
The Juncture of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Knowledge: Self-Certainty and Interpersonal Congruence

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It is proposed that when targets are especially certain of their self-views, their interaction partners will be especially likely to develop impressions of them that are consistent with these self-views. Two studies supported this prediction by demonstrating that, for self-views about which targets were highly certain, targets received self-consistent interpersonal appraisals. In contrast, in areas in which the same targets were relatively uncertain of their self-views, the appraisals they received were only weakly related to their self-views. This difference held for judgments of both valenced and nonvalenced traits and for judgments made by both poorly and well-acquainted raters. Potential mediators of interpersonal congruence are discussed, along with the implications of these findings for the accuracy of social perception and for the role of belief investment in self-concept maintenance.

How well are we understood by the people who inhabit our social worlds? Although most of us probably feel that we are well understood by our significant interaction partners, a long tradition of empirical research in psychology suggests that few of us are as well understood as we assume.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF INACCURACY

Forty years ago, Meehl (1954) became one of the first researchers to question the validity of human social judgment (cf., however, Ichheisser, 1943). Meehl pointed out that even highly trained professionals typically do a very poor job of predicting human behavior (see Dawes, Faust, & Meehl, 1989, for a review). Cronbach's (1955) critique of the newly developing accuracy literature reinforced the emerging skepticism

over the accuracy of human judgment by leading many to decide that the study of accuracy in person perception was no longer worth pursuing (see Kenny & Albright, 1987, for a more detailed historical review).

If researchers were willing to criticize the judgmental capacities of highly trained observers, it should come as no surprise that they eventually became highly critical of the judgmental capacities of highly naive observers. As researchers began to test ideas derived from Heider's (1958) influential work in attribution theory, they quickly discovered that human judgment often falls short of normative judgmental standards (e.g., see Jones & Harris, 1967; Ross, 1977; and see Jones, 1991, for a review). Although accuracy per se was not the focus of their work, Shrauger and Shoeneman's (1979) influential review of self-concept research further bolstered the idea that social judgment is often erroneous. In their review of studies examining the relation between self- and social appraisals, Shrauger and Shoeneman pointed out that whereas people *believe* that their interaction partners view them as they view themselves, the actual relation between self- and social appraisals is surprisingly low. At about the same time, Nisbett and Ross (1980) summarized the sentiments of many social and cognitive psychologists by pointing out that many forms of human social judgment are fraught with error (see also Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). In fact, in their extensive review of

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human social judgment, the most optimistic conclusion Nisbett and Ross could offer was that people make so many inferential errors that some of the most common errors will sometimes cancel each other out.

In recent years, the pendulum of opinion on the accuracy of social perception has begun to swing in the other direction, and it is now easy to identify advocates of the competence of the typical social observer. Swann (1984) has argued that objectively "erroneous" beliefs are often pragmatically accurate (e.g., functional or accurate in the context of a particular relationship). Along similar lines, Funder (1987) has argued that errors in the laboratory are often generated by inferential rules that typically produce valid judgments in the real world. As another example, Trope (1975; Trope & Bassok, 1982) has argued persuasively that people are particularly interested in highly diagnostic social information. Most recently, Gigerenzer (1991) has joined the growing list of advocates of accuracy by criticizing much of the traditional research on judgment under uncertainty. He has argued, for instance, that many of the normatively "incorrect" judgments that people make can be considered quite astute from the perspective of other, equally reasonable, normative standards.

SELF-CERTAINTY AND THE NEED FOR AUTHENTICITY

Although the debate over the accuracy of human judgment is unlikely to be settled any time soon, Kenny and Albright (1987) recently proposed a constructive compromise to this debate by arguing that researchers should move beyond the question *whether* social judgment is accurate and begin to ask *when* social judgment is accurate (see also Funder & Dobroth, 1987). It is in the spirit of this approach that the present research was conducted. Along these lines, we argue that an important, and often neglected, moderator of the accuracy of social perception resides in the people who serve as the objects of social perception. We all have an important stake, that is, in how we are viewed by others. Self-confirmation theories such as self-verification theory (Swann, 1983, 1987) emphasize this point.

Building on the assumption that people have a powerful need to predict and control their social worlds, self-verification theory suggests that once people become highly certain of their self-views, they should be highly motivated to persuade others to provide confirmation for these self-views. Research has shown that people do, in fact, prefer self-consistent social feedback. Moreover, the need for subjectively accurate feedback appears to be powerful enough that people with negative self-views will sometimes take active steps to acquire *negative* self-relevant feedback from others (Swann, 1990; Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992).

If the need for self-consistent feedback documented in previous research translates into the evaluations people typically receive from their habitual interaction partners, and if this need is most pronounced when people are most certain of their self-views (see Pelham, 1991; Swann, 1983; Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann, Pelham, & Chidester, 1988), then self-certainty might provide one answer to the question of when people are viewed accurately by others. More specifically, the relation between people's self-appraisals and the appraisals they receive from others should be especially strong when people are highly certain of their beliefs about themselves. Study 1 was designed to test this hypothesis.

STUDY 1

Study 1 assessed the relation between people's self-appraisals and the appraisals they received from close acquaintances on two distinct dimensions of self-evaluation. In particular, for each target participant, we identified (a) a specific self-view that was held with great certainty (the target's "most certain" self-view) and (b) a specific self-view that was held with little certainty (the target's "least certain" self-view). After these two beliefs were idiographically identified for each participant, the relation between people's self-views and the appraisals they received from a friend or roommate was assessed separately for each belief. It was expected that interpersonal congruence—that is, the correlation between people's self-views and the appraisals they received from friends—would be higher for participants' most certain than for their least certain self-views.

Method

OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURE

Participants took part in this survey study along with a same-sex friend or roommate. After reporting their specific self-views on five distinct dimensions of self-evaluation, participants reported the *certainty* of each of their specific self-views, making it possible to identify a "most certain" (i.e., a confidently held) and a "least certain" (i.e., a tenuously held) self-view for each participant. In addition to reporting their self-views, all participants reported their *views of each other* on all the dimensions on which they had rated themselves, making it possible to assess the relation between participants' self-views and the appraisals they received from their partners.

PARTICIPANTS

To obtain a large sample of participants, data from four independent student samples were combined. Samples 1 and 2 consisted of pairs of friends who had known each other for an average of about 2 years. These two

samples contained 214 and 140 undergraduates at two different large state universities. Sample 3 was composed of 210 arbitrarily assigned, first-semester freshman roommates who had lived together for 12 weeks at the time of their participation. Sample 4 was composed of 100 self-selected roommates who had known each other for an average of about 1 year at the time of their participation. All participants filled out a confidential survey focusing on "personality, friendship, and the acquaintance process."

Participants were included in this study only if they reported a nontrivial amount of variability in the certainty of their specific self-views. In particular, participants were identified as targets only if they reported a discrepancy of at least 2 points (on a 9-point scale) in the certainty of their most and least certain self-views. Application of this selection procedure left 438 participants in the study.

MEASURES AND ANALYSES

The Self-Attributes Questionnaire. Participants reported their self-views on the short (5-item) version of Pelham and Swann's (1989) Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ-S). This measure asks participants to rate themselves relative to other college students on five distinct dimensions: intellectual ability, social skills, artistic ability, athletic ability, and physical attractiveness. For each of these dimensions, participants rated themselves on a percentile scale from 1, *bottom five percent*, to 10, *top five percent*. After reporting their self-views, participants reported the certainty of each of their specific self-views using scales anchored by 1, *not at all certain* and 9, *extremely certain*. Participants also rated the personal importance of their specific self-views on similar 9-point scales. Finally, all participants reported their views of their acquaintances on the same dimensions on which they had rated themselves. Further details on the characteristics of the SAQ-S can be found in Pelham and Swann (1989).

Assessment of congruence. As noted elsewhere (Funder & Colvin, 1988; Kenny & Albright, 1987), interrater agreement is a necessary but not a sufficient criterion for the establishment of judgmental accuracy. All else being equal, however, accuracy is most likely to be high when consensus is high, and comparisons of consensus should be particularly informative when two or more judgments are compared for the same set of raters. Nonetheless, in the absence of objective data concerning the traits and abilities of our participants, we refer to our analyses of self-other agreement as analyses of *congruence* rather than accuracy. To assess congruence in this research, we correlated target participants' self-views with the appraisals they received from their partners on the dimensions of the targets' most and least certain self-views.

Results and Discussion

We expected that the relation between participants' self-views and the appraisals they received from their partners would be especially strong for participants' most certain self-views. This prediction was confirmed. As shown in the top row of Table 1, for their most confidently held self-views, the appraisals that participants received from their relationship partners were strongly related to their own self-appraisals ($r = .61$). In contrast, in the area of participants' least certain self-views, the appraisals they received were only weakly related to their own self-appraisals ($r = .31$). In fact, as indicated by the 95% confidence intervals provided in Table 1, the lower limit of the correlation for participants' most certain self-views was higher than the upper limit of the correlation for participants' least certain self-views. Thus participants who were poorly understood in the area of their least certain self-views were precisely understood in the area of their most certain self-views.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

The idiographic approach adopted in Study 1 suggests that the same people who are viewed in a highly congruent fashion concerning beliefs of which they are highly certain may be viewed in a highly incongruent fashion concerning beliefs of which they are highly uncertain. Thus, although some targets are probably much easier to judge than others, these results suggest that, in at least some areas, almost everyone may be easy to judge by almost anyone. Critics of idiographic analyses, however, have pointed out that approaches such as the one adopted in Study 1 may produce inflated estimates of the relation between people's self- and received appraisals. Below we address several concerns likely to be raised by critics of idiographic approaches.

Confounds with specific attributes. If participants were especially likely to identify some particular SAQ-S traits as their most or least certain (e.g., if most participants identified physical attractiveness as their most confidently held self-view and artistic ability as their least confidently held self-view), then it is feasible that the findings of Study 1 could reflect the differential congruence associated with different *traits* rather than the effects of different levels of certainty. To examine this possibility, we dummy-coded participants' most and least certain self-views to identify the particular SAQ-S dimensions that each participant identified as his or her most and least certain. We then conducted auxiliary analyses (simultaneous multiple regressions) in which we predicted the appraisals that participants received from their partners from (a) the value of each participant's self-rating, (b) the specific dimension that each partici-

TABLE 1: Congruence Correlations for Targets' Most and Least Confidently Held Self-Views, Study 1

Sample	Target's Certainty of Self-View			
	Least		Most	
	Observed Correlation	95% Confidence Interval	Observed Correlation	95% Confidence Interval
Normal	.31	.22 to .39	.61	.55 to .67
Random	.12	.02 to .21	.09	.00 to .18
Truncated	.14	-.02 to .29	.53	.41 to .63

NOTE: *Random* refers to correlations for the full sample of 438 randomly assigned targets and perceivers. *Truncated* refers to correlations for the subset of 156 participants whose most certain self-views were highly moderate (i.e., restricted in range).

pant identified as his or her most or least certain, and (c) the interaction (the cross-product) of these first two terms. The analysis for participants' least certain self-views revealed no main or interactive effects of the dummy-coded dimension variable, all $ps > .25$, indicating that the findings for participants' least certain self-views were not qualified by the particular dimension that participants identified as their least certain. The analysis for participants' most certain self-views, however, yielded a reliable interaction for the dimension variable ($ps > .03$), suggesting that the results differed for different traits.

Follow-up analyses revealed that, for the 36 participants who identified social skills as their most certain self-view, their self-views were unrelated to the appraisals they received from their partners ($r = .05$). Further analyses revealed that the participants in this sample who were highly certain of their social skills almost invariably possessed highly *positive* beliefs about their social skills. In fact, only 2 of these 36 participants rated themselves below the midpoint of the scale, and the partners of these participants rated them significantly more negatively than they rated themselves; respective means were 6.78 and 7.92, $F(1, 35) = 8.77$, $p = .006$, for a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). (Analyses in the other four areas showed no evidence of this pattern.) These presumably self-serving self-ratings, combined with the restriction of range they created, seem to have left little room for congruence in the area of participants' social skills. Although these findings qualify our primary findings, they cannot account for them. Analyses that excluded participants who identified social skills as either their most or their least certain self-view produced findings virtually identical to the findings for the total sample.

Stereotyped accuracy. Because the methodology of Study 1 involves the idiographic identification of different confidently (and tenuously) held self-views for different participants, it is possible that these findings reflect a confound between true congruence or accuracy (i.e., a

person's knowledge of a particular other person) and stereotypic accuracy (i.e., a person's knowledge of people in general; see Cronbach, 1955). As a simplified example, if half our participants identified intellectual ability as their most certain self-view and the other half identified athletic ability as their most certain self-view, and if some raters realize that most college students believe that they are more intelligent than athletic, then these raters could make stereotypic guesses in both of these areas that would masquerade as true congruence. In contrast, if half our participants identified social skills and half identified physical attractiveness as their least certain self-view, and if the typical social perceiver has very little idea whether the typical college student believes he or she is more sociable or more attractive, then perceivers would be unable to benefit from any educated guesses in the area of participants' least certain self-views.

To address the possibility that this or some other form of stereotyped congruence effect might be responsible for our results, we conducted an analysis in which we assigned perceivers *randomly* to targets and correlated the relevant ratings made by these perceivers with the self-ratings of the targets to whom they were assigned. As illustrated in the second row of Table 1, these analyses revealed that our findings were not a product of stereotyped accuracy. First, in absolute terms, the stereotyped accuracy correlations observed were very small. Second, and more important, the stereotyped accuracy correlation was slightly larger for participants' least certain than for their most certain self-views. Thus if perceivers had based their judgments of their friends only on their knowledge of students in general, they would have generated slightly more congruent judgments for their friends' *least* certain self-views.

Restriction or inflation of range. Another common criticism of idiographic approaches is that they often confound (within-subject) psychological variables with the restriction of range or variability of measurement of the predictor variables of interest (see Rushton, Jackson, & Paunonen, 1981). Although we believe that the validity of such criticisms is open to debate when there is a theoretical reason to expect a psychological variable to be associated with extremity, we still thought it important to see whether the effects observed in Study 1 could be explained completely as a function of belief extremity.¹

To examine this possibility, we conducted an alternative analysis in which we artificially restricted the range of scores on participants' most certain self-views by focusing solely on those participants who gave themselves moderate self-ratings (i.e., self-ratings of 4, 5, 6, or 7 on a 10-point scale) in the area of their most certain self-views. Not surprisingly, this set of participants ($n = 156$) showed somewhat greater variability on their least certain than on their most certain self-views (respective

standard deviations were 1.33 and 1.09). Despite this fact, as shown in the bottom row of Table 1, the appraisals received by these participants were still more strongly associated with their own self-appraisals for their most certain than for their least certain self-views. Thus the results of Study 1 cannot be explained as a simple artifact of the greater variability of participants' most certain self-views.

Nonlinearity confounds. It is possible that the difference between the congruence correlations for participants' most and least certain self-views observed in Study 1 merely reflects a difference in the shape (i.e., the curvilinearity) of these two congruence correlations. In particular, if the correlation between people's self- and received appraisals were linear for people's most certain self-views and curvilinear for people's least certain self-views, then the results of Study 1 could be misleading. To examine this issue, we conducted two separate hierarchical curvilinear regression analyses—one for participants' most certain and one for participants' least certain self-views (see Pedhazur, 1982, pp. 403-414). In these regressions, we predicted the interpersonal appraisals that participants received from both a linear and a quadratic term (participants' self-views were entered first, followed by their self-views squared). Neither of these analyses yielded evidence of a significant quadratic effect, both $ps > .14$, respective curvilinear partial $r_s = .07$ and $.04$ for participants' most and least certain self-views. Thus differences in the shape of the correlation curves for participants' most and least certain self-views cannot explain our findings.

CONCLUSIONS

The supplemental analyses of Study 1 not only support our primary hypothesis, they also support the validity of idiographic approaches to personality and the self-concept. Unlike more traditional (nomothetic) analyses of personality, idiographic analyses are more likely to emphasize people's unique psychological investments in their beliefs (Allport, 1961). Although some researchers have argued that idiographic approaches offer no unique empirical or theoretical insights into personality, the results of the present study, combined with the results of other recent idiographic studies of the self-concept (see Pelham, 1993, for a review), suggest that idiographic analyses may provide useful psychological insights.

The results of Study 1 are clear. People are especially likely to be viewed as they view themselves when they are especially certain of their self-views. In contrast, when people are uncertain of their self-evaluations, even their closest companions may not see them as they see themselves. These findings do not appear to be an artifact of the particular attributes that people identify as their

most certain; they cannot be explained as the result of stereotyped accuracy; and they do not appear to be the simple product of the variability in self-ratings that people provide for their most certain self-views. Although it appears that self-certainty moderated the congruence of the interpersonal appraisals that participants received in Study 1, we do not know whether these effects would generalize to other psychological traits or to other relationships. Because our findings for participants' most certain self-views did not apply to at least one psychological dimension, we were especially concerned about the generalizability of our findings to other traits. Study 2 was designed with this concern in mind.

STUDY 2

In Study 2 we assessed people's self-views on 30 neutral traits rather than on the valenced traits of the SAQ-S, and we examined the appraisals people received both from a partner with whom they were minimally acquainted and from a partner with whom they were well acquainted. In particular, we assessed the relation between target participants' self-views and the appraisals they received from (a) a student who had observed them only briefly and (b) their mothers.

Method

OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURE

Undergraduates enrolled in one of two research methods courses announced their names and home towns to the other members of their class. Before this group exercise, each participant had drawn the name of a classmate out of a hat with instructions to be prepared to judge the personality of the person whose name they drew (participants were told that if they drew the name of a person with whom they were at all acquainted, they should return the name to the hat and draw again). After completing the group exercise, each participant privately filled out a 30-item personality inventory (along with a self-certainty rating for each of the 30 items) and then rated the personality of the person whose name he or she had drawn. A subset of these participants were rated on the same 30 traits by their mothers, by means of a survey delivered and returned by mail.

PARTICIPANTS

Fifty-one undergraduates enrolled in one of two research methods courses participated in this confidential study in exchange for a chance to win one of six \$25 prizes in a lottery. All students in attendance in each of the two classes took part in the primary phase of the study. In the smaller of the two classes ($n = 18$), participants were asked, after completing the primary phase of the study, to provide the mailing addresses of their moth-

ers with the understanding that their mothers would be asked to fill out a follow-up survey in which they rated the targets on the same dimensions on which targets had rated themselves. All the participants in this class provided their mothers' addresses, and 14 of the 18 mothers who were sent the surveys returned the surveys within a month of the original study.

Participants were included in the analyses only if the average certainty level they indicated for their 10 most confidently held self-views was at least 2 points greater (on a 9-point scale) than the average certainty level for their 10 least confidently held self-views. Application of this selection criterion and elimination of 2 participants who failed to complete the surveys left 44 participants in the total sample and 13 participants in the subsample in which ratings from mothers were available.

MEASURES AND ANALYSES

The Personality Checklist. Participants reported their self-views on 30 personality traits specifically selected (from Anderson's, 1968, list of 555 trait terms) to be neutral in social desirability. On a scale with a theoretical mean of 3.0, the words ranged in their likableness ratings from 2.54 (for *dependent*) to 3.57 (for *persistent*). Unlike the items in the SAQ-S, none of the traits referred to talents or abilities. Instead, most referred to stylistic or expressive tendencies (e.g., *blunt, cautious, emotional, forward, perfectionistic, restless*). The 30 trait terms were arranged in alphabetical order, and participants provided a self-rating for each trait on a scale ranging from 1, *not at all like me*, to 9, *exactly like me*. After reporting their self-views on the 30 traits, participants reported the certainty and importance of each of their self-views on 9-point scales identical to those used in Study 1.

Assessment of congruence. After idiographically identifying the 10 traits that each participant rated as his or her most (and least) confidently held, we assessed congruence in this study by computing two separate within-couple correlations: one for each participant's 10 most confidently held self-views and one for each participant's 10 least confidently held self-views. For these correlations, the predictor observations were the 10 specific self-ratings provided by targets, and the criterion observations were the same 10 specific ratings as reported by a classmate or by a participant's mother.

Results and Discussion

Were these participants understood particularly well in areas in which they were highly confident of their self-views? To answer this question, we submitted the within-couple correlations observed for participants' most and least certain self-views to a within-subjects ANOVA. As summarized in the top row of Table 2, this analysis revealed that, in areas in which targets were

TABLE 2: Median Within-Couple Congruence Correlations for Targets' 10 Most and 10 Least Confidently Held Self-Views, Study 2

Perceiver	Target's Certainty of Self-Views	
	Least	Most
Classmate	.10	.32
Mother	.12	.60
Randomly paired classmate	.13	.14
Randomly paired mother	.31	.21

NOTE: All correlations are median within-couple correlations based on 10 observations per participant.

highly certain of their self-views, raters who merely observed them reporting their names and home towns made judgments that agreed substantially with targets' own self-ratings. In contrast, in the areas of their least certain self-views, these seemingly transparent targets proved to be quite opaque, $F(1, 43) = 4.57, p = .038$, for a within-subjects comparison between the correlations for participants' most and least certain self-views.

As shown in the second row of Table 2, an examination of the ratings provided by participants' mothers provided even stronger support for our predictions. In particular, in areas in which target participants were uncertain of their self-evaluations, the judgments of their mothers were just as incongruent as the judgments of those who hardly knew them. In contrast, an examination of participants' most confidently held beliefs revealed that their mothers knew them very well, $F(1, 12) = 8.53, p = .013$, for a within-subjects comparison between these two correlations.²

Because the idiographic approach to congruence adopted in this study involved the use of within-subjects profile correlations, we were concerned that these effects might be attributable to the effects of stereotyped accuracy. A supplemental analysis in which we randomly assigned perceivers to targets revealed that these concerns were unwarranted. In particular, as illustrated in the last two rows of Table 2, the maximum correlations that targets could have generated on the basis of normative ratings were very small and, more important, were virtually identical for participants' most and least certain self-views. In fact, the median congruence correlation of .32 observed for classmates' judgments of participants' most certain self-views was still reliably different from zero when we partialled out the potential effects of stereotyped accuracy (by subtracting .14 from each congruence score), $F(1, 43) = 8.24, p = .006$.

These results also appeared to hold independent of the differential variability of participants' most and least certain self-views. In particular, when we examined the congruence correlations of 12 participants whose least certain self-views were, on the average, slightly more variable than their most certain self-views (as indicated

by a comparison of the within-subject variances associated with each particular participant's two sets of 10 scores), the results were virtually identical to those observed for the total sample (the respective median r s were .07 and .30 for participants' least and most certain self-views).

Finally, these results cannot be explained by differences in the shape of the correlation curves for participants' most and least certain self-views. In the case of both appraisals from nominal acquaintances and appraisals from mothers, within-couple regressions patterned directly after the between-subjects curvilinear regressions used in Study 1 yielded no evidence of curvilinear effects. The relevant quadratic partial r s ranged from $-.03$ to $.03$, all p s $> .50$.

Taken together, the results of Studies 1 and 2 suggest that once people become highly certain of their self-views, they become especially adept at securing self-consistent feedback from others. These effects do not appear to be dependent on the specific content or valence of people's self-views; they do not appear to be a by-product of stereotyped accuracy; and they appear to generalize to both casual and serious relationships. In short, the findings of this report suggest that the confidence people place in their self-views plays an important role in the process whereby these beliefs come to be shared by others.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The studies described in this report tell a simple story. When people are especially confident of their self-views, their interaction partners are especially likely to confirm these self-views. In this research, we have assumed that when people become highly confident of their self-views, they take active steps to obtain this social confirmation. Although the studies reported here are consistent with this position, they say very little about *how* people manage to gain this confirmation. These studies provide no evidence, that is, on the mechanisms responsible for our findings.

One possible mechanism for the development of congruence is grounded in people's characteristic interaction strategies: Once people become highly certain of their self-views, they may begin to engage in interaction strategies designed to elicit self-consistent social feedback (Swann, 1983, 1987). Consistent with this idea, Pelham and Swann (1994) have found that people are more likely to solicit self-consistent social feedback (i.e., to actively seek out feedback that supports their existing self-views) in the area of their most certain than in the area of their least certain self-views. People who possessed negative confidently held beliefs, for example, were especially likely to seek feedback about their flaws

rather than their strengths in that particular area. In contrast, in the area of their least certain self-views, the same participants engaged in information-seeking activities that were only weakly related to their self-views.

Although mechanisms such as this can easily account for the ratings our participants received from interaction partners with whom they were well acquainted, they obviously cannot account for the findings concerning minimal acquaintances. Instead, our results for minimal acquaintances are reminiscent of the findings of Kenny, Horner, Kashy, and Chu (1992). These researchers found that, for at least some dimensions of personality (e.g., extraversion), independent raters who observed targets in the absence of any meaningful interaction with the targets agreed at an above-chance level in their ratings of targets. Presumably, this "consensus at zero acquaintance" emerges because of raters' shared beliefs in the validity of stereotypic (i.e., culturally agreed-on) personality cues. If perceivers are capable of using such culturally agreed-on cues to form impressions of others, it seems possible that targets are also capable of using such cues to manage the impressions that others form of them. It is possible, that is, that people are especially likely to display culturally agreed-on "identity cues" in areas in which they have developed especially confident beliefs. For example, whereas the professional model may worry about whether her designer pumps accentuate her lipstick, the professional athlete may worry more about whether her Reebok Pumps accentuate her biceps. Although this account is clearly speculative, the work of Kenny and his colleagues suggests that if targets do display such cues in their efforts to verify their identities, perceivers will find it easy to make use of these cues in their judgments (see also McArthur & Baron, 1983).

The explanations discussed thus far are all based on the assumption that our participants were motivated to verify their confidently held beliefs about themselves (and hence took active steps to do so). Although this motivational account provides a reasonable explanation for our findings, it is by no means the only explanation. It is possible, for instance, that self-certainty is the product, rather than the predecessor, of interpersonal congruence. From this perspective, exposure to particularly clear or consistent "reflected appraisals" from others might cause people to become particularly certain of some of their specific self-views (see Pelham, 1991, Study 2, for indirect evidence along these lines). Although reflected appraisal processes cannot explain our findings for minimal acquaintances, we suspect that both self-verification processes and reflected appraisal processes are responsible for most of our findings. Moreover, even if our participants actively verified their confidently held self-views in the context of the relation-

ships we examined, it still seems likely that some form of reflected appraisal process played a role in the initial development of their beliefs.

Although the results of this report suggest that self-certainty is typically associated with especially congruent interpersonal evaluations, it appears that this is not always the case. In particular, Study 1 revealed that participants who were highly certain of their social skills were *not* perceived in an especially congruent fashion, and we suggested that very little congruence was observed in this area because our participants possessed unrealistically positive views of their social skills. Although there are many other potential explanations for this finding, the fact that being socially skilled is both highly important to most college students and somewhat difficult to define objectively probably sets the stage for particularly self-serving self-ratings in this area (see Dunning, Meyerowitz, & Holzberg, 1989; Kunda, 1990; Pelham, 1993; Pelham & Swinkels, 1994; Taylor & Brown, 1988). If this interpretation is correct, it appears that people who possess confidently held but unrealistically positive self-views may be forced to rely heavily on intrapersonal rather than interpersonal techniques to validate or maintain these beliefs.

Even if we assume that certainty is typically associated with interpersonal congruence rather than optimistic illusions, it is still possible that belief certainty is a proxy for an alternative moderator of interpersonal congruence. For instance, Bem and Allen (1974) have shown that self-other agreement is particularly high in areas in which people report that their behavior is cross-situationally consistent. Along similar lines, the work of Baumeister and Tice (1988) suggests that self-other agreement should be particularly high in areas in which people possess "metatraits." Consistent with the idea that self-certainty may be related to either cross-situational consistency or "traitedness," Pelham (1991) has shown that people's most certain self-views are much more temporally stable than their least certain self-views. Although the prospective nature of Pelham's work suggests that self-certainty causes belief stability rather than the reverse, there is no guarantee that temporal stability translates directly into cross-situational consistency. Prospective studies of congruence that assess actual or self-perceived cross-situational consistency, metatraits, or both will be required to provide a more definitive answer to this question.

Assuming that our perspective on these results is correct, these findings have important theoretical implications for the debate concerning the accuracy or congruence of social judgment. In particular, the present findings suggest that the degree to which targets are understood by their interaction partners depends partly on the degree to which targets make themselves

understandable—that is, on targets' motivations to be viewed as they view themselves (see also Pelham's, 1993, evidence that when targets are motivated to hide important flaws, the relation between self- and interpersonal appraisals is especially low). As mentioned earlier, previous research in social perception has emphasized the role of the motives of the social perceiver. The present research suggests, however, that the motives of the socially perceived (e.g., the motive to verify one's self-views) may also play an important role in social perception.

The present findings, together with other recent work on self-investment, suggest that people's psychological investments in their self-views have important consequences for a wide variety of social and cognitive processes. As suggested earlier, for example, Pelham (1991) showed that belief certainty has important implications for the temporal stability of people's self-views. Along somewhat different lines, Pelham and Wachsmuth (1994) found that self-certainty is an important moderator of social comparison processes. More specifically, Pelham and Wachsmuth found that the same social comparison information will have different effects on people's self-evaluations depending on the certainty of these self-evaluations (when people are highly certain of their self-evaluations, exposure to a talented partner may increase, rather than decrease, their self-perceived competence). As researchers continue to explore the origins and consequences of people's self-conceptions, they should consider the role of self-certainty as a potential moderator of both self- and interpersonal evaluation processes. A long tradition of self-concept research has emphasized the idea that people's social worlds shape their self-views. Although we concur with this view of self-concept formation, a growing body of research is beginning to suggest that once people develop well-articulated self-views, these self-views begin to play an important role in the shaping of people's social worlds.

NOTES

1. Because part of the psychological meaning of belief certainty is belief extremity, we believe that it can be misleading to separate certainty and extremity. Past critics of idiographic methods have argued that researchers must always control for restriction of range when they assess beliefs idiographically. From the perspective of classical measurement theory, however, the restriction-of-range problem applies only when the range of measured scores on a variable of interest (e.g., Graduate Record Examination scores) is *artificially* restricted in some way (as in the case of the GRE scores of students admitted to competitive graduate programs). However, when the variability in a set of observed scores is likely to be representative of the true variability of scores in the population, controlling for "restriction of range" can yield a misleading picture of the true relation between two variables (as would be the case if we corrected the restriction of range observed in adult heights and weights by adding a group of infants to our sample). See Baumeister and Tice (1988) for a related discussion.

2. To facilitate absolute interpretation, we present median within-couple correlation coefficients rather than their *z*-score equivalents in Table 2. We conducted supplemental analyses in which we converted

all the primary within-couple correlations of Study 2 to their z-score equivalents before analysis. The results of these analyses were significant (both p s < .025) for both the target-mother and the target-nominal-acquaintance comparisons.

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