

Coda

The study attempted to extend past work on the perception of wisdom. Specifically, the study embedded wisdom into an interpersonal context of an advice-giving situation, included nonverbal listening behavior as a behavioral manifestation of wisdom, investigated age and wisdom in an ecologically valid way by showing it visually rather than describing it verbally, ensured the comparability of targets through careful pilot work, and demonstrated the necessity to not only focus on the *content* of the perception of persons as wise, but also on the *processes* that influence wisdom attributions.

The study provided evidence for the potential benefits of a social-constructionist perspective (see Meacham, 1990; Staudinger, 1996). In my view, a social constructionist perspective on wisdom can open interesting and fresh insights on the phenomenon of wisdom in terms of its expression and development: First, because it emphasizes „subjective“ rather than „objective“ indicators of wisdom that will lead to a person being consulted for advice and being nominated as being wise; second, because it emphasizes the processes of construction that influence the attribution of wisdom; and third, a social-constructionist approach will require the more detailed investigation of situations and contexts in which wisdom is applied. Some target characteristics may be relevant for the perception of advisors as being wise in some situations, such as advice-giving, but not in others, such as creative life-management (see Sowarka, 1989). Future research on the attribution of wisdom

should acknowledge the social nature of wisdom and address the question which target in which wisdom context will be perceived as being wise by which perceiver. It is part of the definition of wisdom as an ideal concept that only very few people, if any, can be expected to be wise. It might be useful to adjust our scientific endeavors to this notion and reformulate some of our research questions. Rather than searching for wisdom as a characteristic of older persons in general, it may be more appropriate to search for the unique and rare cases of older persons' wisdom.

When it suggests more questions than it can conclusively answer, the presented research shares the fate of many psychological studies. The „*Four laws of psychology*“ that Margaret Matlin pointed out at the 111th annual meeting of the American Psychological Association apply to this study as they do to many others:

1. *Some do, some don't,*
2. *It depends on how you measure it,*
3. *The differences are not very big, and*
4. *It's more complicated than that.*

However, the effects that were found in this study are in accordance with the theoretical assumptions outlined before. New studies will help to address different aspects of the perception of wisdom and try to be parsimonious as well as adequate.