

PREFERENCE FOR HOMOPHILY, CREDIBILITY, AND THE WORD-OF-MOUTH
PROCESS

By

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ABSTRACT

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This paper studied the influence of source credibility on the word-of-mouth process, and the effect of involvement on this relationship. Source credibility's three components: expertise, trustworthiness, and likeability, were found to have different roles such that sources were consistently trustworthy and likeable, while expertise was only considered as involvement in the purchase increased. The utilization of source cues in highly involving purchase situations is an expansion of the traditional elaboration likelihood model research. Homophily was explored as a component of source credibility, such that similar sources were considered to be more likeable. Homophily played a significant role in word-of-mouth source selection due to its link to source likeability. A new scale for homophily was developed based on participants' own words and perceptions, in contrast to most homophily research that studied homophily based on characteristics that researchers believed would be relevant to the homophily process. By allowing the participants to describe homophily in their own words, a more accurate picture of how perceived homophily influences actions and attitudes can be drawn than when researchers utilize their own language and perceptions to form the measurement scale.

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INTRODUCTION

Word-of-mouth advertising, defined as the process of communicating information about a product to another person without commercial (e.g., financial) reasons to do so (Arndt, 1967) was a very popular topic in the 1950's and 1960's. However, due to measurement issues, word-of-mouth was abandoned by most academic researchers until recently. Since the advent of Web 2.0, which includes online brand communities, social networking sites, and blogs, word-of-mouth communication is more easily measurable, and a topic of interest for researchers once again. Furthermore, these online forums and review sites have put power in the hands of consumers that is unprecedented by allowing them to reach a much larger audience than ever before (Vaynerchuk, 2011).

Source credibility literature suggests that individuals find similar, more attractive sources more credible (e.g., Britt, 1978; Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991; Jones, Moore, Stanaland, & Rosalind, 1998; Lichtenstein & Bearden, 1989; Patzer, 1983). Although word-of-mouth sources tend to be deemed more trustworthy than traditional marketing sources of information (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Wisenblit 2010; Solomon, Zaichkowsky, & Polegato, 2002), expertise and similarity / likeability are more variable. Thus, these are two variables that may be more or less important to word-of-mouth source selection depending upon the situation.

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that individuals preferred to receive advice and recommendations from others who were similar to them (e.g., Brown & Reingen, 1987; Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998; Wang, Walther, Pingree, & Hawkins, 2008; Wright, 2000). This is likely a component of source likeability, as homophily (similarity) has been linked to

attractiveness in several situations (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Byrne, 1961a; Duck, 1975; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Singh, 1973; Steele & McGlynn, 1979; Tan & Singh, 1995).

While research has shown that individuals demonstrate homophilous preferences when forming friendships and choosing information sources, the characteristics that researchers measure similarity upon have tended to be based upon the researcher's hypotheses rather than what participants actually consider when judging similarity. In other words, rather than asking an individual which characteristics they prefer their friends to share with them, most research has simply chosen to measure the similarity of friends or sources based on demographic characteristics (e.g., Crosnoe, Frank, & Mueller, 2008; Huston & Levinger, 1978; Reagans, 2005; Weare, Musso, & Jun, 2009) or based upon some other psychographic variable of interest to the researcher (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Byrne & Griffitt, 1966; Geen & Stonner, 1974; Hanish, Martin, Fabes, Leonard, & Herzog, 2005; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988). McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975) created a general homophily scale, but still failed to elicit open-ended responses from individuals regarding which characteristics were important for them when they were making similarity judgments, as recommended by grounded research (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Harmon & Boeringer, 2004; Morse, 1994). Instead, these researchers simply created a large set of statements based on previous research, which was limited based on what was readily measurable. To rectify these measurement issues, one of the goals of this paper is to generate a homophily scale based on the characteristics that participants generate themselves in a series of qualitative interviews. These interviews will also attempt to better understand the reasons why individuals demonstrate this preference to spend time with and heed advice from similar others.

The elaboration likelihood model suggests that involvement increases motivation to elaborate on a persuasion episode, and thus decreases the importance of source attractiveness

cues (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). However, Petty and Cacioppo (1984) found that source cues may be utilized as a central cue when involvement and motivation to process were high while traditionally, the elaboration likelihood model suggested that source credibility was a peripheral cue to aid in the formation of attitudes and intentions when involvement was low (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). Thus, source credibility should be further explored to determine the relationship between source credibility factors (trustworthiness, expertise, and likeability) and involvement. Although certain facets of source credibility may have a negligible effect in high involvement situations, other source cues may be important.

This research paper is focused on a better understanding of the word-of-mouth process and the role of source credibility and preference for homophily in the selection of word-of-mouth sources. As such, the paper begins with a review of the literature regarding word-of-mouth and the resurgence of this literature in the digital age. A preference for homophily has been demonstrated many times in the persuasion (e.g., Britt, 1978; Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991; Jones, Moore, Stanaland, & Rosalind, 1998; Lichtenstein & Bearden, 1989; Patzer, 1983) and relationship formation literature (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Byrne, 1961a; Duck, 1975; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Singh, 1973; Steele & McGlynn, 1979; Tan & Singh, 1995), but it is still not understood when this preference is present and why it occurs. Measurement and manipulation of this construct have been inconsistent and, because of this, its effect on interpersonal relationships and persuasion has been varied in the research (e.g., Dohanos, 2003; Glascock & Ruggiero, 2006; Morris, Gorham, Cohen, & Huffman, 1996; Rocca & McCroskey, 1999; Wright, 2004). A review of the current homophily literature, including the literature that attempts to understand why this tendency for homophily is so prevalent, is considered next. Preference for homophily in sources and source credibility are inextricably linked, due to the consistent link between

homophily and the likeability facet of source credibility (e.g., Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991; Jones, Moore, Stanaland, & Rosalind, 1998; Lichtenstein & Bearden, 1989; Patzer, 1983; Pornpitakpan, 2003). As such, source credibility is discussed next, and its role in the word-of-mouth process. Finally, the elaboration likelihood model predicted that cues such as source credibility would be utilized in low involvement situations when central processing of more detailed cues was undesirable or not possible (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). However, the literature suggests that this relationship is more complex than originally thought (e.g., Eisend, 2007; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Wu & Schaffer, 1987). A discussion of these conflicting findings and their implications for source credibility and involvement's role in word-of-mouth follows. After this review of the literature a series of research questions aimed at a better understanding of the homophily phenomenon are proposed, in addition to hypotheses concerning the role of homophily and source credibility in the word-of-mouth process at varying levels of involvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Word-of-Mouth Advertising

Bloch, Sherrell, and Ridgway (1986) discussed the external information search process, which included word-of-mouth solicitation and consideration, for individuals seeking information before and after a purchase. For both pre and post-purchase information searches, the extent of the information search process was determined by involvement in the purchase process, the market environment (e.g., the availability of information, how many products were on the market), and situational factors (e.g., time constraints). Involvement has been demonstrated to increase the external search process in multiple studies (e.g., Arndt, 1966; Katona & Mueller, 1954).

Arndt (1967) defined word-of-mouth advertising as “oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product, or a service” (p. 3). Word-of-mouth advertising as a topic of discussion for scholars and laypeople enjoyed a certain amount of popularity in the 1950’s and 1960’s, with newspapers reporting the proliferation of ‘whisper campaigns’ and ‘slur campaigns’ in which companies would hire a private firm to promote their own brand and disparage their competitors’ brands (Arndt, 1967). Jacobson (1958) noted that there were several companies available to supply these whisper campaigns, involving disparagement of competitors and promotion of the company’s own brand.

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of word-of-mouth advertising. For example, Wilke (1934) found that in-person speeches resulted in the most drastic changes in attitudes when compared to radio and printed presentations. Eisenstadt (1952) found that while

impersonal contacts converted 10% of immigrants to Israel, word-of-mouth communications converted 65%. Mueller (1958) found that more than 50% of respondents had turned to word-of-mouth sources for information regarding durable goods purchases, while Rich (1963) found that 41%-48% of respondents utilized store ads to find out information before making a purchase versus the 57%-62% who utilized word-of-mouth sources.

Arndt (1967) noted repeatedly, however, that while researchers discovered that individuals preferred to obtain information from word-of-mouth sources, very little was known about the content of these communications. This was a major issue with traditional word-of-mouth studies that could be addressed with the advent of electronic word-of-mouth. Thus, a new set of word-of-mouth studies began to appear in the literature (e.g., Beck, 2007; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Kempf & Palan, 2006; Wangenheim & Bayon, 2004; Zhang & Daugherty, 2009) and a new definition of word-of-mouth needed to emerge in order to address the complexities of one-to-many communication that was now possible. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004) defined electronic word-of-mouth communication as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (p. 39). Recent, Internet-based word-of-mouth studies were able to measure the actual effect of word-of-mouth advertising that could be tracked or manipulated, and thus provided fresh insight into the phenomenon. Despite the advances in technology that have allowed researchers to better understand the word-of-mouth process, marketers are still fascinated with determining how much influence word-of-mouth advertising has on final purchase decisions. For example, Keller and Berry (2003) found that personal sources were used much more often than advertising sources to glean information about

purchase decisions. Refer to Table 1 for more information, a table adapted from Keller and Berry's (2003) book.

Table 1: Percentage of People who Utilize Word-of-Mouth Advertising Versus Traditional Advertising When Making Purchase Decisions

	People	Advertising
Restaurants	83%	35%
Places	71%	33%
Prescription drugs	71%	21%
Hotels	63%	27%
Health tips	61%	19%
Movies	61%	67%
Best brands	60%	33%
Retirement planning	58%	9%
Automobiles	58%	36%
Clothes	50%	59%
Computer equipment	40%	18%
Websites to visit	37%	12%

Opinion leaders are an integral part of the word-of-mouth process. Furthermore, they have certain characteristics in common across product categories. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) found that opinion leaders were more likely to seek out media related to their area of expertise. For example, leaders who specialized in cars read more car magazines and watched more car shows. Furthermore, opinion leaders tended to be more interested in their topic of expertise than other individuals (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948). Opinion leaders were also more likely to engage in information-seeking behaviours from interpersonal sources than other individuals, indicating that the two-step flow process may, in fact, be more complex than originally thought

(Arndt, 1967). Specifically, information may flow from media sources to a key group of interested individuals, who then seek out information from similarly interested individuals before passing it along to other, less interested or informed individuals. On the web, information may flow from the company to a set of opinion leaders and then on to a much larger audience on the Internet, expanding the reach of opinion leaders. These opinion leaders spend a great deal of time learning all that they can about their topic of interest (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948). As such, they are highly expert when discussing their topic area. This lends them one dimension of source credibility. Is this expertise relevant to the people they are advising, or is its relevance dependent upon the situation?

In order for word-of-mouth communication to occur, there must be a shared interest in the product. In support of this, Back et al. (1950) and Festinger et al. (1948) found that rumours reached individuals for whom the information was of interest, but nobody else. Thus, it is not only the opinion leader who must be interested in the communication, but also the recipient of information. On a related note, Peterson and Gist (1951) found that, when rumours were less relevant to the individuals who were recipients of the rumours, they tended to become distorted over time. Thus, information was more accurate when it was passed through interested parties. However, Caplow (1947) and Back et al. (1950) found that distortion was unlikely when rumours were relevant. In the digital age, inaccuracies may prevail if the original information is false, but the source material is readily available so that the information is less likely to be modified over time between exchanges. As such, both consumers and companies have access to the original message rather than a distorted version – something that is not possible for orally transmitted information. This allows for a more thorough understanding of the dimensions of

word-of-mouth communication that increase or decrease its effectiveness while also allowing researchers to study the language and content used in these recommendations.

Although electronic word-of-mouth is increasingly popular, its effects might be less dramatic than traditional word-of-mouth. Herr, Kardes, and Kim (1991) found that face-to-face communication was more persuasive than printed word-of-mouth communication. Thus, although electronic word-of-mouth is more trackable than traditional word-of-mouth communications, applying findings across these two mediums should be undertaken with caution.

Park and Kim (2008) found that, for online product reviews, experts were better able to sift through the cues to find the most relevant information, whereas novices were likely to form an opinion based on a consensus in reviews rather than message content. Involvement levels may have influenced which cues were utilized to evaluate the product, as experts were likely more motivated to process the detailed information, while novices did not have the ability or motivation to do more than interpret the overall tone of the reviews. In support of this, Lee, Park, and Han (2008) found that low involvement consumers based their attitudes solely on the proportion of positive / negative reviews, while high involvement consumers based their attitudes on the quality of the reviews as well as the proportion of positive to negative reviews. Furthermore, Chiou and Cheng (2003) found that message favourableness and number of messages had an effect on brand evaluations, but only when the consumer did not have a strong, pre-existing attitude toward the brand. This data suggests that, overall, individual online sources may have less of an impact on attitudes and intentions, but the volume of information available from other consumers may influence word-of-mouth effects as well (at least for novices).

A preference for homophily, defined as “a tendency for friendships to form between those who are alike in some designated respect” (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954, p. 23) has been

demonstrated to be an important variable in friendship formation (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Batchelor & Tesser, 1971; Byrne, 1961a; 1965; Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Huston & Levinger, 1978; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988; Posavac & Pasko, 1974; Rosenbaum, 1986; Tan & Singh, 1995). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated to be an important variable in word-of-mouth processes (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Bruyn & Lilien, 2004; Dellande, Gilly, & Graham, 2004; Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998; Steffes & Burgee, 2009; Wang, Walther, Pingree, & Hawkins, 2008; Wright, 2000). Both opinion leaders, defined as “those people who are knowledgeable about products and who are frequently able to influence others’ attitudes or behaviours with regard to a product category”, (Solomon, Zaichowsky, & Polegato, 2002, p. 390) and reference groups, defined as “an actual or imaginary individual or group that has a significant effect upon an individual’s evaluations, aspirations or behaviour” (Solomon, Zaichowsky, & Polegato, 2002, p. 368), are integral to the word-of-mouth process, and draw part of their influence from perceived similarity (French & Raven, 1968; Torrance & Mason, 1956). This relationship between similarity and word-of-mouth success has been demonstrated multiple times in the literature since French and Raven’s (1968) discussion of the bases of power (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Bruyn & Lilien, 2004; Dellande, Gilly, & Graham, 2004; Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998; Steffes & Burgee, 2009; Wang, Walther, Pingree, & Hawkins, 2008; Wright, 2000). Since homophily has been linked to source persuasion in word-of-mouth situations and interpersonal attractiveness consistently in the literature, homophily’s effect on relationship formation and persuasion is discussed next, followed by a discussion of why people prefer others who are similar to them.

Homophily

Homophily has been discussed several times in the relationship formation literature. Most of the homophily research to date has measured homophilous tendencies, rather than preferences. In other words, researchers have tended to measure homophilous relationships (how similar friends are to each other, etc.), rather than the construct behind these behaviours. It is important to understand both behaviours and the reasons behind them – including personal preferences and environmental factors - and thus the focus of this paper will be homophilous preferences and the reasons why people prefer to spend time with others who are similar to them grounded in literature regarding homophilous tendencies. Lazarsfeld and Merton's (1954) original concept of homophily discussed a preference for friends who were similar on two dimensions: social status within the population and values. However, since its inception, homophily research has discussed individuals' preferences to form homophilous groups based on many different characteristics, such as a preference to form ties with individuals who are similar regarding gender (e.g., Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Huston & Levinger, 1978; Roth, 2004a; 2004b; Turban, Dougherty, & Lee, 2002), age (e.g., Saiki & DeLong, 2006; Thelwall, 2008; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989), and race (e.g., Doyle & Kao, 2007; Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Joyner & Kao, 2000; Turban, Dougherty, & Lee, 2002), as well as other, less easily identified characteristics such as personality (e.g., Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988; Posavac & Pasko, 1974; Singh, 1973; Steele & McGlynn, 1979), and attitudes (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Batchelor & Tesser, 1971; Byrne, 1961a; 1961b; Feren, Carroll, & Olian, 1988; Rosenbaum, 1986; Tan & Singh, 1995).

Although Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) focused on value homophily, very few studies that cite this original article study homophily based on psychographic or attitudinal variables. As

demonstrated by McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook's (2001) literature review, many researchers have come to believe that value-homophily is an artefact of demographic homophily. In other words, researchers believe that those with similar backgrounds will have similar experiences, and will therefore have similar values and attitudes. This is a view that Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) suggested themselves. However, there is plenty of research demonstrating that homophilous attitudes are important in predicting relationship formation in their own right (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Batchelor & Tesser, 1971; Byrne, 1961a; 1961b; Feren, Carroll, & Olian, 1988; Rosenbaum, 1986; Tan & Singh, 1995). Although demographic similarity is easier to measure, and therefore study, attitude and personality similarity may in fact contribute significant explained variance to the traditional demography homophily studies. However, there is a rich literature from the social sciences that studies attitude homophily without referring to the homophily construct. Byrne and colleagues have studied attitude homophily and its antecedents (e.g., Byrne, 1961a; 1961b; 1965; Byrne, Clore, & Smeaton, 1986; Byrne & Griffitt, 1966; Byrne, Griffitt, & Stefaniak, 1967; Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Byrne & Rhamey, 1965). Specifically, these researchers studied the effects of attitude similarity in an experimental setting without demographic information available, and found that attitude similarity positively predicted attraction ratings to a described individual. Furthermore, Duck and associates have extensively studied the positive relationship between homophilous personalities and relationship formation (e.g., Duck, 1973; 1975; Duck & Spencer, 1972).

While the Internet provides a large amount of anonymity in some forums, web surfers have developed new ways to evaluate homophily based on the information available. In relatively anonymous ratings sites focused on electronic word-of-mouth communications, rating objects in a similar fashion led to feelings of similarity and trust in the other rater's judgment

(Goldbeck, 2009). In other forums, the expression of similar attitudes led to perceived similarity and trust in the participants (Meijnders et al., 2009). Once again, similarity on characteristics other than demographics were instrumental in interpersonal attraction and persuasion.

Fiore and Donath (2005) explored online dating sites, which provide a wealth of information about their members, and found that members were more likely to contact individuals who indicated similar aspirations for the future, habits, education, and physical appearance. Similarly, Schrock (2007) found that online personals tended to express a desire for similarity regarding demographics and vices –a tendency that was more prevalent in women than men. Overall, it appears that in both electronic word-of-mouth situations and interpersonal relationships on the Internet, there is a preference for homophily on characteristics that are deemed relevant to the situation at hand, and homophily is intertwined with attractiveness.

To demonstrate the power of the relationship between attractiveness and similarity, Moss, Byrne, Baskett, and Sachs (1975) asked participants to fill out attitudes of a stranger based only on attractiveness ratings. Responses suggested that the more attractive a stranger was supposed to be, the more participants perceived them to be similar to themselves. This, however, raises a question: does attraction come first, or perceived similarity? The author of the attraction-similarity hypothesis (Morry, 2004; 2005; 2007) argued that attraction came before perceived similarity. This hypothesis also posited that perceived similarity was the key to relationship formation, and not actual similarity, a finding supported by Strauss, Barrick, and Connerley's (2001) work regarding actual vs. perceived personality homophily.

Further supporting the theory that perceived similarity is of more importance than actual similarity, Werner and Parmalee (1979) found evidence that although participants believed they were similar to their friends on both attitudes and activities, these friends were only actually

similar to each other in their activity choices. Furthermore, Acitelli, Douvan, and Veroff (1993) found that newlywed couples believed that their partners were more similar to themselves in their communication behaviours than they actually were. Finally, Levinger and Breedlove (1966) found that the perception of similarity regarding the importance of communication was more predictive of marital satisfaction than actual similarity. Based on these studies, it would seem that perceived similarity is more instrumental than actual similarity in relationship formation.

In an attempt to answer the question regarding the importance of actual versus perceived similarity, Montoya, Horton, and Kirchner (2008) conducted a meta-analysis which compared effect sizes for perceived and actual similarity. Results suggested that actual similarity was only important when respondents had not interacted with each other. Perceived similarity, however, was a positive predictor of attraction for no-interaction studies, short-interaction studies, and even long-interaction studies. These results suggest that perceived similarity is, on average, a better predictor of attractiveness than actual similarity. Since attractive sources are more persuasive than unattractive sources (e.g., Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991; Jones, Moore, Stanaland, & Rosalind, 1998; Lichtenstein & Bearden, 1989; Patzer, 1983; Pornpitakpan, 2003), this perceived similarity will have a positive effect on persuasion. Therefore, future research should focus on perceived homophily rather than actual homophily, and should attempt to better understand under which circumstances actual homophily is of importance.

Morry, Kito, and Ortiz (2011) explored this tendency, and found that couples reported high degrees of perceived similarity between partners regarding dimensions of both moderate and high relevance to the relationship. However, accuracy was higher for moderately important characteristics than low importance characteristics regarding relationship success. As such, these

results suggest that perception is more important than reality, but on characteristics that really matter perception is closer to reality than on those characteristics of little to no importance.

A related study conducted by Lutz-Zois, Bradley, Mihalik, and Moorman-Eavers (2006) found that, for those characteristics that were important to participants, a high degree of perceived similarity was positively related to relationship satisfaction. Characteristics that were unimportant to the participant, however, were not related to relationship satisfaction. In support of this, research has demonstrated that similarity is more impactful on attraction ratings for topics that were important to an individual or to the situation than topics that were irrelevant (Byrne, 1961a; Byrne, Bond, & Diamond, 1969; Clore & Baldridge, 1968; Michinov & Monteil, 2002). In other words, similarity regarding education may not always be important, but when an individual is seeking out advice regarding whether or not they should attend graduate school, similarity will be desirable. These findings further demonstrate the importance of a homophily scale comprised of items of importance to participants, rather than the current state of homophily research which has been extremely varied in its approach to how homophily is measured. Without consistency in the manipulation and measurement of homophily in the literature, homophily research will be inconsistent and incapable of predicting behaviour.

A more complete scale that includes only those characteristics that are relevant to individuals and speaks about homophily in a language that makes sense to participants will lead to a greater understanding of when homophily is perceived to be important. Until one scale is utilized in the research, it is unlikely that researchers will be able to fully understand the role of homophily in society, as differences will too often be due to changes in the scale and not actual differences in preferences. A consistently utilized scale based on the characteristics of importance to those filling out the surveys, rather than those writing them, will allow for

predictions of behaviour to be made across situations, explain the existing conflicting findings in the literature regarding the circumstances in which homophilous tendencies are present, and prevent future confusion.

McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975) created a homophily scale by asking about several different characteristics, including similarity regarding likes, dislikes, morals, values, and emotions. This scale was later revised by McCroskey, McCroskey, and Richmond (2006). Although this scale was a step in the right direction, the authors still failed to ask, in an open-ended format, how individuals evaluated similarity, and what characteristics were considered when making similarity judgments. Thus, researchers may have missed important components of similarity, and included items that were unimportant to individuals when they were evaluating liking based upon homophily. McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975) created their pool of items by searching through the literature for previous research on similarity and including these previously-utilized items. Therefore, if researchers had not thought of a characteristic before this study, it was not included. Furthermore, items may have been included in the scale that were of no importance to participants when making judgments regarding homophily with a target. This is likely, as the appearance factor had a mean below the midpoint (4) of the Likert-type scale in the original study (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975).

Previous work that has utilized McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly's (1975) scale has often determined that only certain elements of homophily were significant predictors of relationship formation (e.g., Glascock & Ruggiero, 2006; Rocca & McCroskey, 1999; Wright, 2004). In these three studies that utilized McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly's (1975) scale attitude homophily, background homophily, or both of these emerged as significant predictors of interpersonal attractiveness. However, the other two factors (values and appearance) were either not mentioned

at all or were not significant. Why, then, should they be included in the scale? Furthermore, effect sizes have sometimes been null (e.g., Dohanos, 2003) or small when statistically significant relationships were found between homophily and attractiveness ratings (e.g., Morris, Gorham, Cohen, & Huffman, 1996). By focusing on only those characteristics that are relevant to similarity judgments in natural settings, the current scale will allow future researchers to find out the impact of homophily in real-life situations.. A scale based on characteristics that are actually evaluated when making similarity judgments would provide researchers with a more accurate perception of how homophily functions in relationship formation and the choice of word-of-mouth advisors. To continue, however, utilizing various scales and manipulations to measure homophily will result in varying effect sizes, conflicting null and positive results, and a confusing literature that is unable to shed light on how homophily works outside of the lab.

Methodologically, there are other problems with much of the homophily research that does not focus on demographics. Although some research has explored individuals' tendency or preference for homophily in real-life friendships and marriages (e.g., Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Carli, Ganley, & Pierce-Otay, 1991; Fiedler, Warrington, & Blaisdell, 1952; Fiore & Donath, 2005; Lutz-Zois, Bradley, Mihalik, & Moorman-Eavers, 2006; Morry, Kito, & Ortiz, 2011; Murstein & Beck, 1972; Schrock, 2007; Strauss, Barrick, & Connerley, 2001; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989), much of the attitude and personality homophily research has been based on experimental procedures that merely describe an individual on one or two characteristics and ask participants to evaluate their interpersonal attractiveness (e.g., Byrne, 1961a; 1961b; 1965; Byrne, Bond, & Diamond, 1969; Byrne, Clore, & Smeaton, 1986; Byrne, Griffitt, & Stefaniak, 1967; Byrne & Nelson, 1965), which maximizes internal validity by ensuring that all effects are due to

the manipulation, but also minimizes external validity as this limited information does not resemble relationships outside of a laboratory setting.

Furthermore, there is a lack of theory in the homophily literature. In other words, despite numerous studies regarding the relationship between similarity and attraction, there has been little done to understand why individuals display this homophilous tendency in their relationships and information-seeking processes.

This research is focused not only in the measurement and application of homophily, but also its roots – why is this phenomenon so prevalent in human interactions? Homophily research has traditionally attempted to manipulate or measure perceived similarity in order to predict attraction ratings. However, there is some research that has studied what demographic, psychological, and sociological factors lead to preferences for homophily in the first place. Ibarra (1992) and Levinson, McCollum, and Kutner (1984) found that women's networks were less gender homophilous than men's networks. Furthermore, Shrum, Cheek, and Hunter (1988) found that age influenced racial and gender homophily, while other researchers found that racial minorities' networks were more likely than racial majorities' networks to be homophilous (Mollica, Gray, & Trevino, 2003). Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) demonstrated that religious homophily varied depending upon the community that an individual had grown up in. As such, there is evidence that certain demographic groups have a greater preference for homophily – at least on certain characteristics.

While the previous discussion has focused on demographic variables that influence preference for homophily, psychological variables influence homophilous preferences as well. Snyder and Morris (1978) found that perceptions of judgmental ability influenced preference for homophily. Furthermore, cognitive complexity (Malhotra, 1988), self-actualization (Olczak &

Goldman, 1975), extroversion (Singh & Teoh, 1999), dogmatism (Palmer & Kalin, 1985), authoritarianism (Mitchell & Byrne, 1973), self-monitoring (Jamieson, Lydon, & Zanna, 1987), need for approval (Posavac, 1971), and need for affiliation (Byrne, 1961b) had positive correlations with homophilous tendencies.

These studies are a first step in understanding why preference for homophily is so prevalent in our society. The findings regarding need for approval (Posavac, 1971) and need for affiliation (Byrne, 1961b) support the findings of Erwin (1981), who found that the perceived likelihood that a target would like a participant mediated the relationship between similarity and attraction. Thus, for people who are highly motivated to be liked, homophily serves as a cue to how likely another individual is to like them. This hypothesis is further supported by the studies that found that targets who evaluated the respondent positively were better liked than targets who evaluated the respondent negatively (Arrowood & Short, 1973; Byrne & Rhamey, 1965; Condon & Crano, 1988; Erwin, 1982; Insko, Thompson, Stroebe, Shaud, Pinner, & Layton, 1973). This is one possible reason why homophilous preferences are common in society – an ever-present need for approval and validation from others. However, further research is required in order to better understand how this need for approval influences preference for homophily.

Perceived homophily with a source, however, is only one consideration when individuals are evaluating a prospective advisor. Source credibility literature states that there are three main attributes of a desirable information source: likeability, trustworthiness, and expertise (Pornpitakpan, 2003). Homophily is one component of likeability, but when considering the selection of word-of-mouth sources it is prudent to examine all three of these facets of source credibility. As such, source credibility's effect on the word-of-mouth process is discussed next, and the different situations in which it is utilized to aid in attitude formation.

Source Credibility

Source credibility refers to the characteristic of a source that makes him or her trustworthy of accurate and helpful information. At first, source credibility was divided into two main components: expertise (the degree to which a source was perceived to have the knowledge to make assertions about a stimulus object) and trustworthiness (the degree to which the source was perceived to be making assertions which they themselves perceived to be valid) (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). In a study of source credibility's two dimensions, it was found that a source that was both trustworthy and expert resulted in the greatest opinion change, but results also indicated that trustworthiness was a more salient factor than expertise (McGinnies & Ward, 1980). Wiener and Mowen (1986) confirmed that both trustworthiness and expertise were positively related to agreement with the viewpoints of the source, while Pornpitakpan (2003) added a dimension to the source credibility literature: source likeability. This is the dimension related to homophily, as interpersonal attractiveness and homophily are linked (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Batchelor & Tesser, 1971; Byrne, 1961a; 1965; Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Huston & Levinger, 1978; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988; Posavac & Pasko, 1974; Rosenbaum, 1986; Tan & Singh, 1995).

In general, a highly credible source has been found to result in greater persuasion than a source low in credibility (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009; Horai, Naccari, & Fatoullah, 1974; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Johnson & Izzett, 1969; Johnson, Torvicia, & Poprick, 1968; Jones, Sinclair, & Courtneya, 2003; Kelman & Hovland, 1953; Lirtzman & Shuv-Ami, 1986; Maddux & Rogers, 1980; Miller & Baseheart, 1969; Watts & McGuire, 1964; Whittaker & Meade, 1968). Furthermore, credibility is correlated with intentions to follow through with advice (Campbell & Wright, 2002). As such, it is a topic of great interest to advertising and marketing researchers.

Several researchers have found that, when sources were perceived to be more trustworthy, participants were more likely to be persuaded by the source's arguments (e.g., Haas & Grady, 1975; Kiesler & Kiesler, 1964; Walster & Festinger, 1962). This is one of the key benefits of word-of-mouth communication – sources are perceived to be less biased and are therefore more impactful on attitudes and purchase intentions. This effect was reversed, however, when a biased source appeared to be primarily concerned with the welfare of the audience. When an altruistic motivation was primed, persuasion was enhanced when persuasive intent was made salient (Mills, 1966). Thus, trustworthiness is a powerful factor when considering the information search process. Furthermore, trustworthiness is based not simply on how biased the source is, but instead how likely it is that the source is looking out for the advisee's best interest - bias seems to be a heuristic cue to how likely it is that a source is looking out for somebody else's best interests.

However, trustworthiness alone is not enough to create a substantial attitude change. In one study of source credibility it was found that a source that was perceived to be biased was deemed to be less fair and produced less attitude change than unbiased sources, but this difference only occurred when the unbiased source was also an expert (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Kelman & Hovland, 1953). Although source credibility literature has largely focused on expertise and trustworthiness, other research has demonstrated that the likeability and attractiveness of a source also play a role in source credibility (e.g., Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991; Jones, Moore, Stanaland, & Rosalind, 1998; Lichtenstein & Bearden, 1989; Patzer, 1983). Thus, more recent literature has recognized trustworthiness, expertise, and source likeability as the three bases of source credibility. Since perceived similarity has been related to attractiveness (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Batchelor & Tesser, 1971; Byrne, 1961a; 1965; Farmer & Farmer, 1996;

Huston & Levinger, 1978; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988; Posavac & Pasko, 1974; Rosenbaum, 1986; Tan & Singh, 1995), homophily can be linked to source credibility based on this dimension.

Markham (1968) found that, contrary to typical source credibility studies, showmanism / entertainment and trustworthiness were the factors that contributed to credibility of newscasters. Thus, likeability and trustworthiness were important for newscasters, but expertise was unimportant. However, the authors hypothesized that this may have been due to a perception that all newscasters were experts. In this case, two dimensions of source credibility were influential in evaluating the source while expertise was not. As such, this research indicated that the dimensions of source credibility relevant to source selection vary depending upon the context and require further study in order to determine when each dimension is relevant to recipients of information.. What causes this variation?

Advertisers have often chosen attractive models for their ads under the assumption that ‘what is beautiful is good’ (Friedman & Friedman, 1979; Singer, 1983). However, other studies have indicated that this assumption is not necessarily always correct (Kamins, 1990). Results of this study indicated that an attractive source was significantly related to credibility only when the product being sold was also related to attractiveness (e.g., make-up, hair dye). For a product which was not related to attractiveness, there was no difference in credibility between an attractive and an unattractive celebrity endorser. Thus, the relevance of attractiveness seemed to play a role in the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers.

For different types of products, then, it makes sense that there are different groups that individuals turn to for advice on buying that product. Selection system theory was one theory which described three ideal types of product selection: market, expert, and peer selection (Priem,

2007; Wijnberg, 2004; Wijnberg & Gemser, 2000). In a study of how these different groups impacted consumers' attitudes toward seeing a new movie it was found that for independent films, an award given by experts was more effective than other types of awards at changing ticket sales (Gemser, Leenmndersr, & Wijnberg, 2008). Authors postulated that because these films were unlikely to be reviewed by an individual's peers, they often turned to professional, expert critics to decide which films to see. As such, the expertise facet of source credibility became salient for this product due to the nature of the purchase.

Recently, a preference for credible sources has been encouraged in some environments where credibility is particularly low, such as the Internet. When the Internet was first introduced, individuals were encouraged to determine the credibility of the website by first evaluating the author of the work (Warnick, 2004). Individuals were supposed to judge the author's motives, expertise, and associations in order to make a decision regarding the credibility of the information contained on the site. In a study of actual respondents that frequently used the Internet, it was determined that different types of websites (e.g., online retailers versus online information sources for topics such as sports and entertainment) resulted in different criteria being utilized to evaluate the site's credibility. Thus, the situation influenced which dimensions of source credibility were the most salient.

Golbeck (2009) found that, in an online context, similar attitudes in reviews could lead to higher credibility ratings for individual raters. Similarly, Bhuiyan (2010) found that similar interests led to a higher level of trust in recommendation systems. Furthermore, similar linguistic styles led to higher levels of trust in a source (Scissors, Gill, Geraghty, & Gergle, 2009). Overall, the research supports the notion that, in the online world, there are several cues to similarity such as similar expressed attitudes (e.g., Golbeck, 2009), similar interests (e.g., Bhuiyan, 2010), and

similar linguistic styles (e.g., Scissors, Gill, Geraghty, & Gergle, 2009) utilized to determine perceived homophily, leading to higher source credibility perceptions and persuasion. Even though the cues available are different from those that are utilized in face-to-face interactions, users' tendencies to favour similar individuals indicate that homophilous judgments are still being made on the Internet.

The importance of cues related to similarity and credibility within the online context when determining the credence to give to online word-of-mouth communication require further exploration, as the findings of studies utilizing the elaboration likelihood model (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981) are inconclusive regarding the situations and involvement levels in which source credibility cues are utilized to form attitudes and intentions (e.g., Eisend, 2007; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Wu & Schaffer, 1987).

Multiple studies on the effects of source credibility and decision involvement have been done over the years. It has been found that when an individual processed a persuasive message on the periphery of their consciousness, heuristic cues such as source credibility were often utilized to draw conclusions about the featured brand (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981), a prediction of the elaboration likelihood model. However, Petty and Cacioppo (1984) found that source credibility could be utilized as a central cue when it was relevant to the evaluation of a message. As such, the dimensions of source credibility and their relationship with involvement call for further exploration in order to determine when source credibility cues are relevant to attitude and intention formation. Source credibility has been organized into three dimensions: trustworthiness, likeability, and expertise. Are certain aspects utilized only in certain involvement situations (high or low)? The current study attempted to better understand this relationship.

Many other researchers have attempted to understand how involvement influences the influence that credibility has on information processing and attitude formation. Andrews and Shimp (1990) found that involvement was significantly related to the effect of source credibility on attitude formation. Respondents were more affected by a favourable source than an unfavourable source for a low involvement situation, but this effect was not present for a high involvement situation. These findings were in accordance with the elaboration likelihood model (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981), as source credibility is typically a peripheral heuristic cue. Mondak (1990) found that when message elaboration was minimal, credibility acted as a heuristic that influenced attitudes. However, when elaboration increased, source credibility's effect on attitude change diminished – but didn't disappear.

Priester and Petty's (2003) research suggested that participants who read an advertisement endorsed by an untrustworthy endorser were more influenced by argument quality than participants who were exposed to an advertisement endorsed by a trustworthy endorser – suggesting that message content may have an effect on the role of source credibility. Heesacker, Petty, and Cacioppo (1983) found that, for highly credible sources, attitudes in response to a strong message were more favourable than attitudes in response to a weak message. However, for low credibility sources, message strength did not influence attitudes. Slater and Rouner (1996) demonstrated that there was a relationship between message quality and source credibility. Furthermore, Beach, Mitchell, Deaton, and Prothero (1978) found that information was discounted more as its relevance and source credibility decreased.

Eisend (2007) found that source credibility enhanced consumers' attention and motivation to process a message (message involvement), improved attitudes toward the ad, and improved attitude toward the brand – yet another way that involvement and credibility influence

each other. Because involvement has been discussed in the source credibility literature on multiple occasions, it is relevant to discuss the elaboration likelihood model and how its predictions can contribute to the understanding of the relationship between involvement, source credibility, and preference for similarity.

As demonstrated by Petty and Cacioppo (1984), source credibility's impact on the decision-making process is influenced by more than the information processing route utilized (central or peripheral). The elaboration likelihood model (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981) suggested that cues to source credibility would be utilized in low involvement situations only. However, Petty and Cacioppo's (1984) work suggested a more complex relationship between involvement and source credibility's role in a decision. Further research is needed to better understand the relationship between source credibility, information elaboration and processing, and attitude formation.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The elaboration likelihood model stated that as involvement with an issue increased, more central or elaborate processing would be utilized to make a decision or evaluate any information provided (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). This model distinguished between central processing, whereby messages were carefully processed and evaluated, and peripheral processing, in which heuristic cues (such as likeability and similarity) were utilized to evaluate a message rather than in-depth deliberation.

When involvement in an issue is low, it is more likely that peripheral processing will be utilized to make decisions (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). Several studies have demonstrated this tendency (e.g., Andrews & Shimp, 1990; Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Yang, Hung, Sungh, & Farn, 2006). Common examples of peripheral

processing include evaluating the credentials of the author of a work or website or evaluating a site based on the attractiveness of a page rather than the actual content. Researchers have related involvement to external search effort in several studies. For example, Hugstad, Taylor, and Bruce (1987) found that involvement was positively related to external search effort, such that interpersonal sources and consumer guides were more influential in these cases. The current study attempted to understand source factors that would influence external search effort, in addition to the likelihood of following the source's advice.

Larsen and Phillips (2002) suggested that source cues may be more important in determining attitudes in highly stressful situations than in less stressful situations. Therefore, once again, source credibility's role in attitude formation and information processing is not as simple as the elaboration likelihood model (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981) proposed.

Although source characteristics such as expertise and likeability have been traditionally thought of as peripheral cues (Chaiken, 1980; Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981), research has demonstrated that source cues can be used to evaluate ability and bias in word-of-mouth situations (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Furthermore, these authors found that when involvement was moderate, source cues were utilized to determine how much additional effort should be made in evaluating the persuasion episode. Overall, this research suggests that involvement will affect the degree to which source cues are processed. When involvement is low, it is more likely that heuristic cues such as source likeability and similarity will be utilized to evaluate word-of-mouth sources. When involvement is high, however, expertise will be utilized as a more central cue to evaluate word-of-mouth sources.

Word-of-mouth sources are members of an individual's own personal network and social networks tend to be homophilous (e.g., Duck, 1975; Fiore & Donath, 2005; Morry, 2005;

Thelwall, 2008). Furthermore, homophily tends to be related to attractiveness (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Batchelor & Tesser, 1971; Byrne, 1961a; 1965; Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Huston & Levinger, 1978; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988; Posavac & Pasko, 1974; Rosenbaum, 1986; Tan & Singh, 1995), another element of source credibility. As such, homophily is likely to play a role in all word-of-mouth situations – but to varying degrees. This tendency for homophily in interpersonal relationships and information sources support the notion that word-of-mouth sources will be homophilous. However, since source credibility involves expertise (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953), which may necessitate differences between the word-of-mouth communicator and receiver (at least regarding knowledge and experience, if not interests as well), homophily between the source and receiver may be less prevalent in situations in which source expertise is required by the purchaser. Despite the common assumption that source credibility is primarily utilized as a peripheral cue in low involvement situations (e.g., Andrews and Shimp, 1990; Chaiken, 1980; Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981) there is evidence that source credibility is utilized at vary levels of involvement (e.g., e.g., Eisend, 2007; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Wu & Schaffer, 1987). As such, further research is needed in order to better understand how involvement influences the relationship between source credibility, information processing, and attitude formation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Since homophily is important to the understanding of source credibility and its dimensions, a better understanding of preference for homophily was the first step to this study, followed by a study of the relationship between homophily, source credibility, and involvement. Up to this point, homophily research has been done using researcher-defined categories of homophily. Specifically, researchers have determined which characteristics to study based upon whatever characteristics were the easiest to study or the most theoretically relevant for the researcher. Although this focus on theory building has added to scientific knowledge in many ways it has diminished the ability of researchers to focus on those dimensions of homophily that were the most relevant to similarity judgments for participants. Furthermore, the lack of consistency in the research has reduced the ability of researchers to compare results between studies. For example, Byrne and colleagues (e.g., Byrne, 1961a; 1961b; 1965; Byrne, Bond, & Diamond, 1969; Byrne, Clore, & Smeaton, 1986; Byrne, Griffitt, & Stefaniak, 1967; Byrne & Nelson, 1965) have focused on how similarity regarding attitudes influences attraction to an individual. Although these studies have been successful in determining attraction to a target, there is little evidence that these characteristics are the most relevant to the participants. In these studies, the participants had no information about the target other than attitudes – as such, generalizability and external validity is limited. Future research should utilize the most relevant characteristics to measure or manipulate homophily rather than simply focusing on what has worked in the past, which would allow researchers to better understand how homophily influences interactions between individuals.

Because a tendency for homophily has been demonstrated so many times in the literature (e.g., Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Byrne, 1961a; 1961b; Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Carli, Ganley, & Pierce-Otay, 1991; Duck, 1975; Fiore & Donath, 2005; Lutz-Zois, Bradley, Mihalik, & Moorman-Eavers, 2006; Morry, 2004; 2005; 2007; Schrock, 2007; Thelwall, 2008), it is useful to create a scale to measure preference for homophily based upon characteristics that are relevant to the participants. Previous research may have over or underestimated homophilous preferences and tendencies simply because the researchers have been measuring homophily based upon characteristics that are irrelevant to homophily judgments. We know that similarity is preferred over dissimilarity, but researchers are still unaware of which characteristics everyday similarity judgments are based upon in natural settings, and for which characteristics individuals display a preference for homophily.

In order to fully understand homophilous preferences, researchers need to have a valid scale with which to conduct research and experiments. A scale to measure preference for homophily will be based upon conscious (rather than subconscious) preferences, and will create an interval-level variable that will be precise enough to measure situation-specific preferences as well as consistent preferences individuals hold across situations. Individuals have been demonstrated to be inherently irrational in describing their preferences (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Tversky, 1977; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), but since perceptions of homophily tend to be more accurate in predicting relationship formations than actual homophily (Morry, 2004; 2005; 2007; Strauss, Barrick, & Connerley, 2001), this is an important first step in understanding homophilous tendencies.

McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975) and McCroskey, McCroskey, and Richmond (2006) constructed a general homophily scale. In a study of preference for homophily, however,

it is important to study homophily based on characteristics that are relevant to homophily judgments in natural settings. McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975) produced a set of items based on previous literature which eliminated any items of relevance that had yet to be studied. However, when studying a phenomenon that is not yet understood, it is important to discover how participants talk about it and its influence on their daily lives, rather than assuming that the previous research has already discovered all of the dimensions of the construct that are relevant (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Harmon & Boeringer, 2004; Morse, 1994). Thus, a general scale of preference for homophily that is based on what participants believe they utilize to make homophily judgments, rather than what researchers think is utilized to make homophily judgments, is important in order to accurately measure preference for homophily.

Furthermore, although the research suggests that participants prefer homophilous others in friendships (e.g., Atkinson, Brady, & Casas, 1981; Griffitt & Veitch, 1974), romantic relationships (e.g., Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Murstein & Beck, 1972), and word-of-mouth sources (e.g., Brown & Reingen, 1987; Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998; Wang, Walther, Pingree, & Hawkins, 2008; Wright, 2000), are the characteristics that individuals prefer a target to share with themselves dependent upon the situation? If preference for homophily is situationally defined, under which circumstances is it most desired by participants?

However, it is not enough to only understand the circumstances of preference for homophily. In order to understand preference for homophily, researchers must understand why it occurs. Thus, we need to understand the motivation behind this preference for homophily. Is it out of a desire for congruity between activities, as suggested by Warner and Parmalee's (1979) findings that friends were actually homophilous regarding activities, but not on other factors? Is

the preference for homophily based on a desire for approval (Byrne, 1961b; Erwin, 1981; Posavac, 1971) ?

The current study focuses on the conscious aspects of preference for homophily because participants are unable to describe their unconscious desires. Furthermore, the research has suggested that perceived homophily (which is a conscious evaluation of homophily) is more important in predicting tie strength and relationship formation than actual homophily (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008), and thus the conscious aspects of homophily are particularly relevant to this study. Thus, we need to understand whether or not individuals are aware of their homophilous tendencies, when (situationally) individuals demonstrate a preference for homophily, and how they make their homophilous judgments. The following research questions are proposed to help better understand these issues.

RQ1: Do actors believe they have a preference for similarity in selecting friends, associates, word-of-mouth sources, or important others?

RQ2: Does preference for similarity vary depending upon the situation, or stay constant?

RQ3: What do actors mean by similarity when they refer to friends and associates?

To date there has been a paucity of research regarding why homophily is prevalent in interpersonal relationships. Researchers have been able to determine that homophilous preferences are prevalent in society across several different types of relationships (e.g., Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Byrne, 1961a; 1961b; Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Carli, Ganley, & Pierce-Otay, 1991; Duck, 1975; Fiore & Donath, 2005; Lutz-Zois, Bradley, Mihalik, & Moorman-Eavers, 2006; Morry, 2004; 2005; 2007; Schrock, 2007; Thelwall, 2008). However, researchers have not addressed the issue of why. Thus, the following research question is proposed:

RQ4: Why do individuals prefer to spend time with and get information from homophilous rather than heterophilous sources?

This study measures involvement in order to understand situational preferences for similarity. However, there may be stable differences between individuals that affect preference for similarity across all situations. Thus, to explore this relationship between individual characteristics regarding preference for similarity and situational preference for similarity, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: An individual's preference for homophily will be positively related to homophilous tendencies when selecting word-of-mouth sources.

Much research has demonstrated that individuals are more interpersonally attracted to similar others (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Byrne & Griffitt, 1966; Crosnoe, Frank, & Mueller, 2008; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988; Weare, Musso, & Jun, 2009) and prefer to receive advice from similar others (e.g., Brown & Reingen, 1987; Wang, Walther, Pingree, & Hawkins, 2008). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Perceived similarity will be positively related to source likeability

Word-of-mouth communication is a form of external information search. Specifically, individuals seek out more information from media, advertising, friends, or other sources when they do not have enough information to make a decision on their own (Hawkins, Mothersbaugh, & Best, 2007; Solomon, Zaichkowsky, & Polegato, 2003). Furthermore, in low involvement situations in which individuals are less likely to exert effort in order to seek out information from word-of-mouth sources, they will pay more attention to the information sources that are already available to them (Kotler, Keller, Sivaramakrishnan, & Cunningham, 2013).

The extent of an information search is influenced by many factors: product class knowledge, time availability, purchase involvement, and attitudes toward shopping (Beatty & Smith, 1987). Furthermore, solicitation of advice from interpersonal sources is positively correlated with purchase involvement and attitudes toward shopping, while personal knowledge is negatively correlated with solicitation of advice from interpersonal sources.

An extensive external search is a process that delays the purchase decision. Greenleaf and Lehmann (1995) explored the reasons why individuals delay making a purchase decision, and the reasons why individuals end their search and purchase the product. Results indicated that, among other reasons, many people delayed their product choice because they needed advice or consent from another individual before making a purchasing decision, or because they did not have sufficient information in order to make an informed decision. Delay was also correlated with financial or social risk, such that individuals tended to delay the purchase of items when they wanted to be certain that they were making the right decision. Word-of-mouth advice is sought out and solicited in order to aid in gathering information, and therefore word-of-mouth advice that ends or shortens an individual's purchase delay is considered successful. Thus, word-of-mouth success can be measured by intentions to follow the advice of the individual. Furthermore, word-of-mouth is truly successful at changing an individual's opinions when they end the external search following communication, indicating that consumers will intend to purchase the product recommended without engaging in additional research. Therefore, a more effective source will result in higher intentions to purchase the recommended product and lower intentions to continue in an external search. Since similar sources tend to be more persuasive than dissimilar sources (e.g., Brown & Reingen, 1987; Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998;

Wang, Walther, Pingree, & Hawkins, 2008; Wright, 2000), the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Perceived similarity will be positively related to likelihood of following advice

H4: Perceived similarity will be negatively related to additional search processes.

Source credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Kelman & Hovland, 1953) and its three facets: expertise, trustworthiness, and likeability, has been utilized in the word-of-mouth literature to explore word-of-mouth source selection. The source credibility literature suggests how word-of-mouth sources are evaluated, but some research indicates that source characteristics are not always relevant when evaluating the quality of a communication. The elaboration likelihood model (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981) discusses the effect involvement has on word-of-mouth source evaluation. Involvement increases the likelihood that an individual will utilize more cognitive resources to evaluate a source, thus resulting in central cues to source credibility being analyzed. Thus, source likeability (a peripheral cue to credibility) will be less instrumental in evaluating source credibility in high, rather than low, involvement situations. However, source credibility can be evaluated centrally when source credibility is relevant to the decision (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Source expertise is likely to be a more central source credibility cue, and will thus be more important in high involvement situations than low involvement situations. High involvement will likely lead to a practice of optimizing (choosing the best alternative) rather than satisficing (choosing an alternative that is good enough) (Simon, 1990), and thus word-of-mouth sources will be evaluated in a more stringent manner. In order to test how involvement influences source credibility's role in the decision-making process, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Preference for similarity will be higher in low, rather than high involvement situations when predicting likelihood of following advice.

H6: Preference for similarity will be higher in low, rather than high involvement situations when predicting additional information search processes.

H7: Likeability will be more important in low, rather than high involvement situations when predicting likelihood of following advice.

H8: Likeability will be more important in low, rather than high involvement situations when predicting additional information search processes.

H9: Expertise will be more important in high, rather than low involvement situations when predicting likelihood of following advice

H10: Expertise will be more important in high, rather than low involvement situations when predicting additional information search processes.

METHODOLOGY

As stated previously, there is no scale to measure preference for homophily in the existing literature. As such, before engaging in any research regarding preference for homophily, a measurement tool needed to be created. Therefore, per the recommendations of grounded theory (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Harmon & Boeringer, 2004; Morse, 1994), the first step of this study was to create a measurement tool. In order to create a set of items for testing, a number of open-ended interviews were conducted. This stage of the research gave the researchers a set of items to be tested, rather than McCroskey's (McCroskey, McCroskey, & Richmond, 2006; McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975) method of simply listing variables previously utilized in research or of theoretical relevance to proposed research. Furthermore, these open-ended interviews aided in determining when and why preference for homophily existed in friendships and in the decision-making process.

After creating a set of items based on the open-ended interviews, a questionnaire format was utilized to determine which items needed to remain in the preference for homophily scale, and the factor structure of the scale. This was undertaken in an iterative process, such that a preliminary survey informed the factor structure, and a second survey validated the structure of the scale.

After the instrument had been created, a survey was undertaken to determine the effect of purchase involvement on preference for homophily and source credibility of the advisor. Data was collected online utilizing a sample of the same demographic characteristics as the samples for the instrument creation – American residents between the ages of 25 and 35, with a fairly even gender split.

Study 1

Overview

Study 1 was focused on developing a set of scale items to measure preference for homophily based on items generated in qualitative interviews, determining whether or not individuals are aware of their homophilous tendencies and preferences, and understanding why homophilous preferences were present in interpersonal relationships and word-of-mouth information searches. This study involved three phases. The first phase consisted of a set of open-ended qualitative interviews to investigate the situations in which homophilous preferences were activated, the characteristics that individuals evaluated when making homophilous judgments, and the reasons why homophily was important. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes regarding the four research questions related to homophilous preferences. These interviews were the basis for the development of a preference for homophily scale, which was validated in phases two and three of this study. The next phase involved the development of a quantitative questionnaire to test the scale items created in phase one. Analysis of this scale involved an analysis of the alpha change statistics for each scale item and an exploratory factor analysis. Following this analysis, an analysis of means was utilized to determine which items were included in the final scale that was tested in phase three of study one. Phase three involved a validation of the preference for homophily scale utilizing alpha change statistics and a confirmatory factor analysis.

Procedure

Open-ended interviews were conducted in person and on the phone. Consent forms were emailed to all phone participants before the interview, and presented to all face-to-face

participants upon arrival. As stipulated in the consent form (Appendix A), participation in the interview indicated consent to the terms. The interviews took between 8 and 22 minutes each. All participants were assigned a pseudonym, and no identifiable data was stored for the participants. See Appendix A for a copy of the interview protocol.

Questions utilized to create the preference for homophily scale were designed to elicit a set of characteristics based on the similarity measurement procedure set out by Tversky (1977), which is a conscious measure of similarity. Specifically, Tversky (1977) stated that evaluations of similarity were based upon a weighted sum of the similarities and differences that individuals shared. Characteristics that individuals shared were weighted and added to the overall similarity score, and characteristics on which individuals were different were weighted and subtracted from the overall similarity score. Thus, Tversky (1977) asserted that perceptions of similarity were formed by judging similarity and dissimilarity across a wide variety of characteristics, and therefore this study's questions asked participants to describe their friends and sources based upon not only those characteristics that they shared, but also those characteristics that they did not share. In order to build a list of characteristics to create scale items, all interview transcripts were analyzed for themes related to the reasons for homophilous preferences, the characteristics participants utilized to describe homophily, and the situations in which preference for homophily was more or less prevalent for participants. Instances where individuals discussed characteristics of importance in judging similarity / dissimilarity and instances in which individuals discussed why they thought homophily was important were identified and tagged. Following this process, two independent coders coded each tagged interview excerpt according to a codebook that included all of the themes identified in the analysis of the transcripts, with 85% intercoder

agreement. Specifically, coders agreed on the theme of the tagged instance 85% of the time. Scale items were then developed based on the characteristics identified throughout this process.

Data for phases 2 and 3 of the scale development was collected online. In phase two, participants were asked to fill out a set of likert-type scale items based upon the results of the individual open-ended interviews in order to form the scale. See Appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire utilized. Data was analyzed utilizing inter-item correlations, alpha change statistics, and an exploratory factor analysis. Phase three validated the scale by asking participants to fill out the scale (see Appendix C for a copy of the questionnaire) and, once again, analyzing inter-item correlations, alpha change statistics, and the alpha reliability statistic. This scale was aimed at measuring preference for homophily and thus individuals were asked not to describe a source, but to describe how important it was to them for a source to share each characteristic with them.

Study Two

Overview

Study two was focused on determining how source credibility, preference for homophily, and perceived homophily influenced how individuals chose who to go to for advice about a purchase. Furthermore, it was utilized as a further test of the preference for homophily scale developed in study one. Involvement was studied as a moderating variable to determine its influence on which characteristics of source credibility would be important to consumers, and how homophilous sources were to the consumer. In order to accomplish this, preference for homophily was measured, in addition to the consumer's perceptions of their chosen word of mouth source's perceived homophily, expertise, trustworthiness, and likeability.

All data for this study was collected utilizing an online survey application, Zoomerang. The survey was hosted on the Zoomerang website and participants were randomly selected from

the Zoomerang panel. Before filling out the survey, participants were informed of their rights as a research participant such that they had the right to refuse to participate without consequence, and they had the right to refuse to answer any question. Furthermore, they were given contact information for the researchers and the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Program, should they have any questions or complaints. Participants were informed that by clicking the 'Submit' button they were indicating their consent to participate in the study. The first four hypotheses were tested utilizing simple linear regressions. The models proposed in figure 2, which encompassed hypotheses 5 – 10, were tested utilizing two linear regression analyses that included interaction terms. Significant interaction terms were then analyzed individually utilizing a one-tailed t-test to compare the means of the dependent variable for the high and low involvement groups.

Measurement

Involvement was measured utilizing Zaichkowsky's (1985) 20-item Likert-type product class involvement scale. This scale has been utilized in many academic studies (e.g., Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989; Beatty & Smith, 1987; Celsi & Olson, 1988; Mano & Oliver, 1993; Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996). This scale was selected due to its excellent reliability statistics and its common use in psychological, sociological, and communication studies.

Preference for homophily was measured based on the items identified in Study one of the research. The items focused not on describing an actual word-of-mouth source, but asked individuals to rate their level of preference for a source to be similar to them regarding each item identified in study one. This was a measure of conscious preference for homophily, and was a further test of the construct validity of this new scale.

Perceived homophily with a source was also measured based on the items identified in study one of this paper. These questions asked them to describe how similar their source was to themselves on each of the items identified for the preference for homophily scale in study one (e.g., values, personality, sense of humour). This was a measure of perceived, not actual, homophily with a word-of-mouth source. However, since perceived homophily has been demonstrated to be a better predictor of relationship formation and attraction (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008) and preference for homophily was measured in a conscious manner, perceived homophily was appropriate. This scale was adapted to measure perceived homophily by asking participants to report how similar or dissimilar their sources were to themselves rather than reporting how important it was to them for their sources to be similar to them on each characteristic. This scale was utilized in order to ensure that this measure was also based on the characteristics that were important to consumers, rather than based on what the researchers thought was important. Measuring perceived homophily and preference for homophily also helped to confirm the scale's construct and predictive validity by testing its ability to predict the relationship between perceived homophily and the influence of a source – which has been demonstrated many times in previous literature (e.g., Brown & Reingen, 1987; Bruyn & Lilien, 2004; Dellande, Gilly, & Graham, 2004; Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998; Steffes & Burgee, 2009; Wang, Walther, Pingree, & Hawkins, 2008; Wright, 2000).

Intentions to engage in additional search and intentions to follow through with a source's recommendation were measured based upon Bearden, Lichtenstein, and Teel's (1984) intentions scale. This scale was selected due to its simplicity, short length, and its high reliability statistics in previous studies (e.g., Li, Daugherty, & Biocca, 2002).

Source credibility was measured based upon its three individual dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, and likeability. In order to measure trustworthiness and expertise, Ohanian's (1990) 5-item Likert-type scales were utilized. This scale was utilized due to its short length and its pervasiveness in the literature (e.g., Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2004; Senecal & Nantel, 2004; Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006). Ohanian (1990) also created an attractiveness scale, but the items were related to physical attractiveness rather than interpersonal attractiveness which was less relevant to the current study. Thus, the Reysen Likeability Scale was utilized to measure likeability (Reysen, 2005), as it measures likeability on both sociability and physical attractiveness. It is less pervasive in the literature than other likeability scales, but reliability statistics were good and the items were more relevant to the current study than other likeability scales.

RESULTS

Study One Phase One

Participants

Twenty-one interviews were conducted in May of 2011 by the author. Interviews lasted between 8 and 22 minutes each, and were based on the interview guide in appendix A. All participants were between the ages of 25 and 35. Eleven of the interviewees were male. Seventeen of the interviewees were Caucasian, 3 Asian, and 1 Black. Note that all participants' names were changed to protect their anonymity.

Research Question 1: *Do actors believe they have a preference for similarity in selecting friends, associates, word-of-mouth sources, or important others?*

Most participants admitted that their friends were quite similar to them, and that similarity was at least somewhat important to them. However, they seemed to indicate that similar interests were more important than similar personalities. For example, John said "It's important to have similar interests. It's not important to be similar people. Because the differences are what makes everyone unique and it's generally differences that'll catch someone's eye a lot quicker than similarities will." He said that these differences caught a person's eye because they were exciting and offered fresh, interesting new perspectives and activities to consider. Other participants often made similar assertions – they tended to prefer to spend time with people who had similar interests to their own, but personality differences helped offer fresh perspectives on situations, and different activity interests took them out of their own 'comfort zone'. There were some participants who stated that similarity was unimportant to them,

but then admitted that they preferred spending time with people who had similar interests, because it made choosing activities to do together simpler and it allowed them to have conversations with their friends about things that they found interesting.

One participant, however, had spent a large amount of time in the military and had a different perspective. As Andrew said “I don’t think it’s as important as we thought it was when I was growing up ... you don’t have to have similarities. Because in the end sometimes you adopt some of the things that you never knew about so... I think no, especially if you have people that are open to trying new stuff and going outside that box then no you don’t have to be too similar.” He explained that, when he was growing up, his closest friends were all very similar to him. However, since joining the military, he had been forced to befriend people with different backgrounds, interests, and personalities. After this military experience, he tended to seek out friends who were different from him because he had grown to appreciate those differences and the new experiences and perspectives that they offered him. However, his closest friends were still those friends from childhood who were extremely similar to him. Thus, preference for homophily seems to be present in all individuals, even those who do not claim to have a preference for similarity. However, experiences and other factors may influence how important this characteristic is, and how consciously individuals admit to a preference for similarity.

Research Question 2: *Does preference for similarity vary depending upon the situation, or stay constant?*

Regarding friendship, participants stated that during times of stress, similarity was more important. Specifically, an individual who had a shared background, and who had been through a similar experience, was better able to lend support to the participant. For example, Sheila said that “Say there was a death in the family, for example. You would need somebody that is used to

that kind of situation and would be able to console you. Say you had a birth in the family, or you were giving birth, you need somebody that's close to that situation to help you out." Furthermore, John stated that "Similarities would be more important during uneasy times. Times of high stress. Or times, fights or disagreements, generally the similarities will be what the group would fall back on to stay together whereas the differences would be what forces it apart." When probed further, John said that this was because friends would be able to fall back upon similar interests to share time together doing something they all enjoy, whereas disagreements would cause discord regarding what to do and how they communicate. Thus, all participants who spoke about situations that would influence the importance of similarity between friends discussed the importance of similarity during times of stress, be it personal stress or disagreements between friends.

Research Question 3: *What do actors mean by similarity when they refer to friends and associates?*

When asked what sorts of things they had in common with their friends, and what sorts of differences they had with their friends, there were several categories of responses. People either spoke of personalities or tastes first. For example, people often stated that they liked similar movies, television shows, and music as their friends. They also spoke of how outgoing or quiet their friends were, and how temperamental they were. Belief systems were also discussed on several occasions, with political and religious beliefs being discussed the most often. Demographic variables were also discussed, particularly regarding gender and age.

When trying to categorize characteristics, a pattern emerged. In general, there were some characteristics that were easy for participants to ascertain based on little or no interaction, and other characteristics that participants would have been required to spend time with the other

person in order to determine similarity. Demographic characteristics and personal appearance were the easiest for participants to identify, but were also discussed only peripherally – indicating that individuals were aware of similarity on these characteristics, but it was not important enough for them to discuss these characteristics in-depth. Alternatively, concerns regarding the social desirability of admitting a preference for homophily on certain characteristics may have prevented participants from discussing it.

Furthermore, there were some categories of characteristics that were easy to identify given a short conversation, such as similar backgrounds, similar familial situations, and similar social networks. These items were discussed slightly more often, and were often mentioned as a way for individuals to meet and for individuals to spend time together. For example, having similar friendship networks allowed for people to spend time in social gatherings, and having similar familial statuses allowed for play dates with children and double dates with other couples.

As stated previously, the most common characteristics discussed had to do with interests. Participants discussed what they had in common with their friends and information sources with regards to activities, television shows, movies, and several other entertainment mediums. These were also the characteristics that they seemed to find particularly important to be similar upon, as it helped them engage in activities and discussions that were interesting to both parties. This set of characteristics required a deeper level of knowledge of the individuals than previously discussed characteristics, and it appeared to be of particular importance. However, these characteristics are fairly easy to ascertain during a brief conversation.

These first three categories: physical and demographic, relational networks and familial status, and activities were all listed as ways of aiding in an introduction. Thus, mutual friends, similar interests, and similar physical appearance were all mentioned as a way to facilitate

introductions and meet new people. However, based on discussion of these traits, interests were more likely to be important to maintaining a relationship than the other characteristics.

The fourth category of characteristics that was discussed almost as often as interests had to do with personality and values. Participants often stated that they were similar to their friends with regards to humour, temperament, and degree of extroversion, and regarding their attitudes toward world issues such as gay marriage and war. This was the first set of characteristics that did not facilitate an introduction, but it was discussed almost as often as similar activities to facilitating the maintenance of a relationship. Participants indicated that similarity regarding these characteristics made it a more comfortable interaction in which they felt that they could be themselves, and in which they felt that their feelings and thoughts were not only understood but accepted, because their interaction partners felt the same way. This particular set of characteristics may facilitate individuals' need for approval (Byrne, 1961; Posavac, 1971), as having friends with similar opinions facilitates agreement and support for those values.

Research Question 4: *Why do individuals prefer to spend time with / get information from homophilous rather than heterophilous sources?*

As previously stated, participants tended to emphasize the importance of similar interests even more than similar personalities in their friends. The reasons why similarity was important were reflective of this tendency. People stated that it was easier to find things to talk about and easier to find things to do with friends who were similar to them. For example, Jane said that "Well, [similarities] just give you something to talk about more than the weather." Furthermore, Samantha stated that "I think it helps if you guys are similar, you know, you have more to talk about." Tori also stated that people with similar interests required less background information in order to understand what she was trying to say, and therefore the conversation tended to flow

more easily. For example, if an individual was interested in cooking and attempting to explain his or her latest exploit, a person who was knowledgeable about cooking would require fewer definitions and explanations, and the emphasis could be on the actual experience of cooking and not on the technical aspects of the activity. Thus, similarities give people common ground to start a discussion, and also help them share common experiences. As Tamara said “I figure if we’re going to be spending time together we should be doing something I like to do. That we both like to do.” Even Andrew, who strongly believed that similarity was unimportant, stated that it was easier to find things to do together when they shared common interests.

Tamara also stated that it was easier to meet people who were similar to her “... say I’m at the gym or something and I see someone who I already know, it’s easier to develop those friendships when you’re in the same places.” Therefore, not only do similarities facilitate conversation and activity choice, similarities facilitate introductions as well. As such, most participants believed that friendships developed between similar people because these similarities allowed them to meet each other, and share experiences and conversations that led to more meaningful relationships.

Although most people stated that similar interests were the most important thing to share, leading to shared experiences and conversations, Nick valued a similar sense of humour above all else. He said that this allowed his friends to joke around and feed off the energy of each other, and also let them be themselves without a fear of being judged. This is similar to the need for approval (Posavac, 1971) and need for affiliation (Byrne, 1961b) findings regarding homophily, which suggest that a desire to be similar to one’s friends is rooted in a desire to be well-liked or accepted. As stated above, similar personality and world views facilitate this feeling of comfort and acceptance, and thus deepen the relationship. Furthermore, these findings are in line with the

findings of Erwin (1981), who discovered that perceived preference of a target toward a participant led to more homophilous and favourable perceptions toward the target.

Participants were also asked how they chose their shopping partners. While many participants indicated that social intimacy and entertainment were factors when they went shopping with other people, several still had comments on when similarity or dissimilarity would be desirable in a shopping partner. When asked specifically about similarity regarding shopping partners, most people said that similarity was desirable because these partners better understood their needs, and were able to give better advice. As Amanda said “It’s great to have somebody who likes the things you like.” Amanda was speaking of clothing shopping, and said that, for these sorts of purchases, it was nice to have somebody with her who could give her advice about what suited her own sense of fashion. She also said that it was nice that they liked the same sorts of stores, and tried on similar styles to each other, making the shopping experience simpler.

Henry also said that, at times, he just wanted somebody to agree with him, and so similarities were important to ensure that he would receive this agreement “If I take somebody shopping with me I usually want the person to say ‘yes’. And usually it’s because I’m unsure. Otherwise I would almost definitely go for it myself.” He said that this tended to happen for high-involvement items, and thus this desire for reassurance was the “human condition” and that we (humans) want assurance that we’re making the right choice when we make risky decisions. Although to a lesser extent, other participants expressed a desire to have people with similar interests so that the person would encourage them to purchase something that they really wanted. This desire for reassurance is similar to the desire for acceptance mentioned earlier for friends, which was mostly driven by similarities regarding values and personalities when discussing friendships.

However, for big-ticket items and impulse buys, participants stated that differences were often good to offer a different perspective. For example, Brent said that “Maybe slightly differences [are] more [important] if I am making kind of an impulse buy and they are giving me good reasons why I shouldn’t make an impulse buy.” When discussing a car purchase, Janet said that she valued differences because she believed that helped her make a more informed decision “I didn’t want somebody who’s just going to confirm what I think, I certainly want some differences of opinion. I think, if I think somebody is just agreeing with me that’s not very helpful. I’d rather have somebody kind of offer me some critique of what I’m thinking or offer me counterpoints because I think I can then have a fuller picture of all my options and I think I can make a more informed decision.” Thus, depending on the purchase situation, there is a different value placed on similarities and differences. Impulse buys and big-ticket items inspire a desire for dissimilarities in order to make a more informed decision, while smaller-ticket items such as clothing inspire a preference for similarity so that people will make recommendations that are appropriate for the individual.

Differences in knowledge and experience were also desirable for big-ticket items. In these cases, people didn’t just want a different perspective - they wanted a more informed perspective. Thus, the most common reason why participants chose a friend as an advisor for a big-ticket item was because they had experience with the product, or because they had knowledge that surpassed that of the participant. For example, Jane spoke of purchasing a videogame console “I think in this case their differences are more important because I don’t have that knowledge so I’m going to them because they have that knowledge.” Tori spoke of purchasing her GPS, and said that although she relies on herself and Internet research for most purchases, she did not have the information about which features were important when making a

new GPS purchasing decision and so she asked her friends who had a GPS which features they thought were necessary. In this case, it was not her friends' expertise that made them a desirable advisor, but their experience with the product. James spoke of the strength of weak ties (Grannovetter, 1973), stating that weak ties may have access to resources (deals) that he did not, and thus they became ideal advisors in situations where their unique resources would help accomplish a goal.

Although participants often spoke of differences being desirable in purchasing situations, many participants also stated that differences between friends allowed them to experience new things that they otherwise would not have tried. For example, Tamara said that her boyfriend's dissimilar interests had led to her finding some new interests regarding movies and television shows "Differences are good with everyday things like going to movies cause there'd be some movies that I would say that I would have never seen unless he said 'hey let's watch it' and then it turns out I actually like them." Other friends spoke of similar experiences when their friends' dissimilar preferences led to them discovering new interests (e.g., food, music, television) that they very much enjoyed. However, it should be noted that these differences in experience and taste eventually led to a shared interest, thus increasing homophilous interests between the two.

Although none of the participants stated that they preferred differences for this reason, they stated that it was a possibility that some people would value differences in order to inspire a healthy debate. Thus, in that case, differences in political, religious, and other belief systems would allow them to be involved in a spirited discussion of their views. However, a mutual enjoyment of debate would be required in order for a friendship to flourish in this situation.

Study One Phase Two

Participants

301 participants were recruited from a Zoomerang panel, which has been demonstrated to be demographically similar to the United States population (Zoomerang, n. d.). All participants were between the ages of 25 and 35, and were notified of the survey opportunity via email.

Zoomerang participants were rewarded 100 zoom points in return for survey participation. See table 2 for a demographic description of the participants.

Table 2: Study 1 Phase 2 Participant Demographics

		Percent	N
Gender			
	Male	43.1%	129
	Female	56.9%	170
Race			
	Caucasian	71.4%	212
	African American	9.4%	28
	Native American	1%	3
	Asian	8.1%	24
	Pacific Islander	0.7%	2
	Hispanic / Latino	6.4%	19
	Multiracial	2%	6
	Don't want to disclose	1%	3
Employment			
	Self-employed	8.4%	25
	Full-time	53.5%	159
	Part-time	8.4%	25
	Not Employed	22.2%	66
	Student	7.4%	22
Education			
	Elementary School	0.3%	1

Table 2 (cont'd)

	Some High School	2%	6
	High School	16.2%	48
	Some College	25.3%	75
	Associate Degree	11.8%	35
	Bachelor's Degree	29.3%	87
	Master's Degree	11.4%	34
	Professional Degree	3%	9
	Doctorate Degree	0.7%	2
Personal Income			
	Under \$10,000	27.2%	80
	\$10,000 - \$20,000	10.9%	32
	\$20,000 - \$35,000	21.1%	62
	\$35,000 - \$50,000	22.4%	66
	\$50,000 - \$75,000	10.2%	30
	\$75,000 - \$100,000	5.4%	16
	Over \$100,000	2.7%	8
Household Income			
	Under \$10,000	11.5%	34
	\$10,000 - \$20,000	6.4%	19
	\$20,000 - \$35,000	16.9%	50
	\$35,000 - \$50,000	20%	59
	\$50,000 - \$75,000	23.4%	69
	\$75,000 - \$100,000	12.2%	36
	Over \$100,000	9.5%	28
Marital Status			
	Now Married	49%	147
	Divorced	4.7%	14
	Separated	1%	3
	Never Married	45.3%	136

Scale Development

Based on the interviews outlined above, a set of 45 Likert-type scale items were created to measure preference for homophily, with 50% of the items phrased such that they needed reverse coding before analysis – a tactic utilized to reduce response bias (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The selection of which items were reverse coded was done on a random basis utilizing a random number generator. However, certain items made little sense after reverse coding, and thus other items were selected instead utilizing a random number generator once again. Furthermore, questions were asked about whom individuals would choose as friends as well as whom individuals would go to for advice. The same procedure as that described above was utilized to select which items would be written about friends, and which items would be written about information sources, such that random assignment was used up to the point that items made sense to the participants. Some items could not be reverse coded. For example “I tend to spend more time with friends who have similar relationships styles to my own” would have made little sense as a reverse coded item. All scale items were coded such that a higher score on the 7-point Likert-type scale indicated a higher preference for homophily. See appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire utilized, including the consent form, demographic questions and scale items.

After recoding of negatively phrased items, data analysis was performed. Before factor analysis was done, all items were subjected to an analysis of skewness and variance to ensure that they varied enough to be predictive of preference for homophily. All items had a skewness of less than 1, answers ranging across the scale of 1 – 7, and a variance between 1 and 2.5. Although responses tended to be clustered around the midpoint, 4, titled “Neither agree nor disagree”, all of the items were deemed fit to be included in the factor analysis, based on the recommendations of Clark and Watson (1995). After this was established, all items were

removed from the scale with item-total correlations of less than 0.2, eliminating 12 items from the scale. Thus, all items that did not fit well within the scale were eliminated in this step.

Next, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to analyze the structure of the remaining items. Two factors resulted. The data were analyzed utilizing unrotated factors, varimax rotation, and oblimin rotation. Each rotation was performed utilizing both standardized and unstandardized scores. Furthermore, multiple data screening techniques were utilized to eliminate cases, such as removing all cases in which more than five responses in a row were the same. Although the items that remained in the scale after eliminating all items with cross-loadings, each factor analysis resulted in only two factors – one factor for items phrased such that similarity was preferable, and one factor for items phrased such that dissimilarity was preferable. This bifurcation of positively and negatively worded items is common, however (Schmitt & Stults, 1985). As such, it was determined that this was a unidimensional scale, and that the wording (positive / negative) was the only difference between the two factors and a decision was made to treat this variable as unidimensional. Per Torgerson (1958), this scale is transitive such that a higher score on the preference for homophily scale denotes a higher degree of preference, and a lower score denotes a lower degree of preference for homophily. This is the main requirement and description of a unidimensional scale.

Once it was determined that this was a unidimensional scale, eliminating items due to cross-loadings was deemed inappropriate, and these items were added back into the original scale. Analysis utilizing t-tests indicated that some items were no different from the midpoint, or had an average rating below the midpoint. Since these items were correlated with a low amount of variance and were not of importance to participants when forming homophilous judgments

and relationships these items were eliminated from the scale before further analysis, leaving a total of 22 items in the scale.

The unidimensional scale had an $\alpha = 0.845$. Refer to table 3 for factor loadings for each item in the scale. The factor analysis had a significant sphericity ($\chi^2 = 4010.023, p < 0.001$) indicating that the items have at least some level of correlation with the other items. Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy indicated that correlations between items could be explained by other variables ($KMO = 0.927$). Although not all items had loadings of 0.6 or higher, they contributed to the alpha reliability statistic and were greater than 0.45, and thus remained in the scale. Some items had significant crossloadings (above 0.4), but due to the unidimensional nature of the scale they were kept.

Table 3: Study 1 Phase 2 Item Factor Loadings, Means, and Standard Deviations

Item	Factor 1 Loading	Factor 2 Loading	Mean	SD
Sense of Humour	0.44	0.233	5.39	1.223
Personality	0.566	0.134	4.76	1.302
Attitude Towards World Issues	0.765	0.140	4.76	1.206
Attitude Towards Drinking	0.594	0.211	4.98	1.154
Intelligence	0.737	0.211	4.88	1.22
Attitude Towards Gaming	0.729	-0.106	4.47	1.224
Life Goals	0.698	0.285	4.84	1.15
Taste in Books	0.693	-0.025	4.39	1.215
Taste in Movies	0.755	0.118	4.69	1.207
Family Values	0.702	0.386	5.12	1.236
Attitude Towards Education	0.703	0.246	4.98	1.195
Relationship Style	0.72	0.109	4.71	1.234
Way of Handling Money	0.603	-0.035	4.58	1.238
Knowledge of Technology	0.699	-0.124	4.44	1.088
Taste in Friends	0.766	0.142	4.59	1.131
Family Situation	0.595	0.121	4.58	1.277

Table 3 (cont'd)

Political	-0.264	0.61	4.49	1.43
Attitude Towards Gay Rights	-0.245	0.754	4.52	1.525
Attitude Towards Children	-0.274	0.772	4.37	1.333
Attitude Towards Sports	-0.296	0.688	4.31	1.267
Values	-0.246	0.776	4.56	1.421
Religion	-0.329	0.731	4.42	1.462

It is worth noting that most of the items that remained in the scale were related to activities, personality, and value systems – those items that were most talked of in the interviews. As such, the items that remained in this scale tended to be the most universally discussed in the interviews, and the most salient for interviewees. Furthermore, people tended to admit to preferring similar individuals based on those characteristics that interviewees from phase one were able to justify – specifically, people admitted a preference for homophily based on traits that interviewees spoke of when they were asked why homophily was important.

Study One Phase Three

Participants

301 participants were recruited from a Zoomerang panel, which has been demonstrated to be demographically similar to the United States population (Zoomerang, n. d.). All participants were between the ages of 25 and 35, and were notified of the survey opportunity via email. Zoomerang participants were rewarded 100 zoom points in return for survey participation. See table 4 for a demographic description of the participants.

Table 4: Study 1 Phase 3 Participant Demographics

		Percent	N
Gender			
	Male	53%	158
	Female	47%	140
Race			
	Caucasian	76.8%	228
	African American	7.1%	21
	Native American	0.3%	1
	Asian	6.1%	18
	Hispanic / Latino	6.7%	20
	Multiracial	2%	6
	Don't want to disclose	1%	3
Employment			
	Self-employed	11.7%	34
	Full-time	58.3%	169
	Part-time	7.6%	22
	Not Employed	16.9%	49
	Student	5.2%	15
	Retired	0.3%	1
Education			
	Some High School	0.7%	2
	High School	16.3%	48
	Some College	18.3%	54
	Associate Degree	11.2%	33
	Bachelor's Degree	30.8%	91
	Master's Degree	16.3%	48
	Professional Degree	3.1%	9
	Doctorate Degree	3.4%	10
Personal Income			

Table 4 (cont'd)

	Under \$10,000	16.3%	47
	\$10,000 - \$20,000	13.2%	38
	\$20,000 - \$35,000	16%	46
	\$35,000 - \$50,000	19.8%	57
	\$50,000 - \$75,000	14.6%	42
	\$75,000 - \$100,000	10.8%	31
	Over \$100,000	9.4%	27
Household Income			
	Under \$10,000	6.1%	18
	\$10,000 - \$20,000	7.8%	23
	\$20,000 - \$35,000	16.7%	49
	\$35,000 - \$50,000	15.7%	46
	\$50,000 - \$75,000	20.8%	61
	\$75,000 - \$100,000	16%	47
	Over \$100,000	16.7%	49
Marital Status			
	Now Married	51.%	153
	Widowed	0.7%	2
	Divorced	3.7%	11
	Separated	1.7%	5
	Never Married	42.4%	126

Scale Development

Based on the analysis in study one phase two, 22 items remained in the Likert-type scale. All items were phrased in the same way that they were phrased in the original test of the items, resulting in a 22-item scale with 6 items that needed to be reverse-coded prior to analysis. See appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire utilized, including the consent form, demographic questions and scale items.

After recoding of negatively phrased items, data analysis was performed. All items had a skewness of less than 1, answers ranging across the scale of 1 – 7, and a variance between 1 and 2. Although responses tended to be clustered around the midpoint, 4, all of the items were deemed fit to be included in the factor analysis based on the recommendations of Clark and Watson (1995). After this was established, item correlations and alpha change statistics were analyzed for each item. This was analyzed in two groups: positively phrased items and negatively phrased items. Based on this analysis, all of the items contributed to the alpha reliability statistic, and all items had inter-item correlations of 0.5 or higher. Thus, all 22 items contributed to and remained in the final scale. The reliability of the positively phrased items was $\alpha = 0.939$, and the reliability of the negatively phrased items was $\alpha = 0.928$. The overall reliability of the scale was $\alpha = 0.794$, which is acceptable (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). A confirmatory factor analysis was utilized to analyze the scale, performed utilizing AMOS Graphics 20. Refer to Figure 3 for the factor structure of the scale and Table 6 for a summary of the scale's path estimates. All paths were significant ($p < 0.001$). Some error terms were covaried in order to improve the fit of the model, and are reported in Table 5. The final model had a CFI of 0.902 and an RMSEA of 0.08, indicating a good fit for the model (Byrne, 2010).

Table 5: Study 1 Phase 3 Item Path Estimates, Means, and Standard Deviations

Item	Factor 1 Standardized Path Estimate	Factor 2 Standardized Path Estimate	Mean	SD
Sense of Humour	0.501***		5.43	1.271
Personality	0.638***		5.03	1.288
Attitude Towards World Issues	0.653***		5.05	1.235
Attitude Towards Drinking	0.592***		5.02	1.327

Table 5 (cont'd)

Intelligence	0.589***		5.14	1.203
Attitude Towards Gaming	0.678***		4.8	1.284
Life Goals	0.754***		5.01	1.178
Taste in Books	0.674***		4.4	1.299
Taste in Movies	0.757***		4.84	1.211
Family Values	0.723***		5.13	1.185
Attitude Towards Education	0.712***		4.88	1.25
Relationship Style	0.791***		4.84	1.271
Way of Handling Money	0.677***		4.74	1.353
Knowledge of Technology	0.744***		4.59	1.359
Taste in Friends	0.804***		4.75	1.279
Family Situation	0.684***		4.71	1.347
Political		0.842***	4.1	1.53
Attitude Towards Gay Rights		0.770***	4.3	1.745
Attitude Towards Children		0.742***	3.98	1.576
Attitude Towards Sports		0.720***	3.86	1.462
Values		0.848***	4.2	1.621
Religion		0.797***	4.02	1.6

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 6: Study 1 Phase 3 Error Covariances

Item 1	Item 2	Covariance
Factor 1: Positively Phrased Items	Factor 2: Negatively Phrased Items	-0.363***
Attitudes Towards Gays	Attitudes Towards Children	0.546***
Sense of Humour	Attitude Towards World Issues	0.292***
Sense of Humour	Attitude Towards Drinking	0.283***

Table 6 (cont'd)

Attitude Towards World Issues	Attitude Towards Drinking	0.312***
Personality	Attitude Towards World Issues	0.258***

*** = $p < 0.001$

A series of products were tested in this questionnaire in order to determine a product category for study two that had varying levels of involvement among participants (the independent variable). Six products were tested in this pretest: shoes, jackets, watches, DVD players, jeans, and sunglasses. Watches were selected for the purchase situation because they had the highest level of standard deviation on a 35-point scale ($SD = 7.47$) and the histogram indicated that there were several people in each of the two tails of the normal curve (see Figure 2). Due to the varying levels of involvement reported regarding this purchase it is likely that, for some people, it was an impulse purchase. However, for most participants it was at least somewhat involving and required a certain amount of elaboration and thought. A watch is worn publicly, and is therefore a part of the image portrayed by the wearer. As such this purchase was, to a certain degree, a status-oriented product. This may have influenced the way that individuals selected their word-of-mouth advisors and envisioned the shopping experience. Involvement in the purchase was then measured in study two in order to ensure that this variability of responses remained and in order to test correlations between involvement and source characteristics.

Study Two

Participants

150 participants were recruited from a Zoomerang panel, which has been demonstrated to be demographically similar to the United States population (Zoomerang, n. d.). All participants

were between the ages of 25 and 35, and were notified of the survey opportunity via email.

Zoomerang participants were rewarded 150 zoom points in return for survey participation. See

table 7 for a demographic description of the participants.

Table 7: Study 2 Participant Demographics

		Percent	N
Gender			
	Male	49.3%	74
	Female	50.7%	76
Race			
	Caucasian	68.7%	103
	African American	9.3%	14
	Native American	1.3%	2
	Asian	8%	12
	Hispanic / Latino	6.7%	10
	Multiracial	2.7%	4
	Don't want to disclose	3.3%	5
Employment			
	Self-employed	10.1%	15
	Full-time	49.3%	73
	Part-time	10.8%	16
	Not Employed	21.6%	32
	Student	6.1%	9
	Retired	2%	3
Education			
	Some High School	2.7%	4
	High School	20.7%	31
	Some College	18.7%	28
	Associate Degree	12.7%	19
	Bachelor's Degree	26%	39
	Master's Degree	14%	21

Table 7 (cont'd)

	Professional Degree	4.7%	7
	Doctorate Degree	0.7%	1
Personal Income			
	Under \$10,000	29.5%	43
	\$10,000 - \$20,000	8.9%	13
	\$20,000 - \$35,000	18.5%	27
	\$35,000 - \$50,000	17.8%	26
	\$50,000 - \$75,000	9.6%	14
	\$75,000 - \$100,000	8.9%	13
	Over \$100,000	6.8%	10
Household Income			
	Under \$10,000	12.8%	19
	\$10,000 - \$20,000	5.4%	8
	\$20,000 - \$35,000	16.9%	25
	\$35,000 - \$50,000	20.9%	31
	\$50,000 - \$75,000	21.6%	32
	\$75,000 - \$100,000	7.4%	11
	Over \$100,000	14.9%	22
Marital Status			
	Now Married	54.7%	81
	Widowed	1.4%	2
	Divorced	4.7%	7
	Separated	2%	3
	Never Married	37.2%	55

Hypothesis 1: An individual's preference for homophily will be positively related to homophilous tendencies when selecting word-of-mouth sources.

In order to test hypothesis 1, a linear regression was conducted, utilizing preference for homophily as a predictor of perceived homophily between a word-of-mouth source and the

participant, as defined by those characteristics included in the preference for homophily scale created in study one, included in Appendix D. Hypothesis 1 was supported. Preference for homophily was positively related to perceived homophily with the source ($\beta = 0.460, p < 0.001$) and explained 21.1% of the variance in perceived similarity.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived similarity will be positively related to source likeability.

In order to test hypothesis 2, a linear regression was conducted utilizing perceived similarity as a predictor of source likeability. Hypothesis 2 was supported. Perceived similarity was positively related to source likeability ($\beta = 0.646, p < 0.001$) and explained 41.7% of the variance in source likeability.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived similarity will be positively related to likelihood of following advice.

In order to test hypothesis 3, a linear regression was conducted utilizing perceived similarity as a predictor of intentions to follow advice. Hypothesis 3 was supported. Perceived similarity was positively related to intentions to follow advice ($\beta = 0.456, p < 0.001$) and explained 20.8% of the variance in intentions to follow advice.

Hypothesis 4: Perceived similarity will be negatively related to likelihood of additional search processes.

In order to test hypothesis 4, a linear regression was conducted utilizing perceived similarity as a predictor of intentions to engage in additional search processes. Hypothesis 4 was supported. Perceived similarity was negatively related to intentions to engage in additional search processes ($\beta = 0.178, p < 0.05$) and explained 3.2% of the variance in intentions to engage in additional search processes.

Hypothesis 5: Preference for similarity will be higher in low, rather than high involvement situations when predicting likelihood of following advice.

Refer to tables 8 and 9 for regression coefficients related to hypotheses 5-10.

Table 8: H5, H7, H9 Regression Coefficients: Predictors of Likelihood of Following Recommendation

Variable	Standardized Coefficient
Perceived Homophily	0.115
Involvement	0.267***
Expertise	-0.031
Likeability	0.811**
Involvement * Perceived Homophily	0.001
Involvement * Likeability	-0.281
Involvement * Expertise	0.147

$R^2 = 0.501$

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 9: H6, H8, H10 Regression Coefficients: Predictors of Likelihood of Engaging in Additional Search

Variable	Standardized Coefficient
Perceived Homophily	-0.178
Involvement	0.297**
Expertise	-0.643*
Likeability	0.263
Involvement * Perceived Homophily	0.337
Involvement * Likeability	-0.252
Involvement * Expertise	0.696*

$R^2 = 0.153$

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

In order to test hypothesis 5, a linear regression was conducted utilizing an interaction term, such that involvement was centred and multiplied by the centred preference for similarity variable and the product was utilized as a predictor. Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Involvement had no impact on the relationship between preference for similarity and likelihood of following advice.

Hypothesis 6: Preference for similarity will be higher in low, rather than high involvement situations when predicting additional search processes.

In order to test hypothesis 6, a linear regression was conducted utilizing an interaction term, such that involvement was centred and multiplied by the centred preference for similarity variable and the product was utilized as a predictor. Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Involvement had no impact on the relationship between preference for similarity and likelihood of engaging in additional search behaviours after receiving advice.

Hypothesis 7: Likeability will be more important in low, rather than high involvement situations when predicting likelihood of following advice.

In order to test hypothesis 7, a linear regression was conducted utilizing an interaction term, such that involvement was centered and multiplied by the centered likeability variable and the product was utilized as a predictor. Hypothesis 7 was not supported. Involvement had no impact on the relationship between likeability and likelihood of following advice.

Hypothesis 8: Likeability will be more important in low, rather than high involvement situations when predicting additional information search processes.

In order to test hypothesis 8, a linear regression was conducted utilizing an interaction term, such that involvement was centred and multiplied by the centred likeability variable and

the product was utilized as a predictor. Hypothesis 8 was not supported. Involvement had no impact on the relationship between likeability and additional search processes.

Hypothesis 9: Expertise will be more important in high, rather than low involvement situations when predicting likelihood of following advice.

In order to test hypothesis 9, a linear regression was conducted utilizing an interaction term, such that involvement was centred and multiplied by the centred expertise variable and the product was utilized as a predictor. Hypothesis 9 was not supported. Involvement had no impact on the relationship between expertise and likelihood of following advice.

Hypothesis 10: Expertise will be more important in high, rather than low involvement situations when predicting additional information search processes.

In order to test hypothesis 10, a linear regression was conducted utilizing an interaction term, such that involvement was centred and multiplied by the centred expertise variable and the product was utilized as a predictor. The interaction term was significant ($\beta = 0.258, p < 0.05$), which indicated that involvement did moderate the relationship between expertise and intentions to engage in additional search processes. The data was then split into high and low involvement, and two regressions were conducted under high and low involvement conditions. The results suggested that expertise was not a significant predictor of additional search processes in low involvement situations, but it was a significant predictor of additional search processes in high involvement situations ($\beta = 0.160, p < 0.05$). As such, hypothesis 10 was supported.

Additional Analysis

Since trustworthiness was not tested in the hypotheses, further analysis was undertaken to understand this facet of source credibility. Results indicated that trustworthiness was positively related to intentions to follow through on recommended product choice ($\beta = 0.480, p < 0.001$),

and intentions to engage in additional search behaviours ($\beta = 0.164, p < 0.05$). Similarly, likeability was positively related to intentions to follow the advice given ($\beta = 0.277, p < 0.001$) and intentions to engage in further search ($\beta = 0.126, p < 0.01$). Furthermore, as indicated in tables 5 and 6, involvement and perceived similarity are positively related to intentions to follow through on advice and intentions to engage in additional search behaviours. As such, it would seem that trustworthiness, likeability, similarity are uniformly deemed important source cues for consideration when evaluating a word-of-mouth message. Contrarily, expertise is only important in highly involving situations.

DISCUSSION

Study One

In developing the homophily scale, items related to personality, values, attitudes, activities, and points of view on issues impacting the world were considered by participants when making judgments of similarity. This new scale has several items in common with the items identified by McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975), although several overlapping items tested in this study were eliminated. Both final scales included several items related to attitudes, personality, and values, however – the key variables discussed in the interviews conducted in phase one of the scale construction. See Table 10 for a side-by-side comparison of the two scales.

Table 10: Side-by-side Comparison of McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly's (1975) Homophily Scale and Current Homophily Scale

McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly	McLaughlin
Behaves like me	
Like me	
From social class similar to mine	
Economic situation similar to mine	
Status like mine	
Morals like mine	
Looks similar to me	
Same size as I am	
Appearance like mine	
Resembles me	
Similar to me	

Table 10 (cont'd)

Thinks like me	Intelligence
Treats people like I do	Relationship Style
Background similar to mine	Family Situation
Sexual attitudes like mine	Attitude Towards Gay Rights
Shares my values	Values
	Sense of Humour
	Personality
	Attitude Towards World Issues
	Attitude Towards Drinking
	Attitude Towards Gaming
	Life Goals
	Taste in Books
	Taste in Movies
	Family Values
	Attitude Towards Education
	Way of Handling Money
	Knowledge of Technology
	Taste in Friends
	Political
	Attitude Towards Children
	Attitude Towards Sports
	Religion

Much of the current homophily research has focused on demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and race (e.g., Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Roth, 2004a; 2004b; Saiki & Delong, 2006; Thelwall, 2008; Turban, Dougherty, & Lee, 2002; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989), and dismissed the importance of similarity regarding attitudes, core values, and personality. However, in both the current and previous scales, demographic characteristics have been eliminated and these other psychographic characteristics have been demonstrated to be relevant. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) suggested that attitude homophily may be the result of demographic homophily – specifically, they suggested that the tendency for people to spend time with individuals with similar attitudes to their own was present because they chose to spend time with demographically

similar individuals, and these demographically similar individuals would therefore have experienced similar upbringings, resulting in attitude similarity. However, the current research supports previous research (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Byrne, 1961a; Duck, 1975; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Singh, 1973; Steele & McGlynn, 1979; Tan & Singh, 1995) that demographic similarity is more likely to be the product of a preference for homophily regarding personality, attitudes, and values – the reverse of what was originally proposed (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954).

This study and previous studies (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Byrne, 1961a; Duck, 1975; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Singh, 1973; Steele & McGlynn, 1979; Tan & Singh, 1995) suggest that personality, attitude, and activity homophily facilitate and encourage relationship formation. However, there is a substantial literature suggesting that demographic homophily is present in interactions and relationship formation as well (e.g., Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Roth, 2004a; 2004b; Saiki & DeLong, 2006; Thelwall, 2008; Turban, Dougherty, & Lee, 2002; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989), characteristics that were not supported in the current scale. Hoffner and Buchanan (2009) found that individuals of the same gender were perceived to have more similar attitudes to the participant than individuals of the opposite gender, suggesting that demographic homophily in relationships may be due to a tendency for people with similar demographic profiles to have things in common with each other aside from their demographic profiles. This could be why people tend to spend time with demographically similar others but do not admit to a preference for similarity on these characteristics – it is merely a result of a preference for similarity on other attributes.

Alternatively, participants may have felt uncomfortable stating a preference for homophily on these characteristics, thereby influencing the scale's construction. Laddering interviews conducted under anonymous or confidential conditions with interviewers who have

no previous (or expected future) interaction with the interviewees may be able to better understand this tendency for demographic homophily. Furthermore, techniques that use projection (e.g., ‘What do you think Cathy would consider...?’) could be utilized to understand this preference. However, the current work and abundant other works indicate that attitudes, personality, and activity homophily are consistently related to attractiveness (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Batchelor & Tesser, 1971; Byrne, 1961a; Duck, 1973; 1975; Duck & Spencer, 1972; Morry, 2004; 2005; 2007). Furthermore, the remaining scale items are the characteristics that participants spoke most about in the interviews and justified when asked why homophily was important to them. Finally, although there is a stigma associated with demonstrating a preference for homophily on demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, expressing a preference for individuals with the same gender or age is not socially unacceptable. Due to the rejection of these items, it is more likely that demographic homophily is present in society as an artefact of a preference for homophily on other characteristics, and not because people actually search for demographic homophily.

The items that remained in the scale after eliminating all items that reduced the scale’s reliability were often discussed in depth by interviewees when they were asked why they preferred to spend time with similar others. Most commonly, they discussed the ease of meeting people with similar interests, the way that similar interests facilitated conversation, and the way that similar interests facilitated activity choice. Similar taste in and attitudes toward activities accounted for 4 out of 22 items that remained in the scale. Since participants spent a great deal of time discussing how this facilitated friendship formation and growth, it makes intuitive sense that this made up approximately 20% of the scale’s items.

Previous research that has touted the superiority of perceived homophily to actual homophily in predicting attraction and relationship formation has focused on attitudinal research rather than activities (e.g., Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008; Morry, 2004; 2005; 2007; Strauss, Barrick, & Connerley, 2001). However, Werner and Parmalee's (1979) work suggests that actual homophily may be predictive of attraction in certain, more easily observable, characteristics. Now that a scale has been created based on those characteristics that participants admit are important to making similarity judgments, future researchers can explore this relationship by comparing actual homophily and perceived homophily in friendship pairs on those traits that are considered when individuals make homophily judgments in natural settings. This will allow researchers to better understand the individual effects of preference for homophily on friendship formation and word-of-mouth source choices.

While respondents tended to talk about the ease of forming friendships with individuals whose interests were similar to their own first, most of them later discussed the fact that having similar opinions made them feel more at ease when conversing with others. A similar sense of humour, political beliefs, religious beliefs, set of values, and personality all led to participants feeling more able to be themselves without fear of being judged. When probed further, participants stated that it was a basic human need to feel accepted, and to feel like their opinions were correct. By spending time with similar others, they felt like their way of living life was validated, rather than challenged. This is in support of previous research that has demonstrated that a high need for acceptance and approval increases homophilous tendencies (Byrne, 1961b; Erwin, 1981; Posavac, 1971).

In shopping trips, individuals expressed a preference for homophily in their partners so that they would enjoy the same stores and be able to give better advice regarding product choice.

This matches the claims above stating that homophily was important to facilitate activity choice. Since preferences were similar, both individuals would enjoy the trip and want to do the same things. The desire for similar taste when receiving advice may be related to a desire for approval or acceptance (Byrne, 1961b; Erwin, 1981; Posavac, 1971), once again paralleling the findings for shopping partners and interpersonal relationships. Many participants stated that they wanted people with similar preferences to go shopping with them so that they could feel validated that they were making the right choice, and not because they wanted an alternative opinion.

For highly involving situations, however, preference for similarity varied between the interpersonal and shopping situations. For highly involving interpersonal interactions, characterized by stress, individuals desired similarity so that they could fall back on those similarities to smooth over difficult times – specifically, participants felt that it would facilitate activities and discussions that would bridge gaps in the friendship. Furthermore, in personally stressful situations (such as a birth or death), similar experiences were important because this would allow for understanding and advice giving. For shopping partners, however, highly involving purchases required individuals with heterophilous information. Specifically, individuals tended to look to word-of-mouth sources who had different knowledge or experience bases in order to lend expertise to the situation. However, a certain amount of homophily was still desirable in order to aid in developing a true understanding of the advisee's needs.

Study Two

This study attempted to determine how involvement and source credibility influenced word-of-mouth advisor choices. Although the elaboration likelihood model predicted that source cues would be utilized only when peripheral processing was undertaken (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981), other research has suggested that source credibility was utilized in both

moderately and highly involving situations in order to form attitudes (e.g., Eisend, 2007; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Wu & Schaffer, 1987). The results of this study suggest that homophily, likeability, and trustworthiness of a source were consistently influential in attitude formation. Specifically, no matter the level of involvement, individuals would be more likely to follow the advice of somebody they trusted, liked, and were similar to.

Expertise, however, was a more complicated facet of source credibility. Specifically, expertise was only influential in predicting likelihood of engaging in additional search efforts in highly involving situations. Expertise, unlike homophily, likeability, and trustworthiness, was limited in its relevance as a cue.

Although source credibility has historically been thought of as a peripheral cue to information processing, individuals are becoming more and more concerned with determining the credibility of a source – especially in the online environment (e.g., Forman, Ghose, & Wiesenfeld, 2008; Golbeck, 2009; Hong, 2006; Heit & Rotello, 2012; Huffaker, 2010). As such, it is likely that people are paying much more attention to the credibility of information sources regardless of involvement or environment. However, this consistent evaluation of source credibility tends to be based on peripheral cues such as grammar, website attractiveness, and credentials – not the actual content (a central cue).

Trustworthiness and likeability of a source were consistently present in word-of-mouth sources regardless of involvement level, while expertise was only present in sources advising participants in highly involving situations. This prevalence of trustworthiness is in line with the work of McGinnies and Ward (1980). In their study of source credibility, source expertise was judged utilizing the central processing route, while source likeability and trustworthiness were judged utilizing the peripheral processing route. This explains the findings of Petty and Cacioppo

(1984) that source cues can be processed in highly involving situations. If expertise is a central cue while trustworthiness and likeability are peripheral cues, source credibility's role in highly involving situations needs to be reconsidered – especially if peripheral cues are evaluated across situations.

This tendency to seek out credible sources on these two dimensions across involvement levels could be due to a consistent preference for likeable and trustworthy sources, or it could be a product of the nature of friendships – people tend to spend time with others that are likeable and trustworthy. Future research should manipulate involvement and measure the processing route utilized to form attitudes and the source credibility cues considered when evaluating a source that is described by the researcher, and not a source selected by the participant from their own social network.

The strong relationship between likeability and homophilous perceptions of the source indicate that the scale created in study one has construct validity. Specifically, this replicates past research which has demonstrated a strong relationship between interpersonal attraction and homophily (e.g., Acitelli, Douvan, & Veroff, 1993; Allgeier, & Byrne, 1973; Batchelor & Tesser, 1971; Byrne, 1961a; 1961b; Fiore & Donath, 2005; Schrock, 2007; Tan & Singh, 1995; Werner & Parmalee, 1979). Furthermore, the correlation between homophilous preferences and homophilous ratings of the word-of-mouth source make intuitive sense, and indicate predictive validity. Previous work that has utilized McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly's (1975) scale has often determined that only certain elements of homophily were significant predictors of relationship formation (e.g., Glascock & Ruggiero, 2006; Rocca & McCroskey, 1999; Wright, 2004). Furthermore, in other studies that utilized this scale, effect sizes were small (e.g., Morris, Gorham, Cohen, & Huffman, 1996) or null (e.g., Dohanos, 2003). This previous homophily scale

has been unable to find a consistent relationship between homophily and attractiveness – which, according to the research, should not be the case (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Batchelor & Tesser, 1971; Byrne, 1961a; 1965; Farmer & Farmer, 1996; Huston & Levinger, 1978; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988; Posavac & Pasko, 1974; Rosenbaum, 1986; Tan & Singh, 1995). By focusing on only those characteristics that are relevant to similarity judgments in natural settings, and by studying new components to homophily that were left out of McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly's (1975) scale, the current scale will allow future researchers to find out the true importance of homophily. If these relationships were re-analyzed utilizing the current scale, a higher correlation and explained variance will likely be observed between perceived homophily and attractiveness.

CONCLUSION

The first step in this dissertation was to create a new scale to measure preference for homophily and, by extension, perceived homophily. The resulting scale had 22 items related to activities, personality, and values. The previously utilized scale (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975) had been utilized in the literature a limited number of times, with mixed results. Dohanos (2003) analyzed the perceived similarity of sorority and fraternity members. According to the previous homophily research (e.g., Allgeier & Byrne, 1973; Byrne, 1961a; Duck, 1975; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Singh, 1973; Steele & McGlynn, 1979; Tan & Singh, 1995) and the predictions of the Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE Model; Lea & Spears, 1991), people who were members of the same fraternity or sorority should have been perceived to be more similar to the participant than members of a different fraternity or sorority. However, Dohanos (2003) found no significant effects utilizing the McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975) scale. Furthermore, Dohanos (2003) utilized the entire scale rather than breaking the analysis into the four dimensions of the homophily scale. Given the mixed results regarding the predictive validity of certain dimensions of the homophily scale (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975), Dohanos (2003) may have experienced significant results if he had analyzed the effects of group membership on perceived homophily's individual dimensions, rather than utilizing the whole scale. By utilizing the scale developed in this dissertation, Dohanos (2003) would be much more likely to find significant effects, in support of previous research, as it is a unidimensional scale based on characteristics that are relevant to individuals when making similarity judgments rather than a multidimensional scale that has dimensions and items that have little bearing on similarity judgments in natural settings.

Morris, Gorham, Cohen, and Huffman (1996) found that, while perceived homophily was positively related to instructor ratings, the explained variance was quite low ($R^2 = 2.9\%$). The current study utilized perceived homophily to predict the likeability of a source, with very high explained variance ($R^2 = 64.6\%$). Although both of these studies indicate the same positive relationship between likeability and perceived homophily, the current study indicated a much stronger relationship between these two variables. By focusing on only those characteristics that are considered when individuals study how similar a target is to them, the predictive and construct validity of the scale is greatly increased, as demonstrated by the higher explained variance of the current scale.

Glascok and Ruggiero (2007) utilized only two dimensions of the homophily (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975) scale: attitude and background homophily. They utilized these, among other variables, to predict students' perceptions of learning. Results suggested that attitude homophily predicted 1.5% of the variance in student learning, while background homophily's explained variance was not reported. The significant, but small, effect of attitude homophily on student perceptions of learning mimics the results of Morris, Gorham, Cohen, and Huffman (1996). Furthermore, the significance of only one dimension out of four supports the notion that Dohanos (2003) may have found different results if the statistical analysis had been based on the individual dimensions rather than the scale as a whole. The small effect size, however, is an indication, once again, that the scale is lower in construct and predictive validity than the current study's scale.

Rocca and McCroskey (2009) studied the effects of attitude and background homophily on the perceived immediacy and verbal aggression of a teacher. Results indicated that perceived homophily was positively correlated to perceived immediacy and negatively related to verbal

aggression. Although explained variance was not reported in this study, and thus comparison across studies is difficult, it is noteworthy that the other two dimensions of perceived homophily (value and appearance) were not reported.

These small and nonsignificant results indicate a scale that is low in construct and predictive validity. Furthermore, the current scale has several questions related to values and activities that predict likeability of a target. While the scale created by McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975) included four items related to value homophily the results were not reported in any of the four studies cited above. This indicates that the value dimension on the previous perceived homophily scale included items that were of little relevance to participants making judgments regarding similarity. Furthermore, the lack of any items related to activities indicates that an entire subset of perceived homophily was missing in the McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975) scale. This is likely due to a paucity of activity-related homophily research at the time the scale was created, but it diminishes the validity of the scale.

While perceived homophily has not been discussed in the traditional source credibility literature, the current study and other word-of-mouth literature (e.g., Brown & Reingen, 1987; Bruyn & Lilien, 2004; Dellande, Gilly, & Graham, 2004; Gilly, Graham, Wolfenbarger, & Yale, 1998; Steffes & Burgee, 2009; Wang, Walther, Pingree, & Hawkins, 2008; Wright, 2000) indicate that this is an important dimension of the source evaluation process. The current study discussed perceived homophily with a source as a precursor to source likeability. Due to the strong relationship between source likeability and perceived homophily it is likely that this is the extent of the effect of perceived homophily on source credibility perceptions. As such, perceived homophily should be discussed as a component of likeability rather than a new dimension of source credibility until researchers better understand the effect that perceived homophily has on

source credibility. Future research should explore whether or not this should be a new dimension of the source credibility literature.

Traditional models of information processing and attitude formation have suggested that source credibility will only be relevant in low involvement conditions (e.g., Chaiken, 1980; Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). The current study, however, and other research (e.g., Hugstad, Taylor, & Bruce, 1987; Larsen & Philips, 2002; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984) suggest a more complex relationship between involvement, source credibility, information processing, and attitude formation. The varied effects of the three dimensions of source credibility across involvement levels suggest that the three dimensions of source credibility, in the future, should be analyzed separately when studying how involvement influences the relationship between source credibility and decision-making. Much like homophily research, the different dimensions have often been analyzed as a set rather than individually. As such, complex relationships were, very likely, overly simplified. Furthermore, unpublished articles regarding the relationship between source credibility and the elaboration likelihood model should be revisited to explore this relationship. With this new information regarding the role of source cues in highly involving situations, previous literature regarding the elaboration likelihood model (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981) and source cues, among other (traditionally) peripheral cues, should be revisited with this new perspective in mind.

Traditional studies of the elaboration likelihood model have not all studied source credibility but they have often given source cues as an example of peripheral cues, and this has transferred to marketing textbooks' explanations of the elaboration likelihood model (e.g., Schiffman, Kanuk, & Wisenblit, 2010; Solomon, Zaichkowsky, & Polegato, 2002). By exploring the importance of source likeability and trustworthiness across involvement levels and

the importance of expertise in high involvement situations, the current study suggests a need for a new approach to the elaboration likelihood model's central route to persuasion, and a need for a new explanation of the peripheral route to persuasion in marketing textbooks and scholarly literature.

Due to these new developments in the importance of source cues across levels of involvement, marketing textbooks and advertisers will need to modify their approach to endorsements and sources of information. Many celebrity endorsements have been focused on low involvement products (Everybody's Journal, 2012), which utilize the peripheral route to persuasion. Although celebrity endorsers have been utilized for highly involving purchases in the past (e.g., Kate Walsh's endorsement of Cadillac) these commercials often include very little information and focus on peripheral routes to persuasion. Celebrities that demonstrate expertise are often knowledgeable because of their use of the product (e.g., Obama's use of the blackberry during his presidential campaign) rather than any demonstrated expertise in the subject matter. When analyzing the most effective celebrity endorsements in, traditionally highly involving, technological products, these celebrities were either involved in the development of the product (e.g., Dr. Dre's endorsement of his headphones brand), they emphasized the ease of use (e.g., Kevin Bacon explaining how easy it is to find videos on Google TV, Ashton Kutcher's endorsement of the Nikon Coolpix camera), or they provided peripheral cues such as humour (e.g., Justin Timberlake's jokes relating to Sony's technological products; PCMag.com). These limited uses of celebrity endorsers suggest that, even in highly involving situations, celebrities are utilized primarily for peripherally processed messages. Celebrities are rarely utilized for messages that demonstrate expertise or are highly content-driven. Marketers should begin to analyze the ways that they can increase the perceived expertise of sources for highly involving

products, in addition to analyzing the likeability and trustworthiness of their sources for these products.

In addition to this new approach to traditional advertising and spokesperson selection, word-of-mouth researchers and marketers need to modify their approach to source evaluation. Social media and Web 2.0 have allowed marketers to analyze the actual messages conveyed via electronic word-of-mouth. Marketers that follow the recommendations inherent in the elaboration likelihood model (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981) would traditionally focus on the content of word-of-mouth messages when they were concerned with highly involving products, and would not take source cues into account. Due to the effects of trustworthiness and likeability across involvement levels, however, source cues should be considered when evaluating the impact of these messages. According to the results of this study, a highly expert review that comes from a source that is not likeable or trustworthy will be much less impactful than a similar review from a source that is viewed positively - a prediction that contrasts with the traditional elaboration likelihood model.

Overall, this new relationship between involvement and source credibility cues suggests a new way of discussing the elaboration likelihood model in textbooks and theoretical research articles. It adds a new element to the ways that an advertiser should select spokespeople in highly involving situations and suggests a new way of identifying influential reviews and word-of-mouth sources in the online context. This new relationship expands the way that marketers and researchers view the effect of involvement on source selection, and has both practical and theoretical implications that merit further exploration.

Limitations

This study was conducted with a homogeneous group (25-35 year-old North Americans), which may decrease the external validity of the study. Research has suggested that homophilous preferences change as people mature (e.g., Duck, 1975; Shrum, Cheek, & Hunter, 1988). Future research should attempt to understand how age influences the importance of homophily, and which characteristics are emphasized by individuals.

While perceived homophily has been demonstrated to be more important than actual homophily (e.g., Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008; Morry, 2004; 2005; 2007; Strauss, Barrick, & Connerley, 2001), giving credence to the need for conscious measures of homophily, future research should attempt to understand subconscious preferences as well. The scale fails to account for subconscious preferences that individuals are unable to articulate, and also fails to include those items that are utilized when evaluating potential friends or advisors but are socially undesirable. Future research should attempt to apply this to real-world situations and determine if this scale accurately predicts friendship pairs, and whether or not other items should be included that were not consciously admitted to by the participants.

The scale was determined to be unidimensional, but the factor analysis did indicate that there were two factors: one factor composed of positively phrased items and one factor composed of negatively phrased items. Although this is common in scale formulation and testing (Schmitt & Stults, 1985), future researchers should attempt to emphasize or draw attention to the question phrasing in order to get a more accurate picture of preference for homophily.

Although this study utilized a product that had varying levels of involvement, the nature of the purchase (a personal item that indicates status and image to the outside world) may have influenced the way that the participants thought about the purchase and preference for homophily.

External search efforts and reliance on word-of-mouth sources may be different for more utilitarian or private product purchases. Future research should attempt to replicate the current study with a variety of products to better understand the relationship between involvement and the varying source credibility facets.

Future Research

The current research was focused on conscious measures and reasons for homophily, but did not explore subconscious preferences for homophily. Future research should utilize projective techniques and a larger number of in-depth interviews to further explore the reasons for preference for homophily without social desirability effects.

Furthermore, the high explained variance of this scale when predicting the likeability of a source (64.6%) suggests construct and predictive validity. However, the scale has only been utilized in one, very specific, study with a homogeneous sample. Future research should utilize the scale with heterogeneous participants and a broader range of topics in order to further demonstrate the validity of the scale. Researchers should emphasize the “dissimilarity” aspect of reverse-coded items in order to improve the reliability of the scale.

The consistent role of trustworthiness and likeability in source effectiveness and the importance of expertise in high involvement situations should be explored with heterogeneous samples and with a heterogeneous set of products. The current study’s focus on watches served the purpose of testing this relationship but limited the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the relationship should be explored in an online context in which cues to similarity and likeability are utilized rather than interpersonal knowledge of the source.

APPENDICES

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Consumer Preference for Homophily, Part 1

You are being asked to participate in a research study of how individuals select friends, and how individuals select who to go to for advice about a purchase. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. These interviews will be recorded to facilitate transcription of the data. If you do not wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in the study.

There are no obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated with participating in this study. However, you will be asked questions about yourself and these questions can sometimes make people uncomfortable. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

This study is not expected to yield any immediate benefit to the individual participants.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researchers: Dr. Keith Adler at 309

Communication Arts & Sciences, adler@msu.edu, 517-353-3266 or Caitlin McLaughlin at 309

Communication Arts & Sciences, mclau115@msu.edu, 517-775-9771.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research

Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing this phone interview.

Interview Protocol

Think about 2 or 3 of your closest friends. How similar do you think these friends are to you?

What sorts of things do you have in common with these friends?

In what sorts of ways are you different from these friends?

Do you think it's important that you be similar to your close friends? As you've added new friends to your group, how important is it that they have something in common with you? What sorts of things do you want these new friends to have in common with you?

Why do you feel that it's important / unimportant?

Do you think there are times when it's more or less important to be similar to your friends?

Now, let's talk about purchases that you've made. Think about the last time you bought a big-ticket item. Who did you go to for advice?

Why did you go to this person for advice?

Was it more important that this person be similar to you or different from you? Why?

How important was this similarity (or difference)? Why do you think similarity (difference) was important?

How similar do you think this person is to you?

What sorts of things do you have in common with this person?

In what sorts of ways are you different from this person?

Now think about the person you're most likely to go shopping with for everyday things. Why do you go with this person?

Was it more important that this person be similar to you or different from you? Why?

How important was this similarity (or difference)? Why do you think similarity (difference) was important?

How similar do you think this person is to you?

What sorts of things do you have in common with this person?

In what sorts of ways are you different from this person?

Are there any times when it is more important that the person you're shopping with or the person you go to for advice should be similar to you? When are those times?

Appendix B: Study 1 Phase 2 Questionnaire and Consent Form

Consumer Preference for Homophily, Part II

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Consumer Preference for Homophily, Part II

You are being asked to participate in a research study of how preference for similarity influences how people choose their friends and information sources. You will need to fill out the questionnaire that follows in order to participate in the study.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

There are no obvious physical, legal, or economic risks associated with participating in this study. However, you will be asked questions about yourself and these questions can sometimes make people uncomfortable. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. In return for your participation in the study, you will receive 100 Zoom Points.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researchers: Dr. Keith Adler at 309 Communication Arts & Sciences, adler@msu.edu, 517-353-3266 or Caitlin McLaughlin at 309 Communication Arts & Sciences, mclau115@msu.edu, 517-775-9771.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

By clicking on the button below, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this online survey.

Are you between the ages of 25 and 35?

- Yes
- No

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree

When I ask for advice about what I should buy, I prefer it when the person advising me is different from me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In personal relationships, I prefer people who have a similar sense of humour to mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer the people advising me to have different political views than my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more comfortable when my friends are different from me in terms of how outgoing they are	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more likely to follow advice about product purchases when a person advising me is more laidback than I am	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When forming personal relationships, I like friends who are as disorganized as I am	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When I ask for advice about what I should buy, I am more comfortable when the person advising me is the same gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having similar personalities is important to me when forming personal relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more comfortable asking for advice from a person who has a similar job to my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer it when my friends' educational backgrounds are different from my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In asking for advice, I prefer it when the people advising me have similar family backgrounds as my own (siblings, parents, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In personal relationships, I prefer to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

spend time with people who look different than me							
I am more likely to listen to advice if the person giving it is near my age	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
It is important to me that my friends have a similar sense of style as me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to listen to advice from a person whose financial situation is different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In personal relationships, I prefer my friends to be just as stubborn as I am	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
When asking for advice, I am more influenced by friends who share the same attitudes toward animals that I have	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer it when my friends' attitudes toward physical fitness are different from	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

my own							
I am more likely to listen to advice from a person whose attitudes toward world issues are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more comfortable spending time with people who have similar attitudes toward drinking as me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
It is important to me that my friends have different hobbies than me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more comfortable taking advice from a person who is similar to me in their intelligence levels	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In personal relationships, I am more likely to choose people whose interests are different than my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer to spend time with friends who	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

have similar attitudes toward gaming as me							
I am more likely to spend time with friends whose attitudes toward sports are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In forming friendships, I look for people who have different life experiences than my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer to take advice from somebody whose life goals and priorities are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In personal relationships, I look for people whose values are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more comfortable getting advice from somebody with different religious views than my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

I prefer friends to have similar taste in books as me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more comfortable when my friends' taste in food is different from my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more comfortable when my friends have similar taste in movies as me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer it when my friends have different taste in music as me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In forming personal relationships, I tend to choose people whose tastes in television shows are different from my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more likely to take advice from somebody whose family values / priorities are similar to my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer it when my friends have similar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

attitudes toward education as I do							
I tend to spend more time with friends who have similar relationships styles to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer asking for advice from somebody who handles money in a way that is similar to me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to ask for advice from somebody whose attitudes towards gay marriage are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer spending time with people whose attitudes towards having children are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to ask for advice from somebody whose knowledge of world issues is different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

I am more comfortable spending time with people whose knowledge of technology is similar to my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend to ask for advice from people whose knowledge of cars is different than my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In personal relationships, I am more likely to choose people whose family situation is similar to my own regarding children and relationship status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more likely to go to somebody for advice if they have similar taste in friends as I do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer the following questions about yourself:

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

What is your age, today, in years?

What is your ethnicity?

- Caucasian / White
- African American
- Native American
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Hispanic / Latino
- Multiracial
- I don't want to disclose

What is your employment status?

- Self-employed
- Works for someone else, full-time
- Works for someone else, part-time
- Not employed
- Student

- Retired

What is the highest degree of school you have COMPLETED?

- Elementary school
- Some high school, but no diploma
- High school graduate or the equivalent
- Some college, but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate degree

What is your PERSONAL income before taxes?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999

- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

What is your HOUSEHOLD income before taxes?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

What is your marital status?

- Now married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated

- Never married

Appendix C: Study 1 Phase 3 Questionnaire and Consent Form

Consumer Preference for Homophily, Part III

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Consumer Preference for Homophily, Part III

You are being asked to participate in a research study of how preference for similarity influences how people choose their friends and information sources. You will need to fill out the questionnaire that follows in order to participate in the study. It will take you approximately 20 minutes. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. Closing the window any time before clicking the ‘submit’ button will discontinue your participation and none of your data will be included in the analysis. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. Data will be stored on the zoomerang website and on the computers of the researchers, and will be password-protected at all times.

There are no obvious physical, legal, or economic risks associated with participating in this study. However, you will be asked questions about yourself and these questions can sometimes make people uncomfortable. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. This study will benefit researchers and marketers in that it will allow them to better understand how individuals choose their advisors and will allow them to facilitate better informed decision-making. In return for your participation in

the study, you will receive 100 Zoom Points. In order to earn these points, you are required to complete and submit the survey. To learn the value of these points, go to

<http://join.zoompanel.com/zoompanel/index.php?menu=How+It+Works&submenu=Get+Rewards>.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researchers: Dr. Keith Adler at 309 Communication Arts & Sciences, adler@msu.edu, 517-353-3266 or Caitlin McLaughlin at 1-125 Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University, caitlin.mclaughlin@ryerson.ca, 416-323-0289.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

By clicking on the button below, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this online survey.

Are you between the ages of 25 and 35?

- Yes
- No

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
When I ask for advice about what I should buy, I prefer it when the person advising me is different from me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In personal relationships, I prefer people who have a similar sense of humour to mine	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer the people advising me to have different political views than my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Having similar personalities is important to me when forming personal relationships	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to listen to advice from a person whose attitudes toward world issues are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more comfortable spending time with people who have similar attitudes	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

toward drinking as me							
I am more comfortable taking advice from a person who is similar to me in their intelligence levels	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer to spend time with friends who have similar attitudes toward gaming as me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to spend time with friends whose attitudes toward sports are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer to take advice from somebody whose life goals and priorities are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In personal relationships, I look for people whose values are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

I am more comfortable getting advice from somebody with different religious views than my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer friends to have similar taste in books as me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more comfortable when my friends have similar taste in movies as me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to take advice from somebody whose family values / priorities are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer it when my friends have similar attitudes toward education as I do	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I tend to spend more time with friends who have similar relationships styles to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer asking for advice from somebody who handles money in a way that is similar to me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to ask for advice from somebody whose attitudes towards gay marriage are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

I prefer spending time with people whose attitudes towards having children are different from my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more comfortable spending time with people whose knowledge of technology is similar to my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In personal relationships, I am more likely to choose people whose family situation is similar to my own regarding children and relationship status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more likely to go to somebody for advice if they have similar taste in friends as I do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You are planning on purchasing a new pair of jeans.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
--	------------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------	---------------------------

				Disagree			
In general I have a strong interest in this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product matters a lot to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get bored when other people talk to me about this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is very relevant to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If the most important purchase to you is 100, where would you rate a pair of jeans on this 100 point scale?

You are planning on purchasing a new pair of shoes.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In general I have a strong interest in this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This product is important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product matters a lot to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get bored when other people talk to me about this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is very relevant to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If the most important purchase to you is 100, where would you rate a pair of shoes on this 100 point scale?

You are planning on purchasing a new pair of sunglasses.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In general I have a strong interest in this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product matters a lot to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get bored when other people talk to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

about this product							
This product is very relevant to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If the most important purchase to you is 100, where would you rate a pair of sunglasses on this 100 point scale?

You are planning on purchasing a new watch.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In general I have a strong interest in this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product matters a lot to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get bored when other people talk to me about this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is very relevant to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If the most important purchase to you is 100, where would you rate a watch on this 100 point scale?

You are planning on purchasing a new jacket.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In general I have a strong interest in this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product matters a lot to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get bored when other people talk to me about this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is very relevant to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If the most important purchase to you is 100, where would you rate a jacket on this 100 point scale?

You are planning on purchasing a new DVD player.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following items:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In general I have a strong interest in this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is important to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product matters a lot to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get bored when other people talk to me about this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product is very relevant to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If the most important purchase to you is 100, where would you rate a DVD player on this 100 point scale?

Please answer the following questions about yourself:

What is your sex?

- Male

- Female

What is your age, today, in years?

What is your ethnicity?

- Caucasian / White
- African American
- Native American
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Hispanic / Latino
- Multiracial
- I don't want to disclose

What is your employment status?

- Self-employed
- Works for someone else, full-time
- Works for someone else, part-time
- Not employed

- Student
- Retired

What is the highest degree of school you have COMPLETED?

- Elementary school
- Some high school, but no diploma
- High school graduate or the equivalent
- Some college, but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate degree

What is your PERSONAL income before taxes?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$34,999

- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

What is your HOUSEHOLD income before taxes?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

What is your marital status?

- Now married
- Widowed
- Divorced

- Separated
- Never married

Appendix D: Study 2 Questionnaire and Consent Form

Consumer Preference for Homophily, Part III

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Consumer Preference for Homophily, Part III

You are being asked to participate in a research study of how preference for similarity influences how people choose their friends and information sources. You will need to fill out the questionnaire that follows in order to participate in the study. It will take you approximately 20 minutes. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. Closing the window any time before clicking the ‘submit’ button will discontinue your participation and none of your data will be included in the analysis. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. Data will be stored on the zoomerang website and on the computers of the researchers, and will be password-protected at all times.

There are no obvious physical, legal, or economic risks associated with participating in this study. However, you will be asked questions about yourself and these questions can sometimes make people uncomfortable. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. This study will benefit researchers and marketers in that it will allow them to better understand how individuals choose their advisors and will allow them to facilitate better informed decision-making. In return for your participation in

the study, you will receive 100 Zoom Points. In order to earn these points, you are required to complete and submit the survey. To learn the value of these points, go to

<http://join.zoompanel.com/zoompanel/index.php?menu=How+It+Works&submenu=Get+Rewards>.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researchers: Dr. Keith Adler at 309 Communication Arts & Sciences, adler@msu.edu, 517-353-3266 or Caitlin McLaughlin at 1-125 Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University, mclau115@msu.edu, 514-769-6381.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

By clicking on the button below, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this online survey.

Are you between the ages of 25 and 35?

- Yes
- No

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
When I ask for advice about what I should buy, I prefer it when the person advising me is different from me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In personal relationships, I prefer people who have a similar sense of humour to mine	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer the people advising me to have different political views than my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Having similar personalities is important to me when forming personal relationships	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to listen to advice from a person whose attitudes toward world issues are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

I am more comfortable spending time with people who have similar attitudes toward drinking as me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more comfortable taking advice from a person who is similar to me in their intelligence levels	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer to spend time with friends who have similar attitudes toward gaming as me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to spend time with friends whose attitudes toward sports are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer to take advice from somebody whose life goals and priorities are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In personal relationships, I look for people whose values are different from	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

my own							
I am more comfortable getting advice from somebody with different religious views than my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer friends to have similar taste in books as me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more comfortable when my friends have similar taste in movies as me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to take advice from somebody whose family values / priorities are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer it when my friends have similar attitudes toward education as I do	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I tend to spend more time with friends who have similar relationships styles to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

I prefer asking for advice from somebody who handles money in a way that is similar to me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to ask for advice from somebody whose attitudes towards gay marriage are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I prefer spending time with people whose attitudes towards having children are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more comfortable spending time with people whose knowledge of technology is similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In personal relationships, I am more likely to choose people whose family situation is similar to my own regarding children	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am more likely to go to somebody for	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

advice if they have similar taste in friends as I do							
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

You are planning on purchasing a new watch.

To you, this purchase is:

Unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Important
Of no concern to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Of concern to me
Irrelevant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Relevant
Means a lot to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Means nothing to me
Useless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Useful
Valuable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Worthless
Trivial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fundamental
Beneficial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not beneficial
Matters to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Doesn't matter to me
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninteresting
Significant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Insignificant
Vital	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Superfluous
Boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interesting

Unexciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Exciting
Appealing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unappealing
Mundane	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fascinating
Essential	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Nonessential
Undesirable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Desirable
Wanted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unwanted
Not needed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Needed

Before you purchase this watch, you've decided to ask somebody for advice. Who would you ask for advice?

Thinking about the person you want to ask for advice about this purchase, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following items.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
They are different from me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their sense of humour is similar to my	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

own							
They have different political views than my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
They have a similar personality to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their attitudes toward world issues are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their attitudes toward drinking are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their intelligence is similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their attitudes toward gaming are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their attitudes toward sports are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their life goals and priorities are similar to	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

my own							
Their values are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their religious views are different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their taste in books is similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their taste in movies is similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their family values / priorities are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their attitudes toward education are similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their relationship style is similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
The way that they handle money is similar to me	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Their attitude toward gay marriage is different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their attitude toward having children is different from my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their knowledge of technology is similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their family situation is similar to my own regarding children and relationship status	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Their taste in friends is similar to my own	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Thinking about the person you want to ask for advice about this purchase, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following items.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
--	------------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------------	---	-----------------------------	--------------	---------------------------

This person is dependable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is sincere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is an expert with watches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is experienced with watches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is knowledgeable about watches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is qualified to talk about watches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is skilled with watches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is likeable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is warm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is approachable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would ask this person for advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like this person as a co-worker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like this person as a roommate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to be friends with this person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is physically attractive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This person is similar to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This person is knowledgeable	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

How likely are you to follow the advice of this person after they give their recommendation?

Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likely
Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable
Impossible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Possible
Uncertain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Certain

How likely are you to continue searching for information after hearing this person's advice?

Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likely
Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable
Impossible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Possible
Uncertain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Certain

Please answer the following questions about yourself:

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

What is your age, today, in years?

What is your ethnicity?

- Caucasian / White
- African American
- Native American
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Hispanic / Latino
- Multiracial
- I don't want to disclose

What is your employment status?

- Self-employed
- Works for someone else, full-time
- Works for someone else, part-time
- Not employed
- Student
- Retired

What is the highest degree of school you have COMPLETED?

- Elementary school
- Some high school, but no diploma
- High school graduate or the equivalent
- Some college, but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate degree

What is your PERSONAL income before taxes?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999

- \$100,000 or more

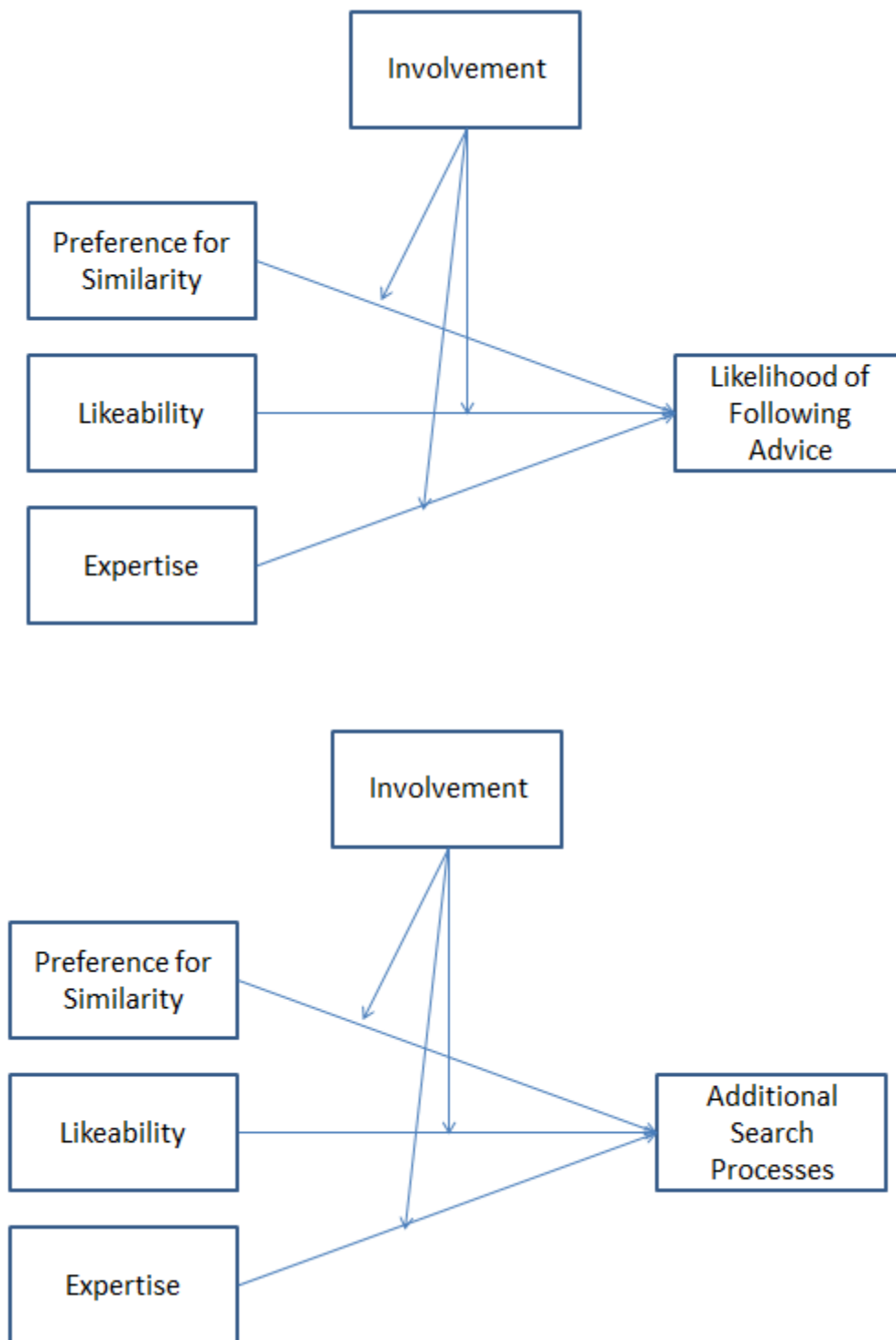
What is your HOUSEHOLD income before taxes?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

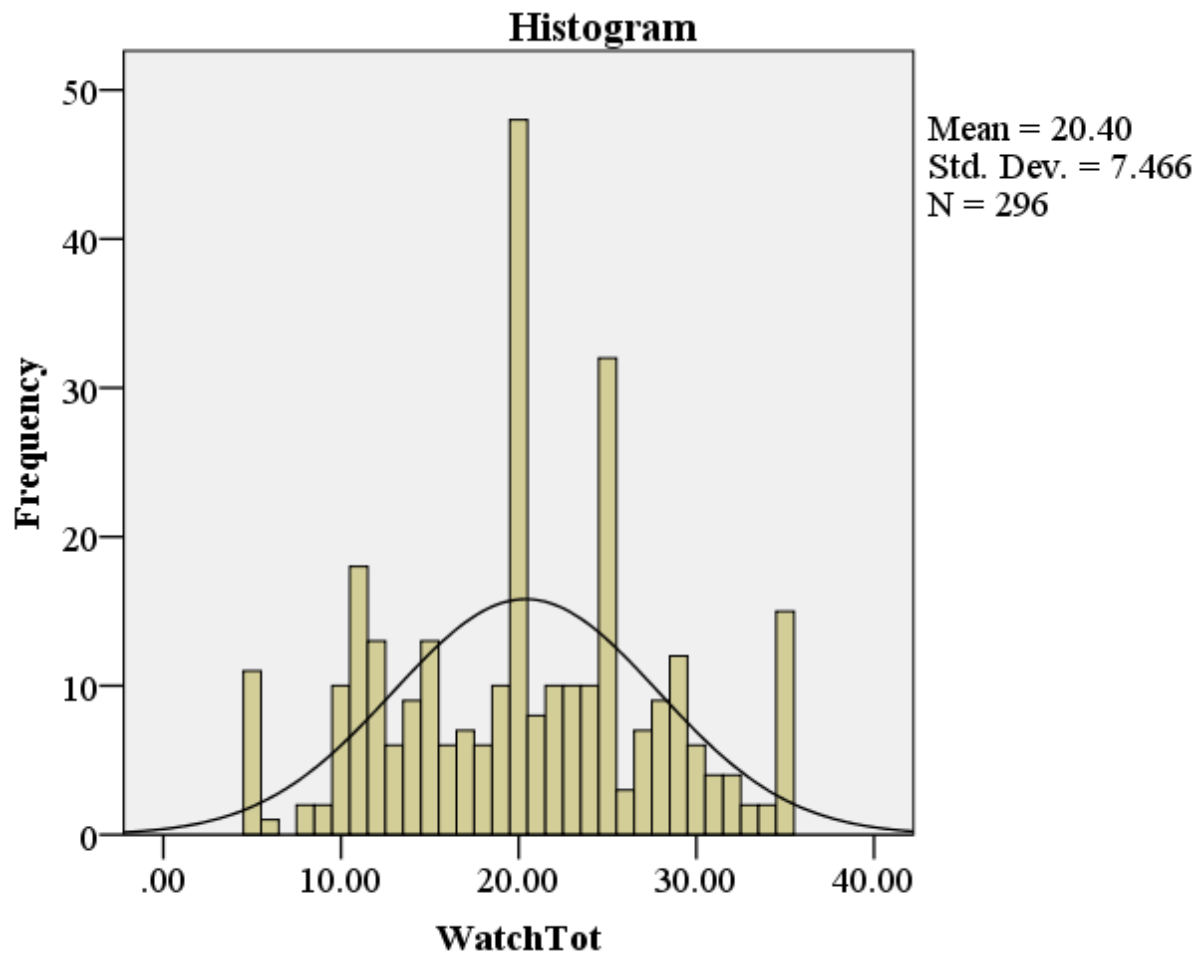
What is your marital status?

- Now married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married

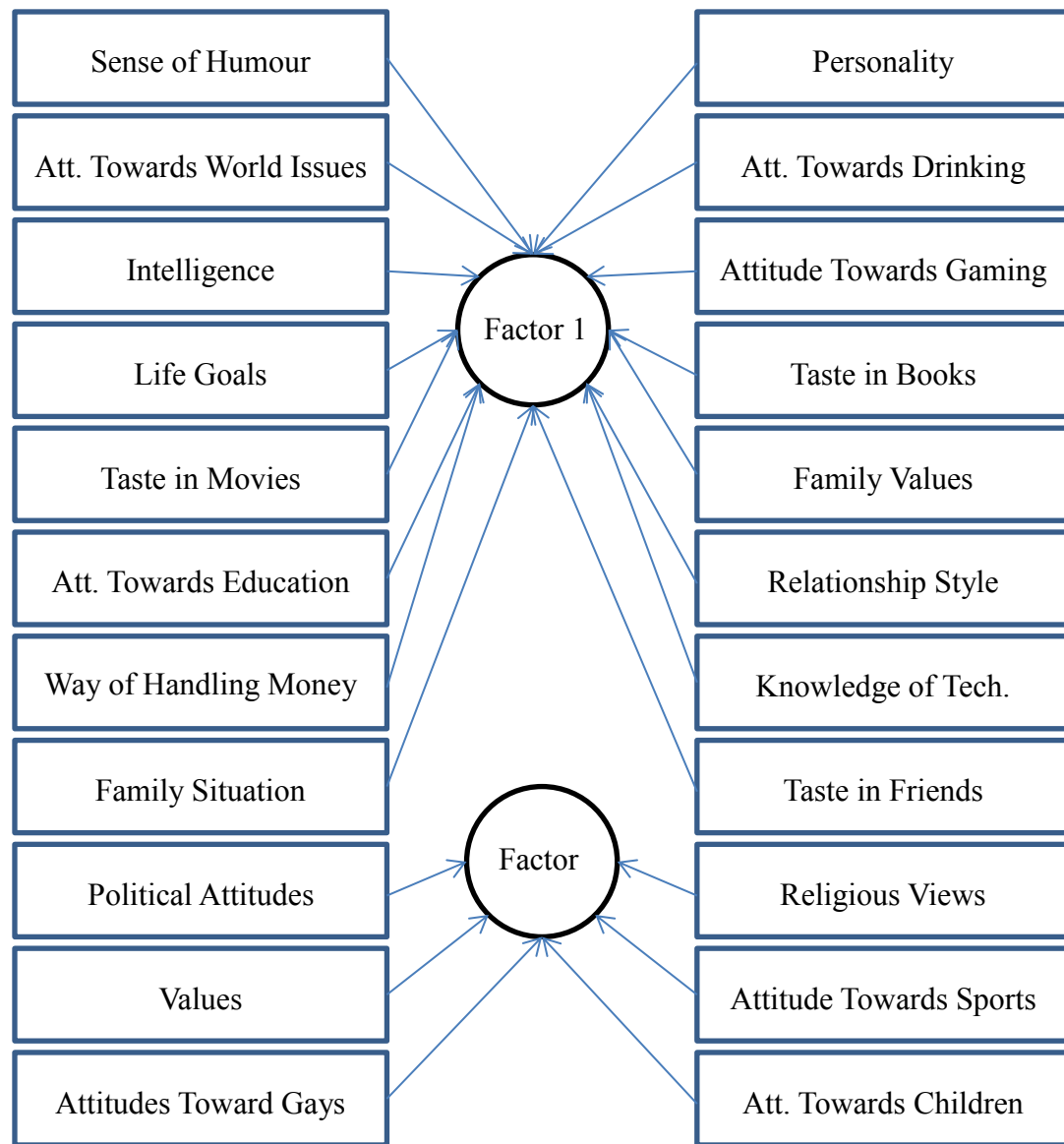
Appendix E: Figure 1 - Hypothesized Path Models



Appendix F: Figure 2 - Distribution of Purchase Involvement in Watches



Appendix G: Figure 3 - Study 1 Phase 3 Path Diagram



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