On the Persuasiveness of Similar Others: The Role of Feeling of Certainty

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Contribution Statement

Previous explanations for the persuasiveness of similar advisers assume a cognitive and computation-like mechanism for the effect. These explanations generally assert that one's similarity with an adviser renders the content of the advice more diagnostic and thus increases persuasion. We propose a complementary feeling-based account for source similarity effects and argue that people incorporate into their judgments their momentary subjective experience from receiving and processing another person's advice. Specifically, we propose that an advice-taker's perceived similarity with an adviser contributes to the advice-taker's cognitive feeling of certainty. In other words, similarity causes the advice to "feel more right." This feeling is incorporated as information into the advice-taker's judgment about the topic of the advice, and thereby increases persuasion.

Abstract

We suggest that while receiving and processing advice, advice-takers have a motive to take the adviser's perspective. Similar advisers are more persuasive because receiving advice from a similar adviser is compatible with this perspective-taking motive, and this compatibility creates a momentary feeling of certainty (a "feels right" experience) while a person receives advice from similar advisers. Our studies show that (1) advice-takers' reliance on their feelings moderates the persuasiveness of similar advisers, (2) advice-takers' self-reported "feels right" experience while receiving the advice mediates this moderation, (3) persuasiveness of similar advisers is attenuated if advice-takers misattribute their "feels right" experience to a source other than the advice, (4) persuasiveness of similar advisers is attenuated when advice-takers already feel certain (vs. uncertain), and (5) the relationship between advice-takers' self-reported "feels right" experience and adviser similarity is attenuated if advice-takers are instructed to avoid taking the adviser's perspective.

We take other people's advice for many decisions in life. Whether the advice we receive persuades us depends largely on the adviser's characteristics. The adviser's similarity to the advice-taker is among the important source characteristics, and we have long known that similarity increases persuasion (Hovland and Weiss 1951; Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953). However, why are similar advisers more persuasive? In this paper we show that, other than influencing what we *think*, similarity to an adviser also influences how we *feel* towards the advice, which in turn affects its persuasiveness.

Previous explanations for the persuasiveness of similar advisers assume a cognitive and computation-like mechanism for the effect. These explanations generally assert that the advice-taker's similarity with an adviser renders the content of the advice more diagnostic and thus increases persuasion. For example, Hovland et al. (1953) proposed that advice-takers consider a similar adviser's advice to be more diagnostic because they assume that a similar adviser will have values, interests, and needs similar to theirs. Empirical investigation of the proposed mechanism has been scarce. To our knowledge, only Gino, Shang, and Croson (2009) have investigated why and how similar advisers are more persuasive. They found that similarity increases the informativeness of the advice when people judge their own actions (vs. actions of others). More generally, the ample prior research on source effects has also mainly focused on computation-like and rule-based thinking (in form of both heuristics and elaborated inferences) as an explanatory mechanism (Chaiken 1980; Gino et al. 2009; Kang and Herr 2006; Petty and Cacioppo 1984; Petty and Cacioppo 1986).

The exclusive focus of prior research on computation-like processes to explain source effects is surprising given that research from many streams of psychology shows that people's judgments are often feeling-based (Damasio 1994; Epstein 1994; Greifeneder, Bless, and Pham

2011; Zajonc 1980). Persuasion too has an experiential and subjective component. Moreover, the role of feelings in persuasion is not limited to affective feelings (Bless, Mackie, and Schwarz 1992), but also includes cognitive feelings (Cesario, Higgins, and Scholer 2008; Wanke, Bless, and Biller 1996), such as the cognitive feeling of certainty (Clore and Parrott 1994).

While not disputing the role of rule-based mechanisms in the persuasiveness of similar others, we propose that people incorporate into their judgment their momentary subjective experience from receiving and processing another person's advice. Specifically, we propose that one's perceived similarity with an adviser contributes to the advice-taker's cognitive feeling of certainty. In other words, similarity causes the advice to "feel more right." This feeling is incorporated as information (Schwarz and Clore 1983) into the advice-taker's judgment about the topic of the advice, and thereby increases persuasion.

SIMILAR ADVISERS AND CERTAINTY

Kagan (1972, 54) defines uncertainty as "incompatibility between cognitive structures, between cognitive structures and experience, or between cognitive structures and behavior." In this definition, "cognitive structures" may refer to people's motives, dispositions, or mental states or schemas. Certainty, according to such a definition, is a subjective state of the person and corresponds to what could be called a state of "cognitive harmony" (i.e., a "feels right" experience), rather than a state of "cognitive tension" (i.e., a "feels wrong" experience). In the context of advice, a feeling of certainty ("feeling right") may be seen "to confirm, to support as true, legal, or just" (Higgins 2012, 249) the advice-taker's reaction to the advice and thus increase persuasiveness of the advice.

How does a person's similarity to an adviser create a feeling of certainty? One of mankind's remarkable abilities is the ability to mentalize, or take the perspective of others. Research has hardly considered the role of perspective-taking in persuasion (but see Friestad and Wright 1994). However, we assume that advice-takers have a strong motive for taking the adviser's perspective while receiving and processing advice. Support for our assumption comes from neuroimaging studies. Substantial neuroimaging evidence shows that a neural network consisting of the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC), the temporal poles (TP), and the posterior superior temporal sulcus (pSTS) is jointly activated and is responsible for mentalizing tasks (Frith and Frith 2003; Frith and Frith 2006; Spunt and Lieberman 2012; Zaki and Ochsner 2012). Importantly, recent neuroimaging studies show the important role of perspective-taking in persuasion (Falk et al. 2010; Falk, Spunt, and Lieberman 2012). For example, Falk et al. (2010) investigated the neural networks associated with being persuaded and found that across different cultures (i.e., Korean and American samples) and across different media (i.e., text and video), the mentalizing neural network is the network that is almost exclusively associated with persuasion. Moreover, both behavioral and neuroimaging evidence suggests that similarity, even when as subtle as membership in similar groups, facilitates perspective-taking (Bruneau, Dufour, and Saxe 2012; Davis et al. 1996; Mathur et al. 2010; Norton et al. 2003; Smith and Henry 1996; Waytz et al. 2010). We believe that because of the advice-taker's motive to take the adviser's perspective, and because similarity facilitates this motive, the advice-taker will feel more certain (i.e., "feel more right") while receiving and processing an advice from a similar adviser. In Kagan's (1972) terminology, because of the compatibility between the advice-taker's cognitive structures (i.e., perspective-taking motive) and experience (i.e., receiving advice from an adviser who facilitates the perspective-taking motive), the advice-taker will momentarily feel more

certain while receiving advice from a similar adviser. It is important to note that this feeling of certainty is independent of the substance of the information contained in the advice, or whatever thoughts that are produced during processing of the advice (Schwarz et al. 1991). Furthermore, people use their subjective experiences of certainty (or uncertainty) in their judgments as information (Clore and Parrott 1994; Schwarz and Clore 1983). Thus, the feeling of certainty caused by advice-takers' similarity to an adviser contributes to the persuasiveness of the advice only when advice-takers rely on their feelings (Greifeneder et al. 2011).

Insert figure 1 about here.

To summarize, as illustrated in figure 1, we propose that advice-takers have a strong motive to take the adviser's perspective while receiving and processing the advice (tested in study 5). Receiving advice from a similar adviser is compatible with this perspective-taking motive and thus creates a momentary feeling of certainty or a "feels right" experience (tested in studies 2A and B, 3, and 4). This momentary feeling of certainty enhances persuasion only when advice-takers have a propensity to rely on their feelings in their judgments (tested in studies 1A–C and 2A and B).

OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

We use a similar paradigm for all eight studies reported in this paper. All studies are conducted in the context of taking advice from an online hotel reviewer. We ask participants to read and imagine a scenario in which they will book a hotel online. Next, participants read one or

two reviews of an anonymous hotel, and then evaluate the hotel based on the reviews. The reviews are the only pieces of information participants receive about the hotel and include the reviewers' profiles, which are used to induce perceptions of similarity or dissimilarity. We use negative online reviews in all our studies. Therefore, a lower hotel evaluation implies higher persuasiveness of the review.

In this paper, we provide causal evidence for different parts of our proposed model across different studies (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005). We also rule out potential alternative explanations by comparing our findings across studies. Thus, we need to ensure that differences between the stimuli used in different studies do not drive the various effects. By using a single context and relatively homogenous stimuli throughout our studies, we ensure that the studies are comparable and that context-driven factors are not the cause of the different effects.

Studies 1A–C test our basic proposition that feelings associated with receiving advice from a similar adviser contribute to that adviser's persuasiveness. Across these three studies, we manipulate reliance on feelings in three ways and show that a similar adviser is more persuasive when advice-takers rely on their feelings. Namely, in study 1A, we show that a similar (vs. dissimilar) hotel reviewer is less persuasive if participants have functional motives than if they have experiential motives. This lesser persuasiveness is because people consider feelings less relevant and therefore they rely less on their feelings when they have functional motives than when they have experiential motives (Adaval 2001; Pham 1998; Yeung and Wyer 2005). In study 1B, we show that even when participants have only functional motives, a similar (vs. dissimilar) reviewer is more persuasive when participants' cognitive resources are limited versus not limited. This higher persuasiveness is because assessing the relevance of feeling for the judgment at hand requires availability of substantial cognitive resources. Thus, even in situations

where feelings are not relevant (when people have functional motives), people will still rely on their feelings when their cognitive resources are limited (vs. are not limited) (Avnet, Pham, and Stephen 2012). In study 1C, we show that when participants are simply instructed to use their logic (vs. to rely on their feelings), the relationship between perceived similarity with the reviewer and persuasiveness of the review is attenuated. Studies 2A and B provide support for our propositions in two ways. Firstly, they provide additional evidence that reliance on feelings moderates the persuasiveness of similar advisers. Study 2A replicates the findings of study 1A and shows a higher relationship between perceived similarity and persuasiveness of the review when participants' motive is experiential (vs. functional). Study 2B builds on research suggesting that the affective system is a decision-making system of the present (Chang and Pham 2013), and shows a higher relationship between perceived similarity and persuasiveness of the review when participants plan to use the hotel in the near future (vs. distant future). Secondly, studies 2A and B, provide mediational evidence that a feeling of certainty (a "feels right" experience) characterizes the subjective experience causing similar advisers' greater persuasiveness. In both studies, we measure participants' self-reported "feels right" experience while they read the review and we show that the interaction between reliance on feelings (i.e., motive in study 2A, temporal proximity in study 2B) and similarity in predicting the persuasiveness of the review is mediated by participants' self-reported "feels right" experience while reading the review. In study 3, we use a misattribution paradigm to provide causal evidence for the proposition that the nature of the subjective experience causing similar advisers' greater persuasiveness is a feeling of certainty. We show that if participants are led (vs. not led) to misattribute their feeling of certainty ("feels right" experience) to a source other than the review, perceived similarity with the reviewer is no longer associated with persuasion. In study 4, we argue that if perceived

similarity with the adviser increases persuasiveness of the advice by creating a subjective feeling of certainty, such a feeling should have less value for those advice-takers who already feel certain (vs. uncertain) because of an unrelated task. We show that the relationship between perceived similarity with the reviewer and persuasiveness of the review is attenuated among participants who feel more certain (vs. uncertain) because of a prior task. Finally, in study 5, we test the proposition that perceived similarity with the adviser creates a momentary feeling of certainty ("feels right" experience) because of the compatibility between receiving advice from a similar adviser and the advice-taker's perspective-taking motive. We observe that the relationship between perceived similarity with the reviewer and participants' self-reported "feels right" experience from receiving the review is attenuated among participants who are asked to avoid taking (vs. to take) the reviewer's perspective.

STUDIES 1A–C

We propose that subjective experiences associated with a similar other's advice lead to that advice's greater persuasiveness. If our proposition is correct, the persuasiveness of a similar adviser should be attenuated when people are induced to rely less on their feelings. In studies 1A–C, we use three different manipulations to manipulate the degree to which participants rely on their feelings. In study 1A, we build on previous research, which has shown that people rely less on their feelings when they have functional motives than when they have experiential motives (Adaval 2001; Pham 1998; Yeung and Wyer 2005). This lesser reliance on feelings is because of an assessment of the relevance of feelings, such that compared to people who have experiential motives, people who have functional motives will consider feelings less relevant,

and therefore ignore their feelings when making the judgment at hand (Greifender et al. 2010). Thus, in study 1A, we hypothesize that a similar hotel reviewer is more persuasive than a dissimilar reviewer only when participants have experiential (vs. functional) motives. However, assessing the relevance of feelings for the judgment at hand requires the availability of cognitive resources (Avnet et al. 2012). Therefore, even when people have functional motives, they will rely on their feelings when their cognitive resources are constrained. In study 1B, we hypothesize that even when participants have functional motives, a similar reviewer is more persuasive than a dissimilar reviewer when participants' cognitive resources are constrained (vs. are not constrained). In study 1C, we use direct instructions (Pham et al. 2001) to manipulate participants' reliance on their feelings versus their logic. We hypothesize that perceived similarity with a reviewer is associated with greater persuasiveness of the review when participants are instructed to rely on their feelings, but not when they are instructed to rely on their logic.

While in studies 1A and B we use participants from a student sample and manipulate similarity experimentally, in study 1C we use a more diverse sample of online participants and measure perceived similarity as a continuous measure.

Study 1A

Design and procedure. One hundred and eleven undergraduate students ($Range_{Age}$ = 18 to 38, M_{Age} = 20.92, SD_{Age} = 2.96, and 44% females) participated in a 2 (motive: experiential vs. functional) × 2 (similarity: similar vs. dissimilar) between-subjects pen-and-paper experiment in class. Participants randomly received a booklet containing one of the experimental conditions.

They first had to imagine trying to find a hotel online for an upcoming trip. In the functional condition, participants imagined a trip to Frankfurt with a colleague, and their stated purpose of stay was to take part in job interviews. We told them that they would be busy during their stay and would not have time for having fun. In the experiential condition, participants imagined going to Paris with their partner and choosing a fun, romantic, exiting, and enjoyable hotel. After reading the scenarios, each participant read two online hotel reviews, which were ostensibly from a credible (but anonymous) travel website and were accompanied by the reviewers' profiles. The first review, a neutral review by a journalist, was constant among the four experimental conditions, and therefore was used to give the study a more realistic setting and to avoid floor effects. The second reviewer's review of the hotel was identical in all conditions and was negative—as suggested both by the reviewer's rating of the hotel (2, ostensibly from a range between 1 and 7) and by the comment itself ("It is relatively average compared to other hotels in the same class. The service didn't impress me either. Overall, I was disappointed. Would I return? Probably not."). Similarity was manipulated using the second reviewer's profile, such that the reviewer was either a male business student with a lifestyle description similar to an average participant's in our study (similar-reviewer condition) or a male PhD in molecular biology who worked as a researcher for "a major" chemical company and had a lifestyle different from an average participant's in our study (dissimilar-reviewer condition). The reviewer's profile was presented before the reviewer's review of the hotel, but on the same page as the review. In a pretest, participants from the same population had indicated higher similarity to the similar reviewer ($M = 3.26$) than to the dissimilar reviewer ($M = 2.28$, $t(31) = 2.36$, $p < .02$). After reading the reviews, participants had to evaluate the hotel using two 7-point items (1 = totally disagree / 7 = totally agree), where they indicated their agreement or disagreement with

two sentences ("I think that the hotel is a good choice for me."; "I have a favorable attitude towards the hotel."). Next, as a manipulation check, we used three items (1 = totally disagree / 7 = totally agree) to measure participants' perceived similarity with the reviewer ("The reviewer is like me."; "The reviewer behaves like me."; and "The reviewer is similar to me.", $\alpha = .95$). As a covariate, we also measured the reviewers' expertise ("The reviewer has the expertise to review the hotel.") using an item ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree).

Results. An ANOVA with perceived similarity as dependent variable and similarity and motive as independent factors showed a main effect of similarity ($F(1,107) = 75.4$, $p < .001$) such that perceived similarity was higher in the similar-reviewer condition ($M = 4.42$) than in the dissimilar-reviewer condition ($M = 2.34$). No other significant effects emerged (p-values > .13).

An ANCOVA with hotel evaluation as dependent variable, similarity and motive as independent factors, and expertise as a covariate revealed a significant interaction between similarity and motive ($F(1,106) = 4.51$, $p < .04$), a significant main effect of motive ($F(1,106) = 4.23$, $p < .05$), a marginally significant main effect of similarity ($F(1,106) = 2.83$, $p < .1$), and a marginally significant effect of expertise ($F(1,106) = 3.88$), $p < .06$). As predicted, follow-up planned contrasts revealed that when motive was experiential, hotel evaluation was significantly lower in the similar-reviewer condition ($M = 3.46$) than in the dissimilar-reviewer condition ($M = 4.25$, $F(1,106) = 7.36$, $p < .01$), but when motive was functional, there was no significant difference between the similar-reviewer ($M = 4.25$) and the dissimilar-reviewer ($M = 4.12$, $F < 1$) conditions.

Study 1B

Design and procedure. One hundred and fifteen undergraduate students ($Range_{Age}$ = 18 to 25, M_{Age} = 21.44, SD_{Age} = 1.80, and 63% females), randomly assigned to each of the four conditions, participated in a 2 (similarity: similar vs. dissimilar) × 2 (cognitive load: high vs. low) between-subjects lab experiment. First, under the guise of a memory task, we asked participants to memorize a two-digit (low cognitive-load condition) or a seven-digit (high cognitive-load condition) number. We told them to keep the number in mind throughout the lab session. Then, we asked all participants to read a scenario identical to the functional scenario used in study 1A. Next, as in study 1A, all participants read a neutral review by a journalist. We manipulated reviewer similarity through a second review and its corresponding profile. The second reviewer was either a 22-year-old student (similar-reviewer condition) or a 51-year-old researcher at a chemical company who had a PhD in molecular biology (dissimilar-reviewer condition). In addition, we used the second reviewer's name to manipulate the reviewer's gender, which was similar to each participant's in the similar-reviewer condition and opposite to each participant's in the dissimilar-review condition. We provided no other information about the second reviewer. The second reviewer's review of the hotel was identical to the one used in study 1A. After participants read the scenario and reviews, we first asked them to recall the number they had memorized, and then, as a manipulation check, we asked them to indicate how difficult it was to memorize it (1 = very difficult / 9 = not difficult at all) and how busy they were while memorizing it (1 = not busy at all / 9 = very busy). Then, participants evaluated the hotel using two items (1 = bad choice / 9 = good choice; 1 = totally unfavorable / 9 = favorable attitude). Finally, we measured perceived similarity and expertise using items similar to those used in study 1A.

Results. ANOVA analyses showed that it was significantly harder for the participants to remember the number ($M_{High\text{-}CL}$ = 3.37 vs. $M_{Low\text{-}CL}$ = 1.76, $F(1, 111) = 32.368$, $p < .001$), and that they felt significantly busier in the high cognitive-load condition than in the low cognitive-load condition ($M_{High\text{-}CL}$ = 4.25 vs. $M_{Low\text{-}CL}$ = 3.14, $F(1, 111) = 5.608$, $p < .02$). No other factors or their interactions were significant (all p-values > .2). An ANOVA with perceived similarity as the dependent variable and cognitive load and similarity as independent factors revealed a main effect of similarity ($M_{Similar}$ = 5.05 vs. $M_{Disimilar}$ = 3.84, $F(1, 111) = 18.402$, $p < .001$) and a main effect of cognitive load ($M_{High\text{-}CL}$ = 4.83 vs. $M_{Low\text{-}CL}$ = 4.10, $F(1, 111) = 6.784$, $p < .02$), but revealed no interaction between cognitive load and similarity ($F < 1$).

An ANCOVA with hotel evaluation as the dependent variable, similarity and cognitive load as fixed factors, and expertise as a covariate revealed a significant interaction between similarity and cognitive load ($F(1,110) = 4.563$, $p < .04$). No main effects of either similarity ($F(1, 110) = 2.038$, $p > .15$) or cognitive load ($F < 1$) were observed. As predicted, follow-up planned contrasts revealed that when cognitive load was high, hotel evaluation was significantly lower in the similar-reviewer condition (M = 4.96) than in the dissimilar-reviewer condition (M = 5.81, $F(1, 110) = 5.77$, $p < .02$). However, if cognitive load was low, there was no significant difference between the similar-reviewer (M = 5.8) and dissimilar-reviewer (M = 5.4) conditions ($F < 1$).

Study 1C

Design and procedure. We recruited 109 participants ($Range_{Age}$ = 18 to 79, M_{Age} = 33.28, SD_{Age} = 11.94, and 60% females) through Amazon's MTurk website. Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling (2011) have shown that Mechanical Turk recruits are significantly more diverse than are recruits from typical college samples, can be recruited rapidly and inexpensively, and that the data obtained are at least as reliable as those obtained via traditional methods. We randomly assigned participants to either the reliance-on-feelings instruction condition or the reliance-on-logic instruction condition (recall that in this study similarity was measured, and not manipulated). First, participants received specific instructions, depending on their condition, to rely either on their feelings or on logical considerations while evaluating the hotel. We adopted the two sets of instructions from Pham et al. (2001), who showed that these specific instructions elicit distinct feeling-based versus reason-based modes of evaluation. After participants read the instructions, we asked them to imagine searching online for a hotel for a trip to London with their partner and to imagine trying to choose a fun, romantic, exiting, and enjoyable hotel. We further asked participants to imagine that they had found a hotel matching their criteria and that they were considering to book it, but that they had also found a review about the hotel on a credible hotel review website. Then, we presented participants with only one review. The reviewer's review of the hotel was identical to the negative review used in the previous studies. The reviewer's profile was a short self-description of the reviewer ("I am 25 years old and currently I am an MBA student. I really like my studies and hope to get a great job after graduating. I love traveling."). After participants read the review, we asked them to evaluate the hotel using three items (1 = totally unfavorable / 9 = totally favorable, 1 = bad choice / 9 = good choice, and 1 = totally dislike / 9 = totally like). Next, we measured perceived reviewer similarity and expertise using items similar to the ones used in the previous studies, and also added two

items (1 = totally disagree / 7 = totally agree) to measure perceived reviewer credibility and trustworthiness ("The reviewer has the credibility to review the hotel."; "The reviewer is trustworthy."). To dissociate similarity from expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness we used these latter three source characteristics as covariates in our analyses. As manipulation checks, two items (r = -.677, 1 = not at all / 7 = very much) measured participants' self-reported reliance on logic ("How much did you rely on your logical considerations while evaluating the hotel?"), and their reliance on feelings ("How much did you rely on your feelings while evaluating the hotel?") while evaluating the hotel. We subtracted the former item from the latter to obtain an overall reliance-on-feelings measure, such that a higher score is indicative of higher reliance on feelings. We also used two items (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree, r = .91) to measure participants' hedonic expectations ("I will be looking for a hotel that will be fun to stay in."; and "I will be looking for an exciting hotel where I can enjoy myself.") and two items (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree, r = .91) to measure participants' utilitarian expectations of the hotel ("I will be looking for a hotel that will cover my functional needs."; and "I will be looking for a hotel that will meet my practical considerations."). Finally, one item (1 = not at all / 7 = very much) measured engagement with the task ("How engaged were you in completing this survey?"). We did not anticipate that the reliance on feelings versus logic instructions would affect participants' expectations of the hotel, or their engagement with the task.

Results. Participants in both conditions reported being equally similar to the reviewer, being equally engaged, and having equal hedonic and utilitarian expectations of the hotel (all t-values < 1). However, compared to those in the reliance-on-logic condition (M = -2.68, SD =

2.30), participants in the reliance-on-feelings condition reported higher overall reliance on their feelings while evaluating the hotel (M = 1.20, SD = 2.51, $t(107)$ = -8.408, $p < .001$).

A regression analysis with hotel evaluation as the dependent variable and similarity, instructions (-1 = logic, 1 = feelings), and the interaction of similarity and instructions as predictors, while controlling for expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness, showed a marginally significant main effect of similarity (β = -.233, $t(102)$ = -1.831, $p < .07$) and an interaction between similarity and instructions (β = -.228, $t(102)$ = -2.195, $p < .03$). No other significant effects emerged (all p-values > .18). As predicted, simple slope analysis (Aiken and West 1991) revealed that when participants were instructed to rely on their feelings, hotel evaluation was negatively associated with perceived similarity with the reviewer (β = -.461, $t(102)$ = -2.577, $p < .01$). However, when participants were instructed to rely on their logical considerations, hotel evaluation was not associated with perceived similarity (β = -.005, $t(102) < 1$).

Discussion of Studies 1A–C

In studies 1A–C, we found evidence that feelings caused by perceived similarity to an adviser can lead to that adviser's greater persuasiveness. Across three types of manipulations of reliance on feelings, we showed that if advice-takers rely less (vs. more) on their feelings, the persuasiveness of a similar (vs. dissimilar) adviser is attenuated. Specifically, in study 1A we showed that a similar (vs. dissimilar) hotel reviewer is more persuasive when participants have experiential (vs. functional) motives. In study 1B we demonstrated that even when participants have functional motives, a similar (vs. dissimilar) reviewer is more persuasive if participants' cognitive resources are constrained (vs. are not constrained). In study 1C, we showed that the

relationship between reviewer similarity and persuasion is attenuated when participants are simply instructed to rely on their logic (vs. their feelings) in evaluating the hotel. Results of study 1C are especially interesting because they show that within the context of our study, participants do not consider it logical (rational) to be influenced more by a similar reviewer than by a dissimilar reviewer. A cognitive account of similarity effects, for example, would assert that advice-takers consider a similar adviser's advice more informative and therefore are more persuaded by a similar adviser's advice (Hovland et al. 1953; Gino et al. 2009). If our participants were using such reasoning, it would be logically justifiable to find a similar adviser's advice more persuasive. However, participants do not seem to rely on such assumptions, because as shown in figure 2, there is no relationship between the adviser's similarity and the persuasiveness of the advice among participants who were asked to rely on logic.

Insert figure 2 about here.

While the results of studies 1A–C clearly demonstrate that reliance on feelings moderates the persuasiveness of similar advisers, they do not inform us about the nature of the feelings associated with similar advisers' persuasiveness. The studies presented next are designed to provide evidence that a feeling of certainty ("feels right" sensation) associated with receiving advice from a similar adviser contributes to the persuasiveness of similar advisers.

STUDIES 2A AND B

Studies 2A and B are designed to provide further support for our propositions in two ways. First, they use two different manipulations of reliance on feelings to provide more support for the proposition that similar advisers are more persuasive when advice-takers rely on their feelings. Specifically, in study 2A, as in study 1A, we manipulate participants' reliance on feelings by manipulating their experiential versus functional motives and hypothesize that the relationship between reviewer similarity and the review's persuasiveness is attenuated when participants have functional (vs. experiential) motives. In study 2B, we manipulate participants' reliance on feelings by manipulating the temporal proximity of their hotel stay. Chang and Pham (2013) have reviewed consistent evidence and provided new evidence supporting the proposition that people rely more on their feelings when making judgments for the near future than for the distant future. We hypothesize that the relationship between reviewer similarity and persuasiveness of the review is attenuated if people are making the decision for the distant future (vs. near future). Second, in studies 2A and B, we plan to provide initial support for our proposition that a feeling of certainty (i.e., a "feels right" experience) characterizes the subjective experience that causes similar advisers' greater persuasiveness. In both studies we measure participants' self-reported "feels right" experience from reading the review, and predict a mediated moderation (Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt 2005) such that participants' self-reported "feels right" experience mediates the interaction between reliance on feelings (i.e., motive in study 2A and temporal proximity in study 2B) and similarity.

A potential alternative explanation for the effects found in study 1A, and for the hypothesized effects of study 2A (i.e., the studies that manipulate reliance on feelings by manipulating participants' experiential versus functional motives), is that some specific associations between the reviewer and either of the motives, rather than differential reliance on

feelings, may cause the effects found. Therefore, although in both studies 2A and B we measure participants' perceived similarity with the reviewer as a continuous measure, in study 2B we administer two different reviewer profiles (between subjects) and predicted that our effects will replicate for both profiles.

Study 2A

Design and procedure. One hundred and eighty participants ($Range_{Age}$ = 18 to 59, M_{Age} = 30.83, SD_{Age} = 10.30, and 57% females), recruited through MTurk, took part in a 2 (motive: experiential vs. functional) × 2 (reviewer profile: student vs. professor) between-subjects experiment. Similarity was measured as a continuous variable. We asked participants, randomly assigned to the conditions, to imagine booking a hotel for either experiential or functional purposes. The functional and experiential scenarios used were identical to those used in study 1A, with the exception that here, participants in both conditions imagined going to London instead of Paris or Frankfurt. We further asked participants to imagine that they had already found and were considering booking a hotel that matched their criteria, but that they had also seen one review of the hotel on a credible travel website. Both the negative comment and the rating in the review were identical to those in the review used in study 1C. However, we used two different reviewer profiles and randomly assigned one or the other to the participants. One of these profiles was the same as that used in study 1C (an MBA student) while the other profile belonged to a researcher ("I am 60 years old and a professor of molecular biology at a major university. I am interested in both research and teaching, and I love traveling."). Then, participants evaluated the hotel, rated the reviewer on similarity, expertise, credibility, and

trustworthiness, and reported their hedonic and utilitarian expectations of the hotel and their engagement with the task using items similar to those used in study 1C. We also added two items (r = -.730, 1 = totally disagree / 7 = totally agree) to measure participants' self-reported "feels right" experience while reading the review: "The review feels right." and "The review feels wrong." The latter item was subtracted from the former to give an overall "feels right" measure, with higher values indicating that overall, the review felt more right (Cesario and Higgins 2008).

Results. An ANOVA analysis with task engagement as the dependent variable and reviewer and motive as independent factors revealed no significant differences between participants' self-reported engagement across conditions (all $Fs < 1$). Similar ANOVA analyses revealed higher hedonic expectations of the hotel among participants in the experiential-motive condition ($M = 4.70$) than among participants in the functional-motive condition ($M = 2.84$, $F(1,176) = 58.79$, $p < .001$). Utilitarian expectations of the hotel were only directionally higher among participants in the functional-motive condition ($M = 5.66$) than among those in the experiential-motive condition ($M = 5.35$, $F(1, 176) = 1.78$, $p < .19$). No other effects were observed (Fs < 1). An ANOVA with similarity as the independent variable, and motive and reviewer as independent factors, revealed only a main effect of reviewer (3.58 vs. 2.86, $F(1,176) = 11.05$, $p < .001$), such that the student was perceived as being more similar. No other effects emerged (all p-values > .15).

To test our main hypotheses, we mean-centered all our independent variables (Muller et al. 2005) and ran several regression analyses, which are shown in table 1. The first regression had hotel evaluation as the dependent variable and similarity, motive (-1 = functional, 1 = experiential), the interaction of similarity and motive, reviewer (-1 = student, 1 = professor), the

interaction of reviewer and motive, the interaction of reviewer and similarity, and also the three-way interaction of reviewer, similarity, and motive as predictors, while controlling for perceived reviewer expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness. As predicted, we did not find any main effects or interaction effects associated with reviewer type (p-values > .23). However, we found a predicted significant interaction of similarity with motive (β = -.150, $t(169)$ = -1.97, $p < .05$). Simple slope analyses revealed a simple effect of similarity both when motive was experiential (β = -.596, $t(169)$ = -5.370 , $p < .001$) and when motive was functional (β = -.295, $t(169)$ = -2.475, $p < 0$ .01). However, as indicated by the interaction, the slope was significantly steeper in the experiential condition. A second regression with similar predictors as those of the first regression and with the self-reported "feels right" measure as the predicted variable resulted in a main effect of perceived similarity (β = .776, $t(169)$ = 5.881, $p < .001$). Finally, a third regression similar to the first regression, but with "feels right" and the interaction of "feels right" and motive added to the predictors, yielded the predicted interaction of motive and "feels right" (β = -.086, $t(167)$ = -1.953, $p < .05$).

Insert table 1 about here.

These three regressions map onto the conceptualized model depicted in figure 1. The first regression shows that participants' motive moderates the effect of similarity on reviewer's persuasiveness and that similarity and persuasiveness are more strongly related when participants have experiential (vs. functional) motives (figure 3). The second regression shows that there is an overall relationship between perceived similarity and the self-reported "feels right" experience, and shows that this relationship is *not* moderated by participants' motive (similarity "feels right"

regardless of motive). The third regression shows that, even when controlling for similarity and similarity's interaction with motive, motive moderates the effect of "feels right" on the reviewer's persuasiveness, such that the relationship between "feels right" and persuasion is higher when people have an experiential motive than when they have a functional motive. Based on Muller et al. (2005), the results of these three regressions fulfill the conditions of a mediated moderation and indicate that the overall interaction between motive and similarity in predicting persuasion (shown in the first regression) is mediated by participants' "feels right" experience.

Insert figure 3 about here.

Study 2B

Design and procedure. We randomly assigned 102 participants ($Range_{Age}$ = 15 to 68, M_{Age} = 32.78, SD_{Age} = 12.84, and 57% females), recruited through MTurk, to either the near-future condition or the distant-future condition. All participants first read a scenario asking them to imagine that in a credible travel website's lottery they had won a Paris trip for two. The scenario explained that per the lottery's terms, participants had to choose one travel package from several packages offered by the website, and that the website would pay all expenses and provide all services. The lottery cover kept the imaginability of the scenarios constant across conditions. Participants in the near-future condition read that they would go on the trip "a week from now," while participants in the distant-future condition read that they would go "a year from now." Participants had to imagine trying to find a fun, beautiful, enjoyable, and memorable

hotel. To reinforce our manipulation, we asked participants to imagine for one minute, as vividly as possible, the thoughts and feelings they would have if going on the trip in a week/year. Next, we asked participants to imagine that they had already decided to book a particular hotel, but that they had also encountered a review of the hotel. Then, participants saw a negative review from an MBA student, which was identical to the review used in study 1C. Then, participants evaluated the hotel, rated the reviewer on similarity, expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness, reported their "feels right" experience, and reported their engagement with the task using items similar to those used in study 2A. Finally, as a manipulation check, participants reported their time-focus while evaluating the hotel using one item (1 = very near future / 9 = very distant future).

Results. Participants in both conditions reported being equally similar to the reviewer ($t < 1$) and being equally engaged ($t(100) = 1.307$, $p > .19$). But participants in the near-future condition reported closer time-focus ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.72$) than did participants in the distant-future condition ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 2.25$, $t(100) = 8.873$, $p < .001$).

Insert table 2 about here.

To test our hypotheses, we mean-centered all independent variables and ran three regressions (table 2). A first regression analysis with hotel evaluation as the predicted variable, and similarity, time (-1 = distant-future, 1 = near-future), and the interaction of similarity and time as predictors while controlling for expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness showed the predicted interaction effect between similarity and time ($\beta = -.207$, $t(95) = -2.390$, $p < .02$). Slope

analysis revealed a significant effect of similarity both when participants expected to go on the trip in a week (β = -.672, $t(95) = -4.961$, $p < .001$) and when they expected to go in a year (β = -.259, $t(95) = -2.053$, $p < .05$). However, as evident from the interaction, the slope was steeper in the near-future condition than in the distant-future condition (figure 4). A second regression, similar to the first but with the "feels right" measure as the predicted variable, showed the predicted significant main effect of similarity (β = .991, $t(95) = 5.53$, $p < .001$). A third regression, similar to the first, but additionally including "feels right" and the interaction of "feels right" and time as predictors, revealed a significant interaction of "feels right" and time (β = -.114, $t(93) = -2.037$, $p < .05$). Similar to study 2A's results, the results of these three regressions suggest a mediated moderation (Muller et al. 2005) such that the overall interaction of similarity and time in the first regression is mediated by participants' self-reported "feels right" experience.

Insert figure 4 about here.

Discussion of Studies 2A and B

Studies 2A and B, firstly, provide further support for the proposition that the relationship between adviser similarity and the persuasiveness of the advice is moderated by advice-takers' reliance on their feelings. Specifically, in study 2A, we showed that the relationship between perceived similarity with the hotel reviewer and the reviewer's persuasiveness is attenuated when participants have functional (vs. experiential) motives. In study 2B, we showed that there is a

lower relationship between reviewer similarity and the persuasiveness of the review when participants are evaluating the hotel for the distant (vs. near) future. We attribute these two interactions to lower reliance on feelings when people have functional (vs. experiential) motives, and when the outcomes of decisions are more (vs. less) temporally distant.

Secondly, studies 2A and B provide mediational support for the proposition that a feeling of certainty ("feels right" sensation) characterizes the subjective experience that causes the greater persuasiveness of similar advisers in situations where advice-takers rely on their feelings. Specifically, we showed that the interaction between similarity and reliance on feelings (i.e., motive in study 2A, and temporal proximity in study 2B) is mediated by participants' self-reported "feels right" experience. Importantly, the results show that the interaction of reliance on feelings and similarity in these two studies does not predict participants' "feels right" experience. Therefore, similarity causes the review to "feel right" regardless of participants' reliance on feelings, but participants seem to ignore this feeling if evaluating the hotel when they have lower reliance on their feelings. One could argue that the self-reported "feels right" experience is just another measure of persuasiveness. In other words, participants might have simply reported feeling more right about the review if the review persuaded them more. This argument would be more valid if we had observed only a simple correlation between "feeling right" and persuasion. However, as shown in our mediated moderation analysis, the correlation between "feeling right" and persuasion is moderated by people's reliance on their feelings, dissociating "feels right" from persuasion.

While the results of studies 2A and B provide interesting mediational evidence for the proposition that adviser similarity causes greater advise persuasiveness because it creates a

momentary feeling of certainty ("feels right" experience), in the following studies we plan to provide causal evidence for this proposition.

STUDY 3

Previous research has shown that people use their feelings in their judgments and decision-making only if they believe that those feelings have information value (Greifender et al. 2010). For example, if people are made aware of the true source of their incidental feelings (e.g., a feeling of uncertainty caused by a prior hypnosis exercise), they will no longer use these feelings in the judgment at hand (e.g., rating how well they understand a poem) (Clore and Parrott 1994). Also, if people misattribute the real source of their integral feelings (e.g., pleasant feelings caused by imagining taking part in a high school reunion) to an external source (e.g., background music played at a low volume), they will ignore those integral feelings from judgment (e.g., intention to participate in the high school reunion) (Pham 1998). In study 3, we intend to use this latter misattribution paradigm to provide causal evidence for our conceptualization that a feeling of certainty ("feels right" experience) characterizes the subjective experience that causes similar advisers' persuasiveness. In study 3, we predict that the association between perceived similarity with the reviewer and the reviewer's persuasiveness is attenuated when participants are led (vs. not led) to believe that they are feeling certain because of a source other than the review.

Design and Procedure

We randomly assigned 107 participants ($Range_{Age}$ = 18 to 69, M_{Age} = 31.66, SD_{Age} = 11.14, and 49% female), recruited through MTurk, to either the misattribution condition or the no-misattribution condition. To make the misattribution manipulation (described below) more believable, in both conditions the survey used a customized theme (Red Comic Sans font on white background, and light blue borders) different from the theme normally used in online surveys. Participants first read a scenario and a review similar to the scenario and review used in study 1C. At this point, we told participants in the misattribution condition that, "Throughout this survey, we have used a specific combination of fonts, shadows, and background color. This combination has been shown to create a 'feels right' experience in people who are exposed to it. That is, a large group of people who have already read a text with this combination of fonts and colors reported that they were more confident in what they read (what they read 'felt more right' to them)." This group of participants then rated their experience with the survey so far by indicating their agreement with two sentences: "The survey felt right" and "The survey felt wrong." Participants in the no-misattribution condition did not receive any information about the source of their feelings and did not rate their experience with the survey. Finally, both groups of participants evaluated the hotel, rated the perceived similarity, expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness of the reviewer, and reported their engagement with the task using items similar to those used in study 1C.

Results

Participants in both conditions reported being equally similar to the reviewer ($t < 1$) and being equally engaged ($t(105) = -1.32$, $p > .19$). A regression analysis with hotel evaluation as

the dependent variable and similarity, misattribution (-1 = misattribution, 1 = no-misattribution), and the interaction of similarity and misattribution as predictors, while controlling for expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness, showed a significant main effect of similarity (β = -420, $t(100)$ = , $p < .001$), a marginally significant effect of misattribution (β = .647, $t(100) = 1.817$, $p > .07$), and an interaction between similarity and misattribution (β = -.199, $t(100) = -2.092$, $p < .04$). No other significant effects emerged (all p-values > .25). As depicted in figure 5, simple slope analysis revealed that if participants did not misattribute their "feels right" experience to the survey design, hotel evaluation was negatively associated with perceived similarity with the reviewer (β = -.619, $t(100) = -3.824$, $p < .001$). However, if participants misattributed their "feels right" experience, hotel evaluation was not associated with perceived similarity (β = -.221, $t(100) = -1.425$, $p > .15$).

Insert figure 5 about here.

Discussion

Confirming the mediational evidence of studies 2A and B, study 3 provided causal evidence that a subjective experience of certainty caused by perceived similarity to an adviser contributes to that adviser's greater persuasiveness. We showed that a similar reviewer's persuasiveness is attenuated when participants are misled (vs. not misled) to attribute the "feels right" experience caused by similarity to the reviewer to a source other than the review (i.e., survey design).

STUDY 4

In study 4, we plan to provide more evidence that a feeling of certainty characterizes the subjective experience produced by perceived similarity to the adviser. Feeling uncertain is an aversive state, and people have a strong motive to resolve such a feeling using whatever means available to them (i.e., whatever causes them to feel more certain) (Kagan 1972). If similarity to an adviser causes a feeling of certainty while receiving and processing the advice, this feeling should be of more value for those advice-takers who already feel uncertain because of an unrelated task. Therefore, advice-takers who already feel uncertain are more likely to use their "feels right" experience in their judgment about the topic of the advice. In contrast, advice-takers who already feel certain will not benefit as much from the value created from a feeling of certainty produced by the adviser's similarity, and are less likely to use this feeling in their judgment. In study 4, we test the hypothesis that the relationship between perceived similarity to the reviewer and the review's persuasiveness is lower among participants who already feel certain (vs. uncertain) because of an unrelated task.

Design and Procedure

We randomly assigned 147 participants ($Range_{Age}$ = 18 to 69, M_{Age} = 31.10, SD_{Age} = 11.39, and all males), recruited through MTurk (because of a software error, females were blocked from participating in this study), to either the uncertainty condition or the certainty condition. The study was couched as two separate studies, with the "first study" serving as a guise for

manipulating feelings of uncertainty versus certainty. In the "first study" all participants were given five minutes to recall, re-experience, and describe in writing a past situation in which they felt either uncertain (uncertainty condition) or certain (certainty condition). The "second study" was identical to study 1C with the exception that here we did not give participants any instructions on how to evaluate the hotel.

Results

Participants in both conditions reported being equally similar to the reviewer and being equally engaged (t-values < 1). A regression analysis with hotel evaluation as the dependent variable and similarity, uncertainty (-1 = certain, 1 = uncertain), and the interaction of similarity and uncertainty as predictors, while controlling for expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness, showed marginally significant main effects of similarity ($\beta = -.169$, $t(140) = -1.66$, $p < .1$) and uncertainty ($\beta = .528$, $t(140) = 1.89$, $p < .06$), and an interaction between similarity and uncertainty ($\beta = -.186$, $t(140) = -2.3$, $p < .023$). No other significant effects emerged (all p-values > .26). As depicted in figure 6, simple slope analysis revealed that if participants felt uncertain, hotel evaluation was negatively associated with perceived similarity with the reviewer ($\beta = -.356$, $t(140) = -2.92$, $p < .004$). However, if participants felt certain, hotel evaluation was not associated with perceived similarity ($\beta = .017$, $t(140) < 1$).

Insert figure 6 about here.

Discussion

In study 4 we showed that the relationship between perceived similarity with an adviser and persuasiveness of the advice is attenuated when advice-takers already feel certain (vs. uncertain) because of a prior task. This result confirms our proposition that similarity to an adviser increases the persuasiveness of the advice by creating a subjective feeling of certainty (a "feels right" experience). The feeling of certainty created by similarity to the adviser does not have the added value for participants who have already been led to feel certain by a prior task. Therefore, this feeling does not influence their judgment.

STUDY 5

The results of the previous studies provide substantial evidence that similarity to an adviser creates a momentary feeling of certainty ("feels right" experience), which then increases the persuasiveness of the advice. However, we have also argued that adviser similarity causes a feeling of certainty because the experience of receiving advice from a similar adviser is compatible with advice-takers' perspective-taking motives. In study 5, we plan to provide support for the latter argument by using direct instructions to manipulate participants' perspective-taking motives while processing the review. Previous research has successfully used direct instructions to induce perspective-taking (vs. no perspective-taking) motives (Goldstein and Cialdini 2007). If compatibility between receiving advice from a similar adviser and perspective-taking motives creates the subjective experience of certainty ("feels right" experience), the feeling of certainty should be attenuated when advice-takers are asked to avoid

taking (vs. asked to take) the adviser's perspective. In study 5, we test the proposition that the relationship between perceived similarity and the self-reported "feels right" experience while receiving the review is attenuated when participants are instructed to avoid taking the reviewer's perspective. However, we expect such a relationship to persist when participants are instructed to take the reviewer's perspective.

Previous research has shown that perspective-taking instructions can affect people's perceptions of similarity with others (Goldstein and Cialdini 2007). To avoid the influence of perspective-taking instructions on our similarity measures, unlike the previous studies, in this study we measure participants' perceived similarity with the reviewer *before* showing them the reviewer's review of the hotel. Here, we suspect that asking participants to rate the reviewer's similarity before reading the reviewer's review may draw their attention to the source of their "feels right" experience and therefore may attenuate any effect of similarity on hotel evaluation (Schwarz and Clore 1983). Thus, we do not make any predictions about participants' hotel evaluation. However, for exploratory reasons we include the hotel evaluation measure in the study.

Design and Procedure

We randomly assigned 101 participants ($Range_{Age}$ = 18 to 62, M_{Age} = 33.42, SD_{Age} = 12.73, and 39% females), recruited through MTurk, to either the perspective-taking condition or the no perspective-taking condition. All participants first read a scenario similar to the scenario used in study 1C. Then, we showed participants only a profile of a reviewer and asked them to rate the reviewer on perceived similarity, expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness. After

participants rated the reviewer, we asked them to read a review of the hotel and informed them that the reviewer whom they just rated wrote the review. The profile, review, and items used to rate the reviewer were identical to the ones used in study 1C. However, in this study, we asked participants to either take (perspective-taking condition) or avoid taking (no perspective-taking condition) the reviewer's perspective while reading the review. The perspective-taking instructions asked participants to imagine how they, in the reviewer's shoes, would experience the hotel, and to visualize the experience as clearly as possible in their mind's eye. The no perspective-taking instructions asked participants to take an outsider's perspective, to distance themselves from the reviewer, and to read the reviewer's experience as objectively as possible. Finally, participants evaluated the hotel, and rated their subjective "feels right" experience and their engagement with the task using items similar to the ones used in studies 2A and B.

Results

Participants in both conditions reported being equally engaged ($t < 1$). Similarity, perspective-taking instruction, or the interaction of similarity and perspective-taking instruction did not affect hotel evaluation (all p-values > .11).

A regression analysis with "feels right" as the dependent variable and similarity, perspective-taking (-1 = no perspective-taking, 1 = perspective-taking), and the interaction of similarity and perspective-taking as predictors, while controlling for expertise, credibility, and trustworthiness, showed a main effect of similarity ($\beta = .393$, $t(94) = 2.057$, $p < .05$) but no main effect of perspective-taking ($\beta = -1.094$, $t(94) = -1.615$, $p > .11$), a significant interaction between similarity and perspective-taking ($\beta = .367$, $t(94) = 2.11$, $p < .04$), and a significant

effect of trust (β = .981, $t(94) = 4.023$, $p < .001$). No other significant effects emerged (all *t*-values < 1). As shown in figure 7, simple slope analysis revealed that if participants were instructed to take the reviewer's perspective, self-reported "feels right" experience was positively associated with perceived similarity with the reviewer (β = .759, $t(94) = 2.69$, $p < .01$). However, if participants were instructed to avoid taking the reviewer's perspective, self-reported "feels right" experience was not associated with perceived similarity (β = .026, $t(94) < 1$).

Insert figure 7 about here.

Discussion

Results of study 5 supported the proposition that compatibility between receiving advice from a similar adviser and the advice-taker's perspective-taking motives causes the advice-taker's feeling of certainty ("feels right" experience) while processing the advice. We showed that "feeling right" is no longer associated with perceived similarity with the reviewer when participants are instructed to avoid taking (vs. to take) the reviewer's perspective. This interaction is also important from an experimental perspective because it dissociates "feeling right" (measured through self-report) from similarity. In studies 2A and B, "feeling right" was correlated with similarity. Thus, one could have speculated that the "feels right" measure is just another measure of similarity. By showing that "feeling right" is not always correlated with similarity, study 5 also dissociates these two measures from each other.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

An important aspect of any communication message (including advice) is the source of that message. We have known this ever since Aristotle defined *ethos*, the character of the communicator, as one of the three modes of persuasion (Aristotle 1926). Yet, despite more than 60 years of investigation (Hovland et al. 1953), we have not been particularly good at predicting how and under what circumstances different source characteristics influence persuasion (Wilson and Sherrell 1993). Interestingly, persuasion research has usually taken a computation-like, rule-based approach to studying source effects (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Chaiken 1980; Kang and Herr 2006), leading researchers to overlook how source characteristics change people's subjective experiences and feelings. In this research, we tried to fill the current void in the literature and provided a model that focuses on how perceived similarity contributes to the advice-taker's feeling of certainty while receiving the advice. Our model assumes that an advice-taker has a motive to take the adviser's perspective while receiving the advice, and that there is compatibility between receiving advice from a similar adviser and the perspective-taking motive (study 5). We argued that this compatibility creates a subjective feeling of certainty ("feels right" experience) while the advice-taker receives advice from a similar adviser (studies 2–5). This subjective experience is included, as information, into the decision about the topic of the advice and increases the persuasiveness of a similar adviser's advice only when advice-takers rely on their feelings (studies 1 and 2).

In some of our studies, instead of manipulating similarity, we decided to measure it. One could put forward an alternative explanation for our effects, suggesting that participants who were initially persuaded more by the review, post hoc, might have reported more similarity with

the reviewer. However, in this paper we were not interested in the relationship between similarity and persuasion per se. Rather, we were interested in how the relationship between similarity and persuasion interacts with our manipulations. Although the alternative explanation would predict a main effect of similarity, it would not be able to account for the interaction between similarity and any of the manipulations in predicting the persuasiveness of the advice. In addition, such an explanation could be used to make the same predictions for the other source characteristics measured in our studies (i.e., participants who were persuaded more would also perceive the reviewer to be more credible, trustworthy, and expert). However, in our studies the pattern of results for the similarity measure was not the same as the pattern of results for the other three source characteristics. Therefore, the abovementioned alternative explanation does not seem plausible.

Could a heuristic-systematic processing (or an elaboration likelihood) account (Chaiken 1980; Petty and Cacioppo 1986), rather than a feeling-based account, explain the findings reported in this paper? For two reasons, we believe not. First, even if we assume that our manipulations affected whether participants engaged in heuristic or systematic processing, it is unclear how such different processing styles might have led to the effects described in this paper (e.g., What serves as a heuristic? What serves as a strong or a weak argument?). Second, across studies, the possibility of more systematic (vs. heuristic) processing of the review is not uniformly associated with either higher or lower persuasiveness of the similar reviewer. In studies 1A, 2A, 3, and 5, a case for more systematic processing in either of the experimental conditions is hard to make. However, higher availability of cognitive resources in study 1B, instructions to rely on logic in study 1C, a closer temporal proximity of the decision outcome in study 2B, and being more uncertain in study 4 (Tiedens and Linton 2001) may be associated with

more systematic processing of the review. Still, higher availability of cognitive resources in study 1B, and instructions to rely on logic in study 1C caused the similar reviewer's *lower* persuasiveness, but a closer temporal proximity in study 2B and being more uncertain in study 4 caused the similar reviewer's *higher* persuasiveness. Therefore, across our studies, a heuristic-systematic account cannot plausibly explain the effects.

Our research contributes to source similarity research specifically, and to source characteristics research generally. We contribute to source similarity research by illuminating the mechanism and conditions under which source similarity enhances an adviser's persuasiveness. The effect of source similarity on persuasion has been taken for granted for decades; however, research investigating the process by which the effect occurs has been scarce (Gino et al. 2009; Hovland et al. 1953; also for research on incidental similarity see Jiang et al. 2010). Therefore, our conceptualization is important because it illuminates the underlying process behind source similarity effects and enables researchers to make and test predictions, which would not have been possible using earlier models. Future research could use our conceptualization to make and test further predictions regarding moderators of similar advisers' persuasiveness. For example, previous research has shown that, compared to novices, experts rely less on their feelings (Srull 1987). Thus, similar advisers may be more persuasive if advice-takers are novices (vs. experts). Likewise, similar advisers may be more persuasive if advice-takers receive the advice in their native language rather than in a second language (Puntoni, de Langhe, and van Osselaer 2009) or if the advice-takers are deciding for themselves rather than for a third person (Raghunathan and Pham 1999). As another speculation, people who normally have less tolerance for uncertainty (e.g., people with a greater need for power) may be more susceptible to being persuaded by similar advisers because the feeling of certainty created by similarity with an adviser may have

more value for them. This effect may be especially stronger when these people are in uncertain situations (e.g., when their power position is in danger).

Our research also provides further insight into the broader area of source effects research. First, while perspective-taking has been extensively studied in the broader area of interpersonal influence (Aron et al. 1991; Davis et al. 1996; Galinsky, Wang, and Ku 2008; Goldstein and Cialdini 2007), it has rarely been considered in research on persuasion, and specifically research on source effects. Our research suggests that any factor influencing the propensity to take another person's perspective may affect persuasion. Second, our research acknowledges that source effects can contribute to the persuasiveness of messages by influencing people's subjective experience while receiving them. We do not see similarity to be the only source characteristic affecting people's subjective experiences when receiving persuasive messages. As an example, consider advice-takers who are experiencing a lack of control over their environment. In this case, an authoritative adviser's advice (even if the adviser's authority is in a domain unrelated to the topic of the advice), could "feel more right" by serving as an instrument in giving more order and structure to the advice-takers' perception of their environment.

One limitation of our research is that throughout the paper we used a single context (i.e., hotel reviews) to test our effects. Using only one context did not allow us to test the generalizability of our effects. However, the purpose of our research was to test a theoretical model. Part of this model testing involved comparing results across studies to rule out alternative explanations. We also provided causal evidence for different parts of the model across different studies (Spencer et al. 2005). Therefore, comparability of results across studies had a higher priority than establishing generalizibility. For the same reason we used only negative reviews in our studies. Further research should test if our predictions will hold for positively valenced

advice. We do not expect the valence of advice per se to influence the predictions made in this paper. However, one could speculate that our predictions will not hold if the valence of the advice is incongruent with the advice-takers' strongly held prior opinions about the topic of the advice. In such cases, advice-takers could in fact experience higher dissonance (Festinger 1957) or imbalance in their thought structure (Heider 1946) because of perceived similarity with the person who is expressing the attitude-incongruent opinions. Thus, in such situations, similarity may lead to a subjectively experienced aversive state. To circumvent such an aversive state, advice-takers could indeed try several strategies, one of which is to distance themselves from the adviser and to strengthen their prior opinions about the target object of the advice—leading similarity to reduce the adviser's persuasive power.

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Table 1

Mediated Moderation Analysis (Study 2A)

	Equation 1 (Hotel evaluation)		Equation 2 ("Feels right")		Equation 3 (Hotel evaluation)	
Predictor	β	*t*(169)	β	*t*(169)	β	*t*(167)
Expertise	.192	1.550	-.095	-.503	.160	1.403
Credibility	-.180	-1.305	.602	2.860**	-.042	-.325
Trustworthiness	-.67	-.502	.266	1.304	.010	.081
Similarity	-.445	-5.167**	.776	5.881**	-.231	-2.633**
Motive	.108	.936	.009	.053	.111	1.053
Reviewer	-.085	-.740	.065	.368	-.065	-.619
Reviewer × Motive	.023	.200	-.034	-.193	.032	.305
Reviewer × Similarity	-.091	-1.202	.172	1.486	-.053	-.757
Similarity × Motive	-.150	-1.970*	.013	.110	-.060	-.724
Similarity × Reviewer × Motive	-.042	-.544	.018	.156	-.029	-.413
"Feels Right"					-.265	-5.664**
"Feels Right" × Motive					-.086	-1.952*

*: $p < .05$; **: $p < .01$

Table 2

Mediated Moderation Analysis (Study 2B)

	Equation 1 (Hotel evaluation)		Equation 2 ("Feels right")		Equation 3 (Hotel evaluation)	
Predictor	β	*t*(95)	β	*t*(95)	β	*t*(93)
Expertise	.136	.890	-.256	-.923	.133	.887
Credibility	-.433	-2.502*	.557	1.772	-.309	-1.772
Trustworthiness	-.065	-.450	.458	1.752	-.027	-.193**
Similarity	-.466	-4.735**	.991	5.538**	-.351	-3.169*
Time	-.104	-.814	-.607	-2.614*	-.184	-1.427
Similarity × Time	-.207	-2.390*	.141	.898	-.028	-.242
"Feels Right"					-.129	-2.242*
"Feels Right" × Time					-.114	-2.037*

*: $p < .05$; **: $p < .01$

FIGURE 1

GENERAL MODEL

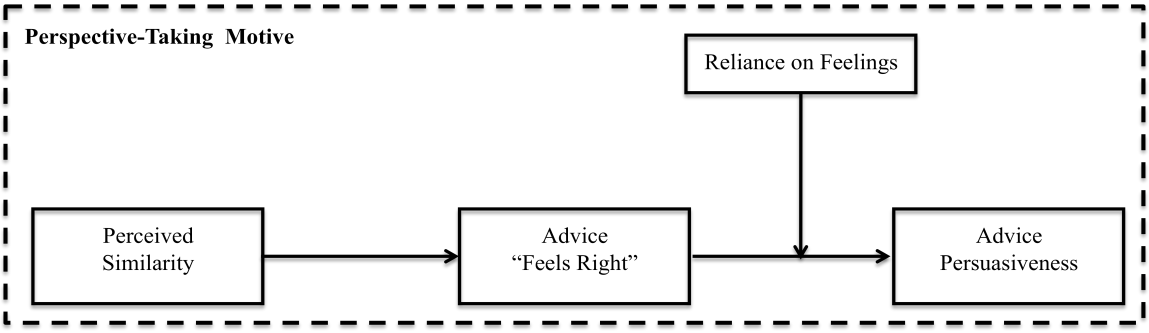

FIGURE 2

EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SIMILARITY AND INSTRUCTIONS ON HOTEL EVALUATION

(STUDY 1C)

Note: The values of covariates are set to their respective means.

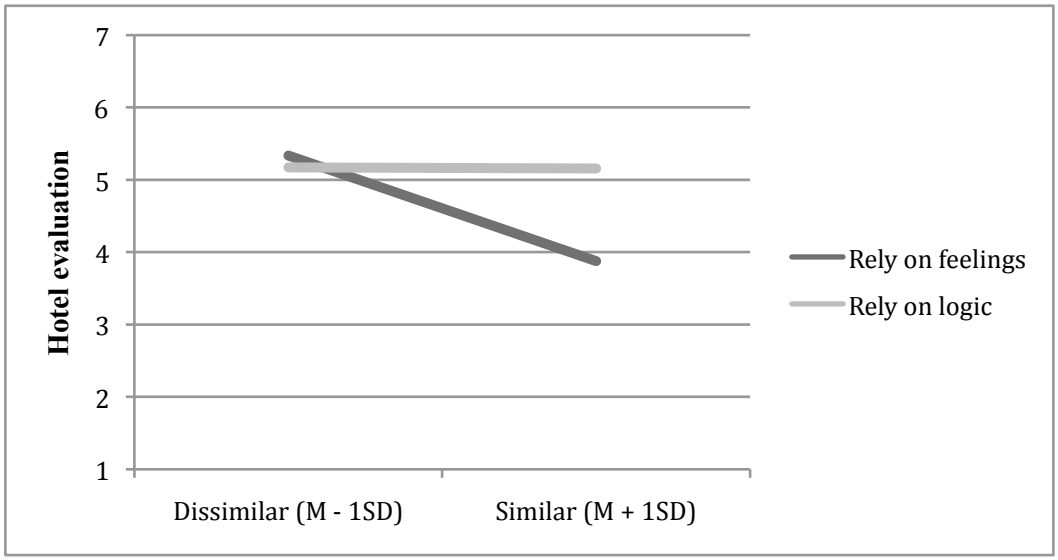

FIGURE 3

EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SIMILARITY AND MOTIVE ON HOTEL EVALUATION

(STUDY 2A)

Note: The data for both profiles are collapsed for presentation purposes. The values of covariates are set to their respective means.

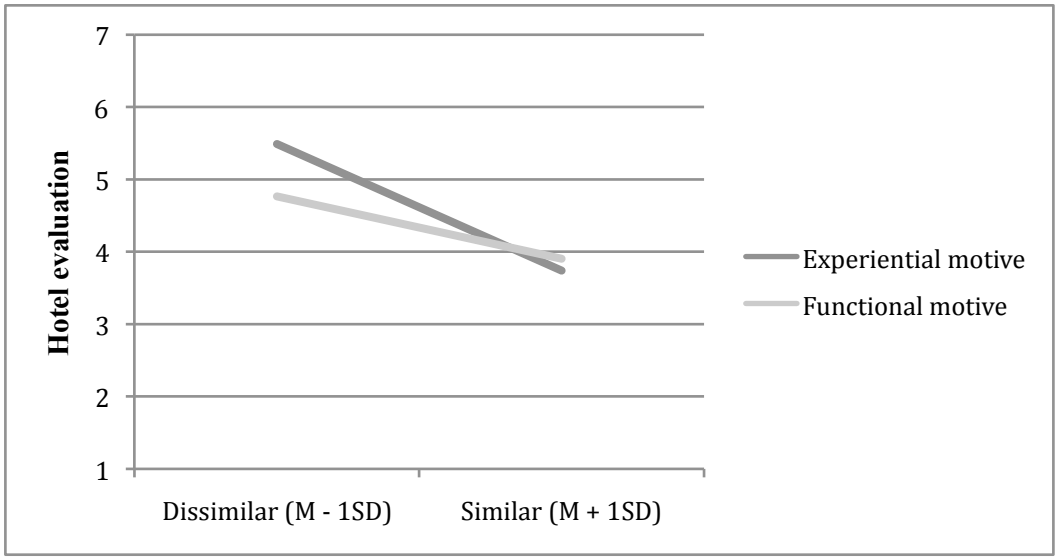

FIGURE 4

EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SIMILARITY AND TEMPORAL PROXIMITY ON HOTEL EVALUATION (STUDY 2B)

Note: The values of covariates are set to their respective means.

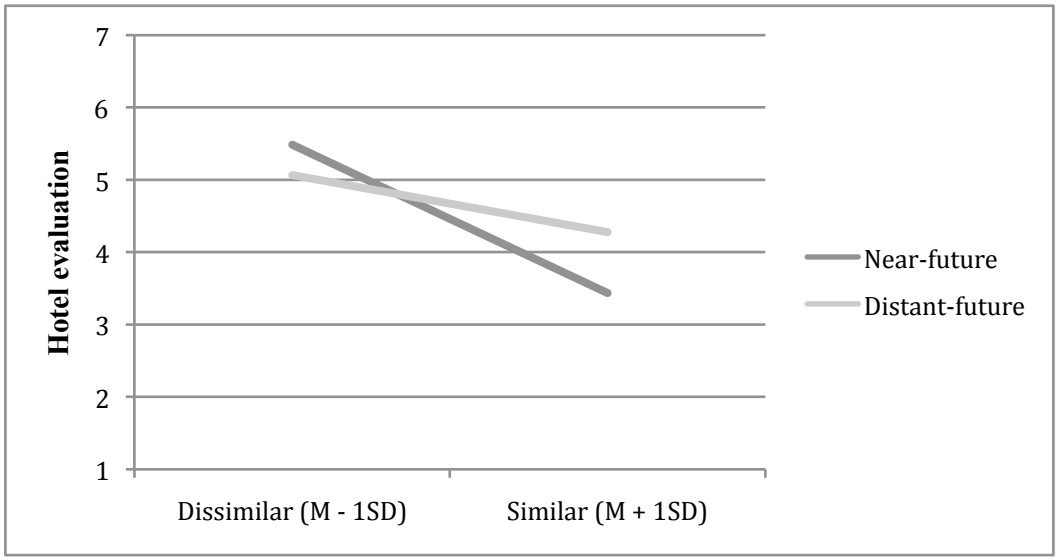

FIGURE 5

EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SIMILARITY AND MISATTRIBUTION ON HOTEL EVALUATION (STUDY 3)

Note: The values of covariates are set to their respective means.

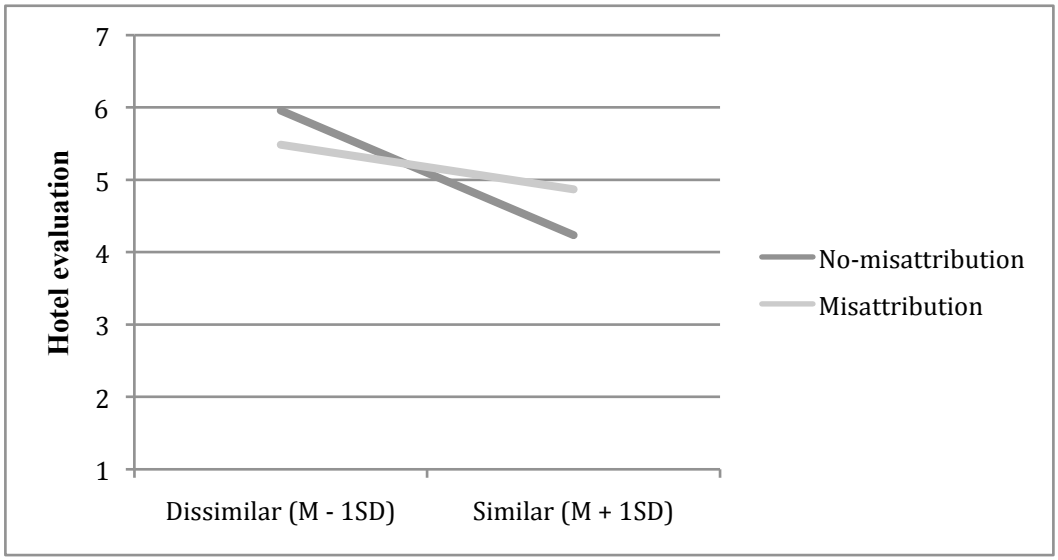

FIGURE 6

EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SIMILARITY AND UNCERTAINTY ON HOTEL EVALUATION

(STUDY 4)

Note: The values of covariates are set to their respective means.

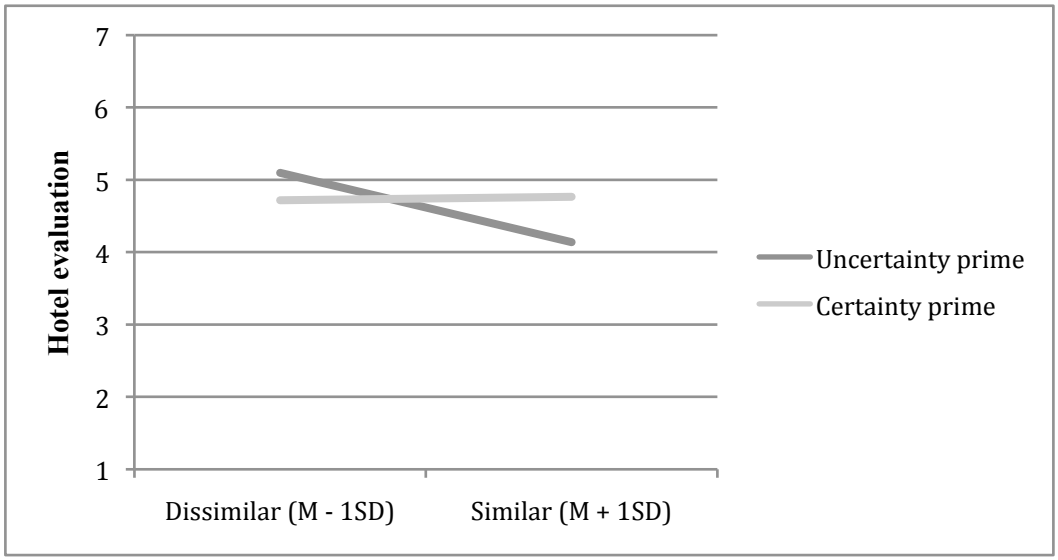

FIGURE 7

EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SIMILARITY AND PERSPECTIVE-TAKING ON HOTEL EVALUATION (STUDY 5)

Note: The values of covariates are set to their respective means.