

## Abstract

The present study examined from a social-constructionist perspective how wisdom is ascribed to an advice giver. Three characteristics of the advice-giver were experimentally manipulated: (1) *Intellectual excellence*, as indicated by the level of wisdom-related knowledge (high vs. low) in the advice; (2) *interpersonal skills*, as indicated by the advisor's nonverbal listening behavior (empathic vs. non-empathic), and (3) *life experience*, as implied by the advisor's chronological age (older vs. younger).

In addition to the advisor's personal characteristics that influence perceptions of wisdom, the study also investigated the effect of two variables on participants' impression formation: (1) *wisdom cueing* and (2) *experience* with the advisor.

Participants ( $N = 160$ ,  $M = 22.9$  yrs.,  $SD = 1.73$ ) watched a silent video in which one person listened to another. Then they were presented with a short text reflecting the advice given by the listener. Afterwards, they were asked to evaluate the advisor's level of wisdom. To investigate the effect of wisdom cueing on wisdom attributions, half of the participants received the instruction to think about wisdom prior to viewing the stimulus material. To investigate the effect of experience with the advisor, participants were repeatedly presented with the same stimulus material.

Advice-givers were perceived as being wiser when they showed a high level (rather than a low level) of wisdom-related knowledge in their advice, when they listened empathically (rather than non-empathically), and when they were older (rather than younger). The effects of these three characteristics on wisdom attributions were independent of each other.

The instruction to think about wisdom increased the perceivers' sensitivity to features typically associated with a wise person. In the wisdom cueing condition, perceivers rated advice-givers who showed three versus two wisdom prototypical features as significantly wiser. This effect was not found for the non-cued participants. The study also showed that the more often participants saw the advisor and read his/her advice the more likely they were to use the wisdom-related knowledge reflected in the advice as a cue for their wisdom attributions. In contrast, the effect of the nonverbally encoded personal characteristics (age, listening behavior) did not change over time.

In general, the study revealed that personal characteristics identified in both explicit and implicit theoretical approaches of wisdom can be operationalized within an experimental person perception paradigm and that these characteristics are used by participants as cues to attribute wisdom to a *specific* advice-giving person. It also demonstrated that these characteristics operate fairly independent of each other and require more or less time and effort to be processed.