one will counterattack but that the competition per se does not appear to increase the likelihood that one will initiate the attack.

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Effects of topic relevancy and attitude similarity on two measures of affiliation*

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Ss were exposed to an anonymous stranger with similar or dissimilar attitudes on topics high or low in relevancy to friendship. Two judgments were made about the stranger: the degree of liking and the highest level of friendship that could be developed with him. Main effects for similarity and relevancy and a three-way interaction with type of judgment were found. Analysis of simple effects revealed that the attraction responses were a function of similarity and not relevancy. The expected level of friendship responses was influenced by the interaction effects of relevancy and similarity: relevancy had a highly significant effect under attitude similarity and not under attitude dissimilarity.

Byrne and his associates have conducted a series of studies on a deduction from interpersonal attraction theory (Newcomb, 1956), that the relationship between similarity and attraction varies with the importance and relevancy of the topic. The initial failures to demonstrate topic effects (Byrne & Nelson, 1964, 1965) were later explained as consistent with the extended law of attraction (Byrne & Rhamey, 1965), by which attraction is related to the weighted proportion of positive reinforcements associated with a person. When equal weights are assigned the positive and negative reinforcements, the weights cancel out

and no topic effect is evident. Topic effects on attraction were shown by differentially weighting topic importance or interest within each level of agreement-disagreement (Byrne, London, & Griffith, 1968; Clore & Baldridge, 1968). La Gaipa & Werner (1971) were unable to replicate these 1968 findings in a study on topic relevancy. It was suggested that topic effects may have been obscured by any dissonance resulting from exposure to agreement and disagreement by the same stranger. The experimental design used in the present study was a return to that used by Byrne & Nelson (1964, 1965) in that homogeneous, rather than heterogeneous, topics were associated with the stranger and equal weights were employed.

The basic assumption was that a difference exists in the relevancy to

friendship formation of similar attitudes on friendship and similar attitudes on impersonal issues. Relevancy was defined in terms of the instrumental value of a topic to the receiver for a specific purpose or goal. It was hypothesized that agreement on the more relevant friendship topics would evoke a higher level of affiliation tendency than agreement on the less relevant impersonal topics.

METHOD

The same materials were used as in an earlier report (La Gaipa & Werner, 1971). A shortened version of the friendship expectancy (FE) scale was used. The 20 items represented the subscales dealing with acceptance, admiration, openness, and ritualistic social exchange. The social attitudes (SA) scale contains 28 items on such impersonal topics as student power, authority, drugs, and sex. The items from the FE scale were originally rated by Ss as having higher relevancy for friendship than the items from the SA scale. The FE scale was designated as measuring topics of high relevancy and the SA scale as measuring topics of low relevancy.

A total of 40 undergraduate students in introductory courses in psychology at the University of Windsor participated in the present study. Twenty Ss were administered the FE scale with instructions to rate each of the friendship statements on a 9-point scale according to how essential it was for maintaining a friendship with a social acquaintance. Twenty Ss were administered the SA scale with instructions to indicate the degree of agreement with each of the statements on a Likert-type scale.

About 1 week after the administration of the two scales, the Ss were returned bogus questionnaires prepared by the E to create two levels of agreement (.33 and .67). Topic relevancy was manipulated by the assignment of the more relevant FE or the less relevant SA scales to the Ss on which the stranger agreed (.67) or disagreed (.33). Four experimental conditions were created. The stranger expressed agreement on the friendship items (similarity-high relevancy), disagreement on the friendship items (dissimilarity-high relevancy), agreement on the impersonal items (similarity-low relevancy), and disagreement on the impersonal items (dissimilarity-low relevancy). This design permitted each S to respond only to one level of attitude similarity and one level of topic relevancy. Two affiliative types of judgments were made about the stranger: the degree of attraction and the potential level of friendship. The attraction measure was based on the last two items of the interpersonal judgment scale (IJS)

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Fig. 1. Mean attraction responses by similarity and relevancy.

used by Byrne & Nelson (1965). The two scores were summed and converted to yield a measure of attraction with a range of 1 to 6. The potential level of friendship with the stranger was measured by a 6-point scale on which the S indicated the highest level of friendship that he thought he could develop with the stranger.

RESULTS

The effects of similarity and relevancy are graphically presented in Fig. 1 for attraction and in Fig. 2 for potential level of friendship. The mean scores shown in Fig. 1 illustrate the strong influence of similarity on attraction, which is consistent with many earlier findings. The influence of relevancy on attraction is less evident. The mean scores shown in Fig. 2 suggest the possible influence of both similarity and relevancy on the potential level of friendship. Statistical tests were used to identify the significant relationships.

These data were treated by a third-factor analysis of variance in a 2 by 2 by 2 design with repeated measures on one factor (Winer, 1962). Significant main effects were found for both similarity ($p < .001$) and relevancy ($p < .01$). The within-S analysis revealed a three-way interaction of Similarity by Relevancy by Type of Judgment ($p < .05$). Further tests were made to examine simple effects. Analysis of the attraction responses (Fig. 1) revealed no significant interaction between similarity and relevancy and no significant main effect due to relevancy. Analysis of the potential level of friendship responses (Fig. 2) revealed a significant Similarity by

Relevancy interaction ($p < .01$). Perhaps the best interpretation of this interaction is that relevancy had no effect when the attitudes were dissimilar and a highly significant effect when the attitudes were similar ($p < .001$).

DISCUSSION

Two attempts to show the effects of topic relevancy on attraction have failed: the replication study (La Gaipa & Werner, 1971) in which the Byrne conditions were manipulated and in the present study under a different set of conditions. Topic relevancy was demonstrated, however, when the Ss judged the level of friendship that they thought could be developed with the stranger. This positive finding suggests that the way in which the dependent variable is measured is an important consideration. There is also some support for the present design, in which the Ss were exposed to homogeneous topics that were high or low in relevancy instead of the intrastranger design suggested by Byrne (1969).

There are some basic differences in these studies that should be considered. The present findings involve topic relevancy rather than topic importance. Furthermore, Byrne, London, & Griffith (1968) define topic importance in terms of the general value system of the Ss and independently of the IJS measure of attraction. In contrast, the friendship items are conceptually specific to the expected level of friendship measure. The friendship items differentiate between levels of friendship (Canfield & La Gaipa, 1970). Agreement on the importance attached to these friendship prescriptions was also predictive of the actual growth of friendship (Lischeron & La Gaipa, 1970). Topic effects may have been enhanced by the use of items with known validities.

Different interpretations may be needed to explain the findings obtained with the two measures of affiliation. The concept of consensual validation (Festinger, 1954) has been used to account for the relationship between attitude similarity and attraction. Attraction toward a stranger may be reinforced by similar attitudes because of the learned motive to be logical and accurate in perceiving reality. Topic content may have relatively little influence on how well a stranger is liked. But estimates of the potential level of friendship may require more relevant information. Agreement on the possible rewards to be derived from friendship may have greater instrumental value for friendship formation than agreement on social issues. Topic effects may depend on

Fig. 2. Mean friendship responses by similarity and relevancy.

whether cognitive or affective measures of affiliation are used.

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