explanations as internal, external or interpersonal. This classification will be done by raters individually. Next, raters will compare notes and compute a percent agreement. Finally, disagreements will be discussed and resolved, with no time limit.

The actual rating is fairly simple. The rating sheet will require judges to circle the appropriate choice (internal, external, interpersonal) for each explanatory statement. In cases of compound explanations involving more than one kind of locus (example: I went to the party because I was invited and also because I'm naturally outgoing), circle more than one choice.

## 2. Stability of Causes

Causes of personal events can vary in their stability. Some causes will involve stable, enduring characteristics of the actor, the situation, or a relationship; other causes will be relatively unstable and variable. There will also be causes of uncertain stability, for which it is difficult to make a determination of stability or instability.

As we shall see, the task in this section is to rate explanations as stable or unstable. Cases of uncertain stability will require some thinking through, but they should, in the end, be categorizable. Table 6 takes the examples from Table 5 and classifies them according to their stability. Now, let's define more explicitly the terms stable and unstable.

Stable causes are those that are relatively long-term and enduring. A stable cause is one you would expect to see operating in the future in the same way that it is operating now or has operated in the past. Stable causes can be internal to the actor; they can be features of the situation or context; and they can involve interpersonal relationships. Examples of stable causes include all enduring personal

Table 6

Examples of Two Types of Stability of Causes

| STABLE | UNSTABLE |
|--------|----------|
| ..because he has a tremendous capacity for work. | ..because she tried the hardest. |
| ..because she is intelligent. | ..because I wanted to. |
| ..because you are too heavy. | ..because he was hopping mad. |
| ..because he is a lucky guy. | ..because he lifted it too high. |
| ..because I am shy. | ..because of sheer luck. |
| ..because the job was so simple. | ..because it was so warm in there. |
| ..because her mother made her work hard. | ..because of an accident. |
| ..because the path was so rough. | ..because she insulted him. |
| ..because people intimidate me. | ..because we cooperated. |
| ..because it was God's will. | ..because we didn't hit it off. |
| ..because my wife doesn't love me anymore. | ..because we all refused to go. |
| ..because you and I see eye-to-eye. | |
| ..because they are in love. | |
| ..because they have a rotten marriage. | |
| ..because I can't make it without her. | |
| ..because she and her dad always fight. | |

characteristics (abilities and capacities; most roles and social identities; personality traits; intelligence; physique and long-term physical characteristics; and motives that have an enduring, trait-like quality), all enduring aspects of social and physical situations (task difficulty; unvarying, long-term social influences; and relatively unchanging aspects of the physical environment), and stable interpersonal relationships (past, present and future) or aspects thereof.

Unstable causes are those that are relatively changeable, variable, or short-term. An unstable cause is one which you would expect to have changed or stopped operating in the future, which has been variable or inconsistent in the past, or which you believe would have a low-to-medium probability of operating in a stable fashion. Like stable causes, unstable causes can be internal, external, or interpersonal. Examples of unstable causes include transient personal characteristics (effort; moods and emotions; short-term motives; and isolated behaviors and behaviors that are not characteristic, nor part of a trait-like pattern), short-term or variable aspects of the social or physical context (luck, chance and accident; unexpected or unusual circumstances; short-term social influences; and changing or variable aspects of the physical world), and unstable personal relationships or any variable aspects of relationships.

Many of the explanations that are to be rated will cite causes that are clearly stable or unstable. Others will be less obvious. In these latter cases, use two strategies to assist in your decision-making.

(a) Rather than think about stability/unstability in absolute, either-or fashion, consider this dimension in a relative, more-or-less way. That is, ask yourself, "Does this cause seem more stable than unstable?" and vice versa.

(b) Think in terms of the future. Would you expect a cited cause to be likely to be operating, unchanged, in the future? Or would you see this cause as having changed or ceased later on?

The answers to these two types of question may be implicit in the wording of an explanatory statement. Look for clues. You may occasionally have to make an educated guess about stability, however.

Rating task. Raters will, individually, categorize explanations as stable or unstable. Next, raters will compare notes and compute a percent agreement. Finally, disagreements will be discussed and resolved, with no time limit.

The actual rating is fairly simple. The rating sheet requires judges to circle the appropriate choice (stable, unstable) for each explanatory statement. If a compound explanation should involve both stable and unstable causes (e.g., he won because he is very smart and he tried hard), circle both.

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D.  Types of Explanations:  Causes and Reasons

     Philosophers and psychologists have pointed out that there are
two types of explanations that people offer for personal events:  causes
and reasons.  This section defines these terms and provides a set of in-
structions for rating explanations as causes or reasons.

## Definitions

     Causes.  A cause involves explanation without justification:
"behavior simply follows from its causes, whether justified or not."*
Causes explain behavior as "the automatic or inevitable outcome of a cer-
tain complex of conditions."  Thus, causal explanations are general, regu-
lar, and perhaps predictable antecedent-consequent relationships.  This
is the type of explanation favored by professional scientists, including
psychologists.  Naive or implicit psychologists can, too, cite causes in
a quasi-scientific manner.

     Reasons.  A reason is an explanation via justification.  "Reasons
explain intentional behavior . . . by showing it to be what any rational
agent would do, given the relevant beliefs and desires."  Justification
is used in a broad sense; it includes not only justification based on
moral or ethical principles, but also justification of a behavior as
rational, that it, "correct, appropriate or sensible from the agent's
point of view."  Agents know the reasons for their behaviors, and these
reasons may be idiosyncratic (they could also be general and normative,
however).

     Causes and reasons compared.  Causes and reasons are similar in
that they are both explanations; as such, they can refer to one's own
behavior or to that of other people; they can be psychological (inter-
nal) or situational (external); and they can be stable or unstable.

     We are more interested, however, in differences between causes
and reasons, since we are setting out to categorize explanations as one
or the other.  Table 7 outlines the differences, and Table 8 supplies
examples.  The most basic and general distinction between causes and
reasons revolves around the issue of justification.  The clearest ways
in which reasons are different from causes are twofold:  reasons are
always known (never unknown) to agents, and reasons explain only inten-
tional behaviors.  (Note that causes may be known or unknown to the
agent, and may refer to both intentional and unintentional behaviors.)
It follows, too, that if an explanation involves unintended behaviors

*All quotations are from D. Locke & D. Pennington, Reasons and other
causes:  Their role in attribution processes.  Journal of Personality
and Social Psychology, 1982, 42, 212-23.  These authors' usage of the
term behavior corresponds to this manual's personal events; agent cor-
responds to actor.

Table 7

Different Characteristics of Causes and Behavior

| CAUSES | REASONS |
|---|---|
| Explanation without justification. | Explanation via justification. |
| May be unknown to agent, difficult to uncover. | Always known to agent. |
| Explain accidents and occurrences as well as intentional behaviors. | Explain only intentional behaviors (actions). |
| General and regular causal connections. | May be idiosyncratic to agent. |
| Automatic, inevitable, often predictable result of antecedent condition(s). | Based on rationality (what any rational agent would, could or might do); a rational, sensible or appropriate act from the agent's point of view. |

Table 8

Examples of Causes and Reasons

| | CAUSE | REASON |
|---|---|---|
| He knocked her down because | the bus suddenly stopped. | she insulted his manhood. |
| I went to the store because | I was kidnapped. | we needed milk. |
| He is a thief because | he had a twisted childhood. | he doesn't care for hard work. |
| I choose to walk because | I have a driving phobia. | it is good exercise. |
| They always fail because | society is against them. | they prefer to be taken care of. |
| We need your advice because | nothing else has helped. | we want to do the right thing. |
| He became president because | he was driven by a lust for power. | it was his life's ambition. |
| I am happy because | my wife just had a baby. | I don't let little things bother me. |

and/or cites causal conditions <u>unknown</u> to the agent, it must be a cause and not a reason.

## Making Ratings

The rating sheet for causes and reasons (see p. 139) structures your decision about whether explanatory statements contain causes or reasons by asking four questions. You will answer these questions prior to making your final decision; your answers will help to determine the choice that you make. Let us briefly look at each of these guiding queries.

<u>Justification</u>? The full form of this question is as follows: Does the explanation that is offered involve some kind of justification?

Remember that we are using the term <u>justification</u> in a broad sense. It is not restricted to moral or ethical correctness; it includes justification of a behavior as correct, appropriate or rational from the agent's point of view. Note, too, that the question is <u>not</u> "Do you think the agent's behavior was justified, correct, what you would do?" You have to take the role of the agent and decide whether the act was justified in his/her view.

If you answer "No" to this question, it would suggest that the explanation is a cause.

If you answer "Yes" to this question, it would suggest that the explanation is a reason.

If the explanation is ambiguous, if you are very unsure or cannot decide whether justification is involved, you should circle the ? option.

<u>Agent's awareness</u>? Full form: Is the agent aware of the factors that are being cited to explain his/her behavior?

Your answer to this question will be your estimate about whether or not the agent consciously knows about the particular factors cited, in the explanation, as influencing his/her behavior. Remember to check ratings of the Referent Subject (made previously) to be sure you have the correct agent in mind.

If your answer to this question is "No," it would suggest that the explanation is a cause.

If your answer to this question is "Yes," it could suggest either a cause or a reason, although a reason is probably favored.

Use the ? option for ambiguous cases.

<u>Intentional referent</u>? Full form: Is the personal event described in the referent of the explanatory statement an intentional action?

RATING SHEET:  CAUSES AND REASONS

---

Statement code: | Justification? | No | Yes | ? | CAUSE | I | E
| Agent's awareness? | No | Yes | ?
_____ | Intentional referent? | No | Yes | ? | REASON | P | S
| General/regular/normative? | Yes | No | ?

---

Statement code: | Justification? | No | Yes | ? | CAUSE | I | E
| Agent's awareness? | No | Yes | ?
_____ | Intentional referent? | No | Yes | ? | REASON | P | S
| General/regular/normative? | Yes | No | ?

---

Statement code: | Justification? | No | Yes | ? | CAUSE | I | E
| Agent's awareness? | No | Yes | ?
_____ | Intentional referent? | No | Yes | ? | REASON | P | S
| General/regular/normative? | Yes | No | ?

---

Statement code: | Justification? | No | Yes | ? | CAUSE | I | E
| Agent's awareness? | No | Yes | ?
_____ | Intentional referent? | No | Yes | ? | REASON | P | S
| General/regular/normative? | Yes | No | ?

---

Statement code: | Justification? | No | Yes | ? | CAUSE | I | E
| Agent's awareness? | No | Yes | ?
_____ | Intentional referent? | No | Yes | ? | REASON | P | S
| General/regular/normative? | Yes | No | ?

---

Statement code: | Justification? | No | Yes | ? | CAUSE | I | E
| Agent's awareness? | No | Yes | ?
_____ | Intentional referent? | No | Yes | ? | REASON | P | S
| General/regular/normative? | Yes | No | ?

---

Statement code: | Justification? | No | Yes | ? | CAUSE | I | E
| Agent's awareness? | No | Yes | ?
_____ | Intentional referent? | No | Yes | ? | REASON | P | S
| General/regular/normative? | Yes | No | ?

---

Statement code: | Justification? | No | Yes | ? | CAUSE | I | E
| Agent's awareness? | No | Yes | ?
_____ | Intentional referent? | No | Yes | ? | REASON | P | S
| General/regular/normative? | Yes | No | ?

---

This question asks whether the referent involves an action over which the agent has volitional control, as opposed to an occurrence involving no intent or control by the agent.

If you answer "No" to this question, it would suggest that the explanation involves a cause.

If your answer is "Yes," it could suggest either a cause or a reason, although a reason is probably favored.

A choice of ? denotes a large amount of uncertainty.

General/regular/normative? Full form: Are the factors cited in the explanation general and regular, of the type you would expect to see operating in a similar fashion and with similar effects across agents, situations, or particular agent x situation interactions?

In this question you are asked to make a statement about the nomothetic or idiographic nature of the factors cited in the explanation. Does it seem "lawful" in a deterministic way? Or is the explanatory factor idiosyncratic to the agent?

If you answer "Yes" to the question about generality/regularity/ normativeness, then either a cause or a reason is suggested, although a cause is probably favored.

If you answer "No" to this question, a reason is suggested.

A ? suggests an uncertain or ambiguous state of affairs.

Putting the answers together. The four preliminary questions and their response choices (yes, no, ?) are arrayed in a column for each explanatory statement. The pattern of responses to these queries will be an aid to your decision between a rating of "cause" or "reason." Note that the left column of responses is suggestive of causes and the middle column suggests reasons. In some cases, all responses may suggest a cause or a reason unequivocally. In other cases, there will be a mix or some missing information (? responses). In the latter eventuality, you will have to make your decision based on the evidence and your intuition.

Rating procedure. Two judges will each, individually, rate all explanations as causes or reasons. Then they will compare notes, calculate percent agreement, and resolve discrepancies via discussion.

APPENDIX B

SCORING MANUAL:  CONSISTENCY, DISTINCTIVENESS AND CONSENSUS

INFORMATION IN THE NEWSPAPER ADVICE COLUMNS

PART I.  INTRODUCTION

A.  OVERVIEW

The purpose of the present study is to see how people use support-
ing information to justify or clarify their explanations for their own
or other people's behavior.  This is actually a study which is part of
an ongoing research project studying the newspaper advice columns.  Last
semester, student "raters" or "coders" went through a set of letters to
the advice columns.  Their job was to search for explanations of be-
havior.  This semester student raters will be searching for certain
pieces of information that support or clarify explanations.

Sometimes, pieces of information in the advice columns are vague
or unclear.  For this reason, we decided to use several raters or coders.
We can be relatively confident that we have located the correct pieces
of information if several independent raters all locate the same items.
This procedure will help us to insure that our data is clear and unam-
biguous.

If several raters all end up with the same data using this par-
ticular coding manual, then the manual is said to be Reliable.  The par-
ticular type of reliability involved is called interrater reliability.
If the independent raters end up with different data, then the coding
manual is not reliable, and we may have problems with the definitions of
our terms or with the procedure we outline.

Although the raters who will be using this manual will be search-
ing the advice columns for information that supports explanatory state-
ments, it will be helpful for them first to understand what explanatory
statements are:

B.  EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS

People write into the newspaper advice columns with descriptions
and explanations of their own and other people's problems and be-
haviors.  A system for reliably identifying advice column explanations
was developed by Thomas Schoeneman and Daniel Rubanowitz.  This system
is contained in the Scoring Manual:  Explanatory Statements in the Ad-
vice Columns.  The definitions and classifications for explanatory
statements and their components which were used in this scoring manual
will be presented in this section.

Let us first begin with some examples of explanatory statements:

1) She wants to be pregnant again because she believes it will
   be a valuable "learning experience" for her children.

2) For business reasons I cannot be seen in public with my lover.

3) Kathy's self-righteousness is beginning to bug me.

Explanatory statements contain two parts: an explanation and what is being explained. The explanation part is naturally called an explanation. That which is being explained is called a referent. Using the three examples from above, we can see how explanatory statements can be reduced or simplified to the form "referent because explanation."

1) REFERENT:     She wants to be pregnant.
   BECAUSE
   EXPLANATION:  she believes it will be a valuable "learning experience" for her children.

2) REFERENT:     I cannot be seen in public with my lover
   BECAUSE
   EXPLANATION:  of business reasons.

3) REFERENT:     I'm beginning to be bugged
   BECAUSE
   EXPLANATION:  of Kathy's self-righteousness.

## C.  TYPES OF REFERENTS

There are three general types of referents: enduring personal characteristics, transient personal characteristics and contextual characteristics.

Enduring personal characteristics refer to relatively long-term, unchanging aspects of people. Referents in this category include social identity elements (e.g., He is a Mormon), personal dispositions (e.g., Joe is an aggressive person) and physical characteristics (e.g., Bill is tall).

Transient personal characteristics refer to relatively short term personal events. Referents in this category include behaviors (e.g., I was fighting with John), affective states (e.g., Bob was happy about the election results) and motivational states (e.g., Ed needs Sue's love).

Contextual characteristics refer to events that are not personal, but that are contextual, physical or impersonal. Referents in this category include interpersonal relationships (e.g., We are happily married) or impersonal/physical contexts (e.g., The day was stormy).

## D.  TRANSIENT PERSONAL CHARACTERISTIC REFERENTS

Transient personal characteristic referents will be the focus of the present study because they possess one special property. They can be reduced or simplified in a certain way that makes them compatible with certain theories of social cognition.

Specifically, this type of referent can be broken down into three components:  the person, the verb and the stimulus.  The person refers to who is performing or experiencing the behavior, affect or motivation in the referent.  The verb refers to the behavior, affect or motivation itself.  This term should be differentiated from the grammatical component of a sentence referred to by the same name.  The referent component verb refers to all the words in the sentence that are necessary to specify the complete behavior, thought or feeling in the referent. The stimulus refers to the target, recipient or focus of the verb.  Here are a few examples:

1) John laughed at the comedian.

      PERSON:     John
      VERB:      laughed at
      STIMULUS:  the comedian

2) She was ecstatic about the movie.

      PERSON:     She
      VERB:      was ecstatic about
      STIMULUS:  the movie

3) I need to get some sleep.

      PERSON:     I
      VERB:      need to get
      STIMULUS:  some sleep

It is important to note that only transient personal characteristics can be simplified to the form "person verb stimulus."  The referent "Bill is very tall" (classified as an enduring personal characteristic) cannot be simplified in this way.  "Bill" is the person and "is very tall" would be the verb.  But, there really is no stimulus or target toward which Bill is behaving.

PART II.  FORMING FULLY SIMPLIFIED REFERENTS

A.  EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS OF INTEREST TO THE PRESENT STUDY

A set of explanatory statements was generated from a random sample of advice columns using the Scoring Manual:  Explanatory Statements in the Advice Columns.  Each explanatory statement was simplified to the form "referent because explanation."  The referent refers to the behavior, thought, feeling, etc., which is being explained.  The explanation refers to the attribution, or "why" the behavior, thought, feeling, etc. occurred.  This section of the present scoring manual is concerned only with the processing of referents.

Only certain types of referents are of interest in the present study.  Part II.B. of the Scoring Manual:  Explanatory Statements in the Advice Columns contains a procedure for classifying referents into one of three general categories:  enduring personal characteristics, transient personal characteristics or contextual characteristics.  This section of the present scoring manual is concerned only with the processing of referents categorized as transient personal characteristics.

B.  REFERENT COMPONENTS

The referents that were categorized as transient personal characteristics can be simplified or reduced to the form "person verb stimulus."

The "person" refers to who is performing the behavior in question.

The "verb" refers to the complete behavior being performed, such as thinking, feeling, acting, etc.

The "stimulus" refers to the target, recipient or focus of the behavior, and it could be a person, an object, or an event.

Here are two example referents and their components:

1) REFERENT:  John laughed at the comedian.

    PERSON:     John
    VERB:       laughed at
    STIMULUS:   the comedian

2) REFERENT:  Sue is afraid of the dog.

    PERSON:     Sue
    VERB:       is afraid of
    STIMULUS:   the dog

C.  VARIATIONS ON THE "PERSON"

Our two above examples illustrate referents that are relatively simple.  In the advice columns many referents are quite complex and represent a variety of grammatical forms.  Consider the following example:

    REFERENT:     He said that she is a snob
    BECAUSE
    EXPLANATION:  he is quick to call people names.

This referent is in multi-subject form.  Either "he" or "she" could be the referent subject or person.  When the explanation is examined, however, it becomes apparent that "he" is the person.  "He" is the person because it is his behavior that is being explained.

Part II.A. of the Scoring Manual:  Explanatory Statements in the Advice Columns will be used to locate the "person" in each referent.  In addition to the multi-subject form just described, Part II.A. of the Scoring Manual:  Explanatory Statements in the Advice Columns describes four other types of unusual referent subject forms.  The person can be presented in the passive voice, as in "They should not be blamed for his misdeed."  The person performing a behavior here is "the blamer."  The person can also be presented in the imperative, as in "Tell me what to do."  The person performing the behavior is the implicit "you" as in "You tell me what to do."  Sometimes the person occurs as part of a dangling participle, as in "Going to his house would be unfair to her."  The person performing the behavior is that person who is going to the house in question.  Finally, the referent person can show up an indirect object, as in "The abortion issue burns me up."  Here, the person performing the behavior is "me," as in "I" am burned up by the abortion issue."

D.  VARIATIONS ON THE "STIMULUS"

1)  IMPLICIT "STIMULUS" TYPES:  Sometimes the stimulus is simply not presented in the referent.  For example, consider the referent "John swims."  "John" is the person, "swims" is the verb, but no stimulus is given.  Obviously, John must swim somewhere.  In order to determine the stimulus it will be necessary to examine the original advice column letter in which the referent appeared.

2)  EVENTS AND GERUNDS

The focus or target of a behavior can sometimes be a verb (grammatical) or a verb form.  For example, in the referent, "I enjoy jogging alone," "I" is the person, "enjoy" is the verb, and the gerund "jogging" is the stimulus.

An example referent that has an event as its stimulus would be, "I am happy that you arrived."  "I" is the person, "am happy that" is the verb and "you arrived" is the stimulus.

3) MORE THAN ONE "STIMULUS":

Occasionally there is more than one target, recipient or focus of a person's behavior. For example, consider the following referent, "I am cleaning the house for my mother." "I" is definitely the person. "Cleaning" could be the verb with "the house" as the stimulus. However "cleaning the house for" could be the verb with "my mother" as the stimulus. In order to determine the correct verb and stimulus it may be necessary to examine the original letter. If the particular letter is a discussion of various activities that are performed for one's mother, then the stimulus may be "the house." But if the letter discusses helping various people with their chores, errands or housework, then "my mother" may be the correct stimulus. Problems in determining the correct stimulus can be dealt with by using the explanation, the statement excerpt or the original letter as a reference.

E.  PROCEDURE

Before fully simplifying referents it is necessary to identify those referents that are relevant (e.g., transient personal characteristics). Two steps will be involved in this process. First, the referent subject or the person will be identified in each referent. Second, transient personal characteristic referents will be identified. These two steps will be accomplished using Part II.A. and Part II.B., respectively, of the Scoring Manual: Explanatory Statements in the Advice Columns. Once the appropriate set of referents have been located, a sample of fully simplified referents can be generated.

One team of two raters will fully simplify a random sample of 50 referents in order to assess the reliability of the procedure. One rater only will fully simplify the remaining referents in the total sample. All raters will use the following procedure for simplifying referents:

1) Record the person obtained for each referent obtained from Part II.A. of the Scoring Manual: Explanatory Statements in the Advice Columns. This person will refer to who is performing the behavior.

2) Locate an answer to the two following questions:
What is the complete behavior? (verb)
Who or what is the target, recipient or focus of the behavior? (stimulus)

These two questions must be entertained simultaneously because postential variations in the stimulus will result in variations of the verb.

3) If there is more than one answer to one or both of the questions in #2, then refer to the explanation, statement excerpt and/or the original letter in order to determine the correct stimulus and verb.

4) The results of the two raters will be compared and the percentages of agreement (e.g., reliability) will be calculated.

5) If there are any discrepancies between the two rater's results, then the discrepancies will be discussed and resolved, one referent at a time. There will be no time limit on the discussions.

PART III:  TEST QUESTION FORMATION:  CONSISTENCY, DISTINCTIVENESS AND

CONSENSUS

In order to help ensure that raters will be searching for in-
stances of supporting information in a systematic manner, it will be
necessary to provide them with a structured format.  This manual will
describe the procedure for formulating three questions, one for Consis-
tency information, one for Distinctiveness information and one for
Consensus information.  The raters will use these questions to test for
the presence of each kind of supporting information as it relates to
an explanatory statement in the advice columns.

A.  REVIEW OF EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS:

Teams of student raters scanned the advice columns for explana-
tory statements using the Scoring Manual:  Explanatory Statements in the
Advice Columns.  Using this manual, a reliable set of explanatory state-
ments was generated.  Each explanatory statement was reduced or sim-
plified to the following form:

REFERENT                 BECAUSE                  EXPLANATION

Referents can be categorized into three general types:  enduring
personal characteristics, transient personal characteristics and con-
textual characteristics (see Part II.B. of the Scoring Manual:  Explana-
tory Statements in the Advice Columns).  Only referents that are transi-
ent personal characteristics are of interest in the present study.

B.  REVIEW OF REFERENT COMPONENTS

Each referent of interest can be simplified to the form "person
verb stimulus."  The "person" refers to who is performing the behavior
in the referent.  The "verb" refers to the complete behavior being per-
formed.  The "stimulus" refers to the target, recipient or focus of the
behavior.

C.  INFORMATION TYPES

The simplified referent components can be used to define three
types of information.

Consensus information provides data on the variance of the term
person.  Consensus tells us about how many persons perform the same be-
havior as the referent person toward a given stimulus.  Consensus infor-
mation can be outlined this way:

```
PERSON A?
PERSON B?
PERSON C?                VERB——————————STIMULUS
REFERENT PERSON
```

A concrete example can be illustrated as follows:

REFERENT:  Andrew is afraid of the dog.

> PERSON:     Andrew
> VERB:       is afraid of
> STIMULUS:   the dog

CONSENSUS INFORMATION:   Ruth, Monica and Bruce are also (or, are
                         not also) afraid of the dog.

```
ANDREW
RUTH?
MONICA?              AFRAID OF——————————THE DOG
BRUCE?
```

Distinctiveness information provides data on the variance of the
term stimulus.  Distinctiveness tells us about how many target objects
or persons are the focus of the given persons behavior (e.g., verb).
Distinctiveness information can be outlined this way:

```
                                          ?STIMULUS A
                                          ?STIMULUS B
PERSON——————————————VERB                  ?STIMULUS C
                                          REFERENT STIMULUS
```

Our example from above can be illustrated as follows:

REFERENT:  Andrew is afraid of the dog.

DISTINCTIVENESS INFORMATION:   Andrew is also afraid of (or, is
                               not also afraid of) beagles, ter-
                               riers, huskies and dachshunds.

```
                                          ?BEAGLES
                                          ?TERRIERS
ANDREW—————————————————AFRAID OF          ?HUSKIES
                                          ?DACHSHUNDS
```

Consistency information provides data on how frequently or how
often the given person performed a given behavior (e.g., verb) toward
the given stimulus, either in the past or across situations.  Consistency
information often involves the use of a modifier of the verb, such as
"always," "sometimes" or "never."  When there is variance of a behavior
across situations, the various situations are usually listed.  Our ex-
ample from above can be described as follows:

REFERENT:   Andrew is afraid of the dog.

CONSISTENCY INFORMATION:   Andrew has always/never been afraid of the dog in the past.

<div align="center">or</div>

Andrew has always/never been afraid of the dog, either indoors, outdoors, or riding in the truck.

D.   QUESTION FORMATION

   1.   DEFINITIONS

In addition to person, verb and stimulus, three other terms need to be defined for question construction:

PERSON LABEL:     Every person is a member of some category.  If the person is described in the referent just as an individual, then they belong to the category "people" or "others."  If the person is described as belonging to some specific group then that group name can be invoked (e.g., men, Republicans, car owners, etc.).  Since we are concerned here only with the behavior of organisms, there are no categories for objects or things under person label.

STIMULUS LABEL:   Every stimulus also belongs to some category. Unlike the person, the stimulus can be a thing or a human being.  Things will belong to categories such as dogs, cats, movies, cities, airplanes, etc.  A human being will belong to categories in the same way as the person did (see PERSON LABEL).

VERB LABEL:       Some, but not all verbs are behaviors which belong to a general behavioral category.  For example, "giving someone $100 for their birthday" is part of the general category of "gift giving."

1)   REFERENT COMPONENTS AND RAW FORM QUESTIONS

Once we have the three components of each referent identified, it is possible to construct questions which test for the presence of Consistency, Distinctiveness and Consensus information.

The "raw" forms for each of these questions are as follows:

CONSISTENCY:         How often in the past (or, in how many settings), has (would, should) <u>Person Verb</u> (or Verb label) Stimulus (or Stimulus <u>label</u>)?

DISTINCTIVENESS:     Toward (to, with) how many different <u>Stimulus Label</u> does (would, should) <u>Person Verb</u> (or Verb label)?

CONSENSUS:           How many other <u>Person label</u> (did, would, should) <u>Verb</u> or (Verb label) <u>Stimulus</u> (or Stimulus label)?

E.  EXAMPLES

The referent components obtained from the rater's use of Part II of this coding manual can be placed in the appropriate slot to form each question.  The use of the "helper" verbs "did," "would" and "should" will ensure that each question is grammatically correct.  The use of the <u>Person label</u> and the <u>Stimulus label</u> will enable questions to be formed which will address the variance across the <u>person</u> and the <u>stimulus</u>, respectively, since these are the definitions of Consensus and Distinctiveness, respectively.  The <u>Verb label</u> will be used to help make sure each question makes sense and is consistent with the <u>Person</u> and <u>Stimulus</u> labels.  Here are several examples:

1)  REFERENT:  Bill gave Ed fifty dollars for his graduation.

        AGENT:      Bill
        VERB:       gave fifty dollars (e.g., gave a gift)
        STIMULUS:   Ed

    CONSISTENCY:        How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has Bill given such a gift to Ed?

    DISTINCTIVENESS:    Toward how many different people does Bill give gifts?

    CONSENSUS:          How many other people (do, would) give such a gift to Ed?

2)  REFERENT:  My boyfriend liked my hair.

        AGENT:      My boyfriend
        VERB:       liked
        STIMULUS:   my hair

    CONSISTENCY:        How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has my boyfriend liked my hair?

    DISTINCTIVENESS:    Toward how many different physical features of mine does my boyfriend express liking?

<u>CONSENSUS:</u>         How many other people (do, would) like my hair?

3) REFERENT:  Mom said the movie was a rip-off.

     AGENT:     Mom
     VERB:      said was a rip-off
     STIMULUS:  the movie

<u>CONSISTENCY:</u>    How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has Mom said "it was a rip-off" about a movie?

<u>DISTINCTIVENESS:</u>  Toward how many different movies does Mom say "it was a rip-off"?

<u>CONSENSUS:</u>         How many other people (do, would) say "it was a rip-off" about the movie?

PART IV:   FINDING CONSISTENCY, DISTINCTIVENESS AND CONSENSUS

According to Harold Kelley's (1967) theory of attribution (e.g., how people attribute or explain the causes of behavior), people use three types of information along with explanatory statements:  consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus.  The job of the raters in this part of the study is to find instances of these information types that are used to support, justify, defend or clarify explanatory statements. Before learning how to locate these information types in the advice columns, it will be necessary for the raters to be thoroughly familiar with them.

A.   CONSISTENCY INFORMATION

This information type tells us about how frequent or repeatable a behavior has been in the past or in other settings.  In general, it tells us how consistent the behavior has been.  Behavior that a person has performed most of the time is said to have HIGH CONSISTENCY.  Behavior that a person has performed relatively infrequently is said to have LOW CONSISTENCY.

Consider the following behavior (remember that a behavior is called a referent when it appears in an explanatory statement):

JOHN LAUGHED AT THE COMEDIAN.

If John laughed at the comedian most of the time in the past, his behavior would be high in consistency.  In this case, consistency information might take this form:

JOHN HAS ALWAYS LAUGHED AT THE COMEDIAN.

If John laughed at the comedian relatively infrequently, then his behavior would be low in consistency.  In this case, consistency information might take this form:

JOHN HAS NEVER LAUGHED AT THE COMEDIAN.

The key words in the last two examples were "always" and "never," respectively.  Key words like these "clue us in" that we are being given information about the consistency of the behavior.  Other key words that usually indicate consistency information are "rarely," "usually," "frequently," "occasionally," "sometimes," "habitually," "chronically," etc.  Notice that some of these key words indicate high consistency (e.g., frequently), some indicate low consistency (e.g., rarely) and some are unclear (e.g., sometimes).  Even if you cannot tell whether the information is high or low in form, it would still be consistency information if it tells you about the frequency of past behavior.

The consistency of a behavior is sometimes revealed in the number of ways the behavior presents itself, or in the number of different settings in which the behavior occurs. This type of consistency information can be illustrated using our example "John laughed at the comedian." High consistency might be:

> JOHN HAS LAUGHED AT THE COMEDIAN, WHETHER HE SAW HIM
> ON T.V., IN THE MOVIES, OR IN PERSON.

Low consistency might take this form:

> JOHN DOES NOT LAUGH AT THE COMEDIAN, WHETHER HE SEES
> HIM ON T.V., IN THE MOVIES, OR IN PERSON.

Just for the sake of completeness, here is a list of instances of high consistency on John's behavior:

> JOHN OFTEN LAUGHS AT THE COMEDIAN.
> JOHN GENERALLY LAUGHS AT THE COMEDIAN.
> JOHN USUALLY LAUGHS AT THE COMEDIAN.
> JOHN LAUGHS AT THE COMEDIAN IN CLUBS, ON STAGE, OR AT
> THE MOVIES.

Here is a list of instances of low consistency on John's behavior:

> JOHN RARELY LAUGHS AT THE COMEDIAN.
> JOHN SELDOM LAUGHS AT THE COMEDIAN.
> JOHN LAUGHS AT THE COMEDIAN ONLY ONCE IN A WHILE.
> JOHN LAUGHS AT THE COMEDIAN IN PERSON, BUT NEVER WHEN
> HE'S ON STAGE OR IN THE MOVIES.

Finally, here is a list of general examples of consistency information as you might encounter them in the advice columns:

> (high) - I ALWAYS KEEP MY CAR WELL POLISHED.
> - EVERYTIME I WANT TO GO SOMEWHERE, SOMEONE IS
>   SURE TO WANT TO RIDE ALONG.
> - I ALWAYS FOLLOW THE YANKEES, WHETHER I HEAR ABOUT
>   THEM ON THE NEWS, READ ABOUT THEM IN THE PAPER,
>   OR LISTEN TO THE GUYS AT WORK TALK ABOUT THEM.

> (low) - YOUR WIFE RARELY PUTS UP WITH THIS.
> - MY BOSS ENJOYS A BIG DINNER WHEN HE EATS OUT
>   BUT AT HOME HE NEVER COOKS VERY MUCH.
> - BILL HAS NOT ACCEPTED AN INVITATION FROM ME
>   EVER SINCE MY DIVORCE.

The raters will not be required to tell the difference between high and low consistency when finding it in the advice columms, but being aware of the differences may be helpful.

## B. DISTINCTIVENESS INFORMATION

You will remember from before that the behaviors we are interested in can all be simplified to the form "person verb stimulus." Distinctiveness information tells us about the number of different stimuli toward which a person performs a behavior (e.g., verb). LOW DISTINCTIVENESS information tells us that a behavior occurs for many different "stimuli."

```
                                              ╱STIMULUS A
                                             ╱─STIMULUS B
PERSON━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━VERB◄━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━
                                             ╲─STIMULUS C
                                              ╲STIMULUS D
```

This can be illustrated with our example referent "John laughed at the comedian." Low distinctiveness might take this form:

JOHN LAUGHS AT MANY DIFFERENT COMEDIANS.

```
                                            ╱COMEDIAN A
                                           ╱─COMEDIAN B
JOHN━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━LAUGHS◄━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━
                                           ╲─COMEDIAN C
                                            ╲COMEDIAN D
```

John's behavior is low in distinctiveness because it occurs for many different stimuli.

HIGH DISTINCTIVENESS information tells us that a behavior occurs only for a specific stimulus.

```
                                                ╱STIMULUS A
PERSON━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━VERB ━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━
                                                 STIMULUS B
                                                 STIMULUS C
                                                 STIMULUS D
```
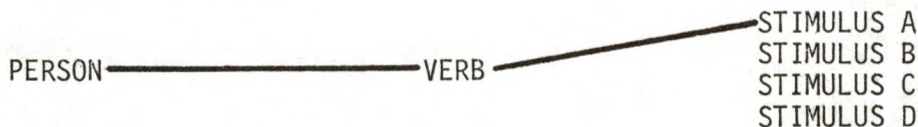
With the referent "John laughed at the comedian," high distinctiveness might take this form:

JOHN LAUGHS ONLY AT HIS FAVORITE COMEDIAN.

```
                                              ╱FAVORITE COMEDIAN
JOHN━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━LAUGHS◄━━━━━━━━━━━━━
                                               COMEDIAN A
                                               COMEDIAN B
                                               COMEDIAN C
```

Sometimes distinctiveness information is presented by simply listing the different stimulus toward which the behavior occurs. If the behavior occurs for the majority of the stimuli, then it is low in distinctiveness, as in:

At the party, John laughed at Bill's, Ruth's, Steve's and George's jokes.

```
JOHN─────────────────LAUGHED◄────BILL'S JOKES
                                ►RUTH'S JOKES
                                ►STEVE'S JOKES
                                 GEORGE'S JOKES
```

If the behavior occurs for the minority of the <u>stimuli</u> then it is high in distinctiveness, as in:

John laughed at Bill's jokes, but not at Ruth's, Steve's or George's jokes.

```
JOHN─────────────────LAUGHED·────►BILL'S JOKES
                                  RUTH'S JOKES
                                  STEVE'S JOKES
                                  GEORGE'S JOKES
```
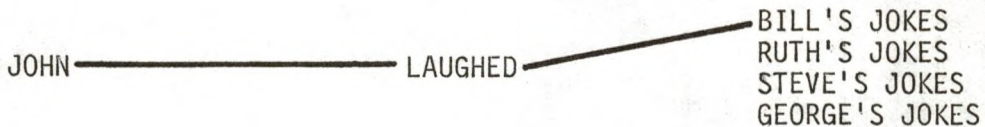
Using our example, "John laughed at the comedian," here are some general examples of distinctiveness information:

    (low)  - JOHN LAUGHED AT MANY COMEDIANS.
           - JOHN LAUGHED AT VARIOUS COMEDIANS.
           - JOHN LAUGHED AT ALL KINDS OF COMEDIANS.

    (high) - JOHN LAUGHED AT NO OTHER COMEDIAN.
           - JOHN LAUGHED AT ONE OF THE COMEDIANS.
           - JOHN LAUGHED ONLY AT POLITICAL COMEDIANS.

Here are some examples of distinctiveness information as you might encounter them in the advice columns:

(Low)   Someone is sure to call and invite me to play golf,
        go fishing, to a ball game, wrestling match or to
        play poker.

```
SOMEONE─────────────CALL AND INVITE◄────►PLAY GOLF
                                        ►GO FISHING
                                        ►BALL GAME
                                        ►WRESTLING MATCH
                                        ►POKER GAME
```

(Low)   I urge all mothers to listen to their children.

```
I───────────────────URGE◄────►MOTHER A
                             ►MOTHER B     All
                             ►MOTHER C    mothers
                             ►MOTHER D
                              Etc.
```

(Low)   Your kindness brightened not only the boy's life, but
        yours and your husband's as well.

```
YOU━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━BRIGHTENED ◄━━━━━BOY'S LIFE
                                    ━YOUR LIFE
                                    ━HUSBAND'S LIFE
```

(High)  I guess I'm marching to the "union drummer" because it's
        the only drummer I have ever heard.

```
I━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━AM MARCHING━━━━━UNION DRUMMER   All
                                DRUMMER B       other
                                DRUMMER C       drummers
                                Etc.
```

(High)  Bill changed his last name but kept his first and middle
        names the same.

```
BILL━━━━━━━━━━━━━━CHANGED━━━━━FIRST NAME
                             MIDDLE NAME
                             ━LAST NAME
```

(High)  Sue is particularly afraid of big dogs, especially dober-
        man pinschers.

```
SUE━━━━━━━━━━━━━━AFRAID OF◄━━━DOBERMAN PINSCHERS  All
                             ━BIG DOGS            other
                              TYPE OF DOG C       kinds
                              TYPE OF DOG D       of
                              TYPE OF DOG E       dogs
```

Raters will not be required to identify whether the distinctiveness information is high or low.  But we are interested in locating all applicable instances of distinctiveness, so it may be helpful to understand the difference between high and low types.

There are times when it will not be easy to tell whether the distinctiveness information is high or low.  For example:

I LIKE A NUMBER OF STRANGE FOODS.

In this case we do not know whether the distinctiveness is high or low. If the person had said, "I like all strange foods," the distinctiveness would be low.  If the person had said, "I like few strange foods," the distinctiveness would be high.  In any event, the words "a number of" in the above example do tell us something about the number of stimuli toward which the person performs the behavior (e.g., "liking"). Therefore, this example would count as distinctiveness information.

C.  CONSENSUS INFORMATION

This type of information tells us about the number of other people, besides the referent person, who perform the same behavior. It can also refer to the number of other people who would be expected

to perform the same behavior.  Just like consistency and distinctiveness, consensus information can be high or low.  HIGH CONSENSUS would indicate that most other people perform (or would be expected to perform) the same behavior toward the <u>stimulus</u>:

PERSON A  
PERSON B  
PERSON C  
PERSON D  → VERB ———————— STIMULUS

With our example, "John laughed at the comedian," high consensus information might take this form:

EVERYONE LAUGHED AT THE COMEDIAN.

JOHN  
PERSON B  
PERSON C  
PERSON D  → LAUGHED ———————— COMEDIAN

LOW CONSENSUS would indicate that few other people perform (or would be expected to perform) the same behavior:

PERSON A  
PERSON B  
PERSON C  
PERSON D  → VERB ———————— STIMULUS

With our example, "John laughed at the comedian," low consensus information might take this form:

NO ONE ELSE BESIDES JOHN LAUGHED AT THE COMEDIAN.

JOHN  
PERSON B  
PERSON C  
PERSON D  → LAUGHED ———————— COMEDIAN

Sometimes the number of different persons performing the behavior are simply listed, as in:

JOHN, RUTH, STEVE AND GEORGE ALL LAUGHED AT THE COMEDIAN.

High Consensus  
JOHN  
RUTH  
STEVE  
GEORGE  → LAUGHED ———————— COMEDIAN

Or,

JOHN LAUGHED AT THE COMEDIAN, BUT RUTH, STEVE AND GEORGE DID NOT.

```
              JOHN
Low           RUTH
Consensus     STEVE                    LAUGHED               COMEDIAN
              GEORGE
```

Sometimes, the forms of consensus that involve expectations for others or for groups of others can be somewhat subtle. Again consider our example, "John laughed at the comedian":

PEOPLE GENERALLY LAUGH AT THE COMEDIAN.

```
            JOHN
People      PERSON A
  in        PERSON B                  LAUGH               COMEDIAN
General     PERSON C
```

In this case, there is high consensus on John's behavior. Suppose the information was:

ALTHOUGH PEOPLE GENERALLY DO NOT LAUGH AT THE
COMEDIAN, JOHN DID.

```
JOHN
PERSON A
PERSON B                 LAUGH               COMEDIAN
PERSON C
```

We know that "John laughed at the comedian" but the "People generally do not laugh at the comedian," therefore there is low consensus on John's behavior.

An even more subtle example might be:

HIGH CONSENSUS:   Women are known to laugh at the comedian.

LOW CONSENSUS:    Women usually do not laugh at the comedian.

Sometimes consensus information is not so subtle, as in:

HIGH CONSENSUS:   Eighty-eight percent of the audience laughed
                  at the comedian.

LOW CONSENSUS:    Twenty-two percent of the audience laughed at
                  the comedian.

One familiar type of consensus information that you have no doubt encountered in commercial advertising involves rates of "expert" testimony, as in:

HIGH CONSENSUS:   Four out of five critics laughed at the
                  comedian.

LOW CONSENSUS:    One out of five critics laughed at the comedian.

Here are a number of general examples of consensus information as you might encounter them in the advice columns:

(High)   Men shake hands as a matter of custom.

Men
in          MAN A
General    MAN B
           MAN C          SHAKE HANDS WITH ———————— OTHERS
           MAN D
             Etc.

(High)   I'm sure many people write to you to say how grateful
         they are:

Many     PERSON A
People   PERSON B
         PERSON C       WRITE ———————————— YOU
         PERSON D

(High)  All four gynecologists who examined me said there is
        nothing physically wrong.

        GYNECOLOGIST 1
        GYNECOLOGIST 2
        GYNECOLOGIST 3       SAID ———————— NOTHING IS PHYSICALLY WRONG
        GYNECOLOGIST 4

(Low)    No one in Iowa has your accent.

        IOWA RESIDENT A
        IOWA RESIDENT B
        IOWA RESIDENT C      HAS ———————————— YOUR ACCENT
        IOWA RESIDENT D

(Low)    Few women share your dilemma.

        WOMAN A
Few     WOMAN B
Women   WOMAN C           SHARE ———————— YOUR DILEMMA
        WOMAN D
        WOMAN E
          Etc.

(Low)    Only 1% of children are known to lie.

        99% OF CHILDREN
        1% OF CHILDREN ———— TELL ———————— LIES

As with Consistency and Distinctiveness, there will be times when it will be difficult to determine whether the consensus information is high or low.  Since raters will not be required to identify whether the information is high or low, this difficulty is not crucial.  Nonetheless,

it may be helpful to be aware of this difference between high and low types when trying to identify consensus in the advice columns. Here are some acceptable examples of consensus information that are not clearly high or low:

- Some of us simply believe in doing things the hard way.
- There are definitely people in the world who like to do unkind things.
- Several participants rooted for the Twins.
- A certain percentage of people are afraid of public speaking.

## D. FINDING SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS

### 1. PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

The purpose of the present study is to use a naturalistic source of social data, like the advice columns, in order to study how people use information (e.g., Consistency, Distinctiveness and Consensus) in order to support, clarify, defend or justify their explanations of behavior. Unfortunately, this type of information is very difficult to get at. There are many problems with wording, grammar and "figures of speech" that sometimes cause the explanations and the information types to become buried in the verbiage of the advice columns. Sometimes the explanatory statement and the information types are separated from the behavior by several sentences.

In order for the raters or coders to reliably locate (e.g., all raters finding the same thing) the correct data, they must first become totally familiar with the kinds of information types and how they relate to explanatory statements. In addition, the raters must be given sufficient training and practice. This will help insure that all raters are competent and will help to catch potential problems before they can happen on the real experimental sample of advice columns. Some examples of the three information types in the advice columns are used for descriptive purposes only, and may or may not have anything to do with an explanatory statement. Since the reliability of this coding format is the "bottom line" of the present study, it is important for the raters to locate information types in a clear and unambiguous fashion. Also, it is important that each piece of supporting information be agreed upon by several independent raters. In view of these considerations, we have devised a structured procedure for finding information types.

The group of raters who will be using this coding manual will be working from a set of explanatory statements that were found by another group of raters. Each explanatory statement will be presented in its simplified form, "REFERENT BECAUSE EXPLANATION," as described earlier. In addition, the excerpt from the advice column that contained the explanatory statement will also be presented. The letter number and paragraph number for each explanatory statement will also be presented. Finally, raters will be given the set of original advice column letters

from which the explanatory statement was taken.  The rater's job will be to re-locate the explanatory statement in the original letter, and then scour the letter for any pieces of supporting Consistency, Distinctiveness and Consensus information.

## 2)  TEST QUESTIONS

To help structure the rater's search for supporting information, three specific questions will be presented with each explanatory statement, one for each information type.  Each question will be designed to test for the presence of the specific information type.  The general form of the three questions will be as follows:

> HOW CONSISTENT IS THE REFERENT BEHAVIOR?
> HOW DISTINCTIVE IS THE REFERENT BEHAVIOR?
> HOW MUCH CONSENSUS IS THERE ON THE REFERENT BEHAVIOR?

In the actual experimental sample, each question will be worded in accordance with the actual referent (e.g., "person verb stimulus") being explained.  For instance, consider our previous example:

> REFERENT:     John laughed at the comedian.
> BECAUSE
> EXPLANATION:  he has a good sense of humor.

CONSISTENCY:     How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has John laughed at the comedian?

DISTINCTIVENESS:  At how many different comedians does John laugh?

CONSENSUS:       How many other people (do, would) laugh at the comedian?

> Here is another example:

> REFERENT:     Sue is afraid of the dog.
> BECAUSE
> EXPLANATION:  he's a vicious animal.

CONSISTENCY:     How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has Sue been afraid of the dog?

DISTINCTIVENESS:  How many different dogs is Sue afraid of?

CONSENSUS:       How many other people (are, would be) afraid of the dog?

The rater's job will be to search the original advice column letter for answers to the three questions.  In some cases, the same excerpt will contain several explanatory statements (and therefore several referents), each with its own set of questions.  Each set will be

presented on its own data sheet. Sometimes, the questions for two different explanatory statements will sound quite similar. It is important that the rater search for answers to questions that relate to the specific referent. It is possible to get confused and search for an answer while holding a previous referent in mind. This is why the questions and explanatory statements will be presented on separate data sheets. This potential confusion also highlights the importance of carefully reading each excerpt, referent and explanation before beginning to search for answers to the questions. Also, when searching through the original letter it will be helpful to re-read the referent and the question several times.

## 3.  USING THE THREE TEST QUESTIONS

As stated earlier, some pieces of information are vague or implied. It will be necessary for the rater to carefully consider each sentence in the letter to see if it is usable as an answer to one of the test questions. The three test questions are designed to be used only as a guide to help organize and structure a search for the three information types. It will be helpful for each rater to be aware of how variable the information types will be presented in actual advice column letters. Sometimes an instance of information will not be an exact answer to one of the questions. For this reason it is important for the raters to understand, in theory, what consistency, distinctiveness and consensus information are.

In the advice columns, the three types of supporting information are presented in various locations and frequencies. The information can show up before the explanation or referent, or it can show up after the explanation or referent, or it can even show up as part of the explanation or referent. Supporting information types are frequently separated from the explanation or referent by several sentences. At times, several information types may be used to support a single explanatory statement (e.g., both Consistency and Distinctiveness may be used). Occasionally, the same information type may be used more than once (e.g., two instances of Consensus) for a single explanatory statement. Also, the same piece of information may be used to answer questions for different explanatory statements (e.g., one instance of Consistency information may be used to answer the consistency test questions for two or more explanatory statements. We are interested in collecting all of these available pieces of supporting information. Finally, it is important to note that there are times when no supporting information is used with an explanatory statement.

Since some collectible pieces of information are not exact answers to the test questions, it will be important for raters to be aware of the following variations.

### a.  REFERENT PLURALS

As noted above, a piece of supporting information may be part of the actual referent. Anytime a rater sees that the person in the referent

is presented in plural form (e.g., People, Men, Teachers, Parents, Couples, They and I, Thousands of children, etc.) they should automatically consider the possibility that this is an instance of <u>consensus</u> information.  Here are two examples:

REFERENT:        <u>People</u> get upset about the police
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:     they are often incompetent.

REFERENT:        <u>Many of us</u> uphold these principles
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:     it says so in the Bible.

Similarly, any time a rater sees that the <u>stimulus</u> in the referent is presented in plural (e.g., others, people, mom and dad, a therapist or counselor, these three items, etc.) they should automatically consider the possibility that this is an instance of <u>distinctiveness</u> information. Here are two examples:

REFERENT:        I have married my share of <u>couples</u>
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:     I am a justice of the peace.

REFERENT:        She is bothered by <u>barking dogs</u>
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:     she has trouble concentrating.

Sometimes both the <u>person</u> and the <u>stimulus</u> in the referent are presented in plural form, so both consensus and distinctiveness should be considered.  Here are two examples:

REFERENT:        <u>Men</u> use <u>women</u>
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:     they were raised to be that way.

REFERENT:        <u>Children</u> must cope with <u>frustrations</u>
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:     it is part of life.

A more subtle type of plural involves generalizations or norms.  For example:

REFERENT:        <u>The man</u> should be the boss
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:     it is expected.

In this case <u>the man</u> refers to men in general, so this would be consensus information.  Here is another example:

REFERENT:        I always thank <u>the host</u>
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:     I feel better about myself when I do.

In this case, the host refers to any host, so this would be distinctiveness information.

One exception to these rules about plurals involves the use of words like "we" or "them." For example:

REFERENT:     We enjoy being married
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:  it is right for us as a couple.

In this case, even though the person is in plural form, consensus would be present only if there was information about the number of other couples who also enjoy being married.

## b. CONSISTENCY IN THE REFERENT

Consistency information can also be presented as part of the referent. This is usually signaled by the presence of some key word which reveals the variation of the referent behavior over time. Here are several examples:

- He continues to be aggravated by his boss.
- It is unusual for us to argue over money.
- Milly rarely speaks for herself.
- Sue will never read your letter again.
- I always dress nicely.
- Since I turned 21, I have consumed alcohol excessively.

Sometimes, consistency information is presented in the referent when the behavior is described as occurring in various situations. Here are a couple of examples:

- People discuss politics at school, at work, and at home.
- She is a messy eater, whether it is at breakfast, lunch or dinner.

## c. NEGATIVES AND OPPOSITES

As noted above, the test questions are to be used only as a guide for conducting the information type search. There are times when an instance of one of the information types does not answer a test question exactly, and yet it will still be an acceptable piece of consistency, distinctiveness or consensus. Consider this example:

REFERENT:     People should not resort to welfare
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION:  they should work for their keep.

Person:    People
Verb:      should not resort to
Stimulus:  welfare

The consensus test question would be:

> CONSENSUS: How many people (do, would, should) <u>not</u> resort to welfare?

The first noticeable piece of consensus lies in the referent itself, because the <u>person</u> is presented in plural form (e.g., people in general should not resort to welfare). Suppose that the following piece of information also appeared somewhere in the original advice column letter:

> Many folks survive entirely on welfare.

Notice that the consensus information question asked about how many people <u>do not</u> resort to welfare. The above piece of information tells us about how many people <u>do</u> resort to welfare. Even though that piece of information does not answer the test question exactly, it would still be an acceptable piece of consensus. It is acceptable because it <u>does</u> give us information about the variation of the <u>person</u>.

Here is another example:

REFERENT: Bernard will not come to our party
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION: he knows Beth will be there.

Person:     Bernard
Verb:       will not come to
Stimulus:   our party

The consistency test question would be:

> CONSISTENCY: How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has Bernard <u>not</u> come to our party?

Suppose the following piece of information appeared somewhere in the original advice column letter:

> Bernard always loved to come to our parties.

Notice that the consistency information question asked about how often in the past Bernard would <u>not</u> come to our parties. Even though the above piece of information does not answer the test question exactly, it would still be an acceptable piece of consistency. The information that "Bernard has always come to the parties in the past" tells us something about how consistent his <u>not coming</u> is.

For the sake of completeness, here is an example involving distinctiveness:

REFERENT: Henry thinks a lot about adopting a child
BECAUSE
EXPLANATION: he knows his wife would love it.

```
Person:        Henry
Verb:          thinks about
Stimulus:      adopting a child
```

First note that thinks a lot reveals consistency information. Here is the distinctiveness test question:

DISTINCTIVENESS: About how many different aspects of adopting a child does Henry think?

Suppose the following piece of information appeared somewhere in the original advice column letter:

Henry tries not to think about all the paperwork, the legal hassles, and the long delay involved.

Notice that the distinctiveness information question asked about how many different aspects of adopting a child that Henry does think about. The above piece of information tells us about how many different aspects he does not think about. This is still an acceptable piece of distinctiveness information because it provides data on the variation of the stimulus.

When processing the experimental sample, the raters should remember that the test questions are to serve only as a guide. It is important to be alert for both positive and negative variations of the person (consensus), the stimulus (distinctiveness) and time/situations (consistency).

E.  PROCEDURE

The following procedure should be used by all raters:

1) Read the excerpt, the simplified explanatory statement (e.g., REFERENT BECAUSE EXPLANATION), the simplified referent (e.g., person verb stimulus) and the three test questions.

2) Locate the correct letter and paragraph from the selection of original letters using the I.D. number at the top of each data sheet.

3) Read the entire original letter in order to become familiar with its content.

4) Do one question at a time.

5) Start from the beginning of the letter (not just the beginning of the paragraph) for each question.

6) If you find information that enables you to answer a question, write in that information under the question that it refers to.

7) Write in the supporting information <u>just as it appears</u> in the original letter. If you feel you need to explain your choice of information, or show why it is correct, place your clarification in <u>parentheses</u> next to the piece of information.

8) If you find more than one piece of supporting information that answers a given question (e.g., two instances of Consistency), then number your pieces of information (e.g., 1, 2, 3, etc.). Present instances of information in the order in which they appear in the original letter.

9) If you are not able to locate a piece of information that will answer the question, write in the words "NO INFO" under the question.

10) Complete one question before going on to the next.

11) Complete all three questions for one explanatory statement before going on to the next data sheet.

F. TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

As stated before, reliability is the "bottom line" of the experiment. It is essential that those information types that are found be agreed upon by the majority of our raters.

There is a very real tendency to "read into" the advice columns. A rater may sometimes get "the feeling" that a particular information type is being presented but they can find no clear proof of it. We are interested in finding all available pieces of information that can be agreed upon by several independent raters. There are two "rules of thumb" that may be helpful. First, if a rater finds himself/herself thinking too much, or twisting words around too much, chances are he/she has located an unreliable piece of supporting information. However, it is important for us to find all available pieces of information, and this may involve "playing" with the sentences in one's mind to see if they can be used as an answer to one of the questions. There will no doubt be times when a rater must make a "judgment call." This brings us to the second rule of thumb which is simply to use common sense.

G.   SAMPLE INFORMATION TYPE SEARCHES

EXCERPT:       About eight months ago she launched into one of her middle-of-the-night screaming fits.  I belted her in the mouth.  From that day on she never had another nightmare.

Now she is trying to make me feel guilty--claims I am a wife beater.  Actually, it's the only time I ever laid a hand on her.

REFERENT:     I belted her

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION:  she launched into one of her middle-of-the-night scream-ing fits.

Person:      I
Verb:        belted
Stimulus:   her

CONSISTENCY:    How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has he belted her?

Actually, it's the <u>only</u> time I laid a hand on her.

DISTINCTIVENESS: How many different people does he belt?

NO INFO

CONSENSUS:      How many other people (do, would, should) belt her?

NO INFO

EXCERPT:        About eight months ago she launched into one of her
middle-of-the-night screaming fits.  I belted her in the
mouth.  From that day on she never had another nightmare.

Now she is trying to make me feel guilty--claims I am a
wife beater.  Actually, it's the only time I laid a hand
on her.

REFERENT:       She never had another nightmare

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION:  I belted her.

Person:        She
Verb:          had not
Stimulus:     nightmare

CONSISTENCY:     How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has
she not had nightmares?

She never had another nightmare.

DISTINCTIVENESS:  How many different types of nightmares does she no
longer have?

. . . she launched into one of the middle-of-the-night
screaming fits . . . she never had another nightmare.

CONSENSUS:      How many other people (do, would, should) not have
nightmares?

NO INFO

EXCERPT:        You need psychiatric help to get over your phobia which
                is uncommon but not unheard of.

REFERENT:       You need psychiatric help

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION:    of your phobia.


Person:         You
Verb:           need
Stimulus:       psychiatric help


CONSISTENCY:        How often in the past (or, in how many settings) have
                    you needed psychiatric help?



                            NO INFO



DISTINCTIVENESS:    How many different types of professional help have you
                    needed?



                            NO INFO



CONSENSUS:          How many other people (do, would, should) need such
                    psychiatric help?



                    . . . uncommon but not unheard of.

EXCERPT:          The little boy is five years old.  I'm sure he has never
heard the words, "I love you" from his parents.  The
father's idea of attention is constant criticism, bark-
ing commands and threats of physical violence.  What's
unfortunate is that the boy's other relatives also fail
to express any love for him.

REFERENT:       He has never heard the words "I love you" from his parents.

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION:    The father's idea of attention is constant criticism,
barking commands and threats of physical violence.

Person:         He
Verb:           has not heard the words "I love you" from
Stimulus:      his parents

CONSISTENCY:     How often in the past (or, in how many settings) has
he not heard the words "I love you" from his parents?

I'm sure he has <u>never</u> heard the words "I love you" from
his parents.

DISTINCTIVENESS:   From how many others does he not hear the words "I
love you"?

The boy's other relatives also fail to express any
love for him.

CONSENSUS:      How many other people (do, would, should) fail to hear
the words "I love you" from their parents?

NO INFO

EXCERPT: When I am introduced to a new person, I extend my hand. Most people reciprocate, but too many appear uncomfortable. Either they will not put out their hand, or when they do, you get a dead fish.


REFERENT: I extend my hand

BECAUSE

EXPLANATION: I am introduced to a new person.


Person: I
Verb: extend my hand to
Stimulus: others


CONSISTENCY: How often in the past (or, in how many settings) do I extend my hand to others?


When I am introduced to a new person, I extend my hand (e.g., Whenever I meet a new person I consistently extend my hand).


DISTINCTIVENESS: Toward how many different people do I extend my hand?


NO INFO


CONSENSUS: How many other people (do, would, should) extend their hand to others?


Most people reciprocate (e.g., most people also extend their hands).

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