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Young People's Beliefs About Intergenerational Communication *An Initial Cross-Cultural Comparison*

This article examines young people's perceptions of their conversations with older people (age 65-85) across nine cultures—five Eastern and four Western. Responses from more than 1,000 participants were entered into a cross-national factor analysis, which revealed four initial factors that underlie perceptions of intergenerational conversations. Elder nonaccommodation was when young participants reported that older people negatively stereotyped the young and did not attend to their communication needs. On the other hand, elder accommodation was when older people were perceived as supportive, attentive and generally encouraging to young people. A third factor was respect/ obligation and a fourth factor labeled age-irrelevant positivity described a situation where young people felt conversations with much older people were emotionally positive and satisfying, age did not matter. Examining cross-cultural differences, some East versus West differences were observed, as might be expected, on the basis of simplistic accounts of Eastern collectivism versus Western individualism. However, the results challenge common-sense notions of the status of old age in Eastern versus Western cultures. On some dimensions, participants from Korea, Japan, People's Republic of China,

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Hong Kong, and the Philippines appear to have relatively less positive perceptions of their conversations with older people than the Western cultures—the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. But there was also evidence of considerable cultural variability, particularly among Eastern cultures—variability that has heretofore all too often been glossed over when global comparisons of East versus West are made. A range of explanations for these cultural differences is explored and implications for older people in these societies are also considered.

In spite of a recent surge of research interest in communication and aging, there has been little work in the field of communication concerned with matters of the life span, particularly aging and intergenerational communication. In fact, the field of social gerontology has only recently begun to recognize the important role of communication in the health and well-being of older adults. What research that does exist on communication and aging is almost entirely Western. In contrast to this, the investigation of intercultural communication has been one of the main growth areas of communication study in recent years, with the effect that we do know that Eastern and Western cultures differ in some crucial and interesting ways. A combination of intercultural and aging research is now long overdue, especially so when one considers the rapid change many Eastern cultures are undergoing, moving from largely rural and agricultural to industrial and highly technological economies. Such changes can and do affect intergenerational relations and elderly health and welfare in very important ways. Nevertheless, the state of current knowledge about the different approaches to aging in the East and the West is largely hearsay or the result of lay wisdom and has no consistent basis in research or theory. This article begins to redress the balance somewhat by reporting a study designed to examine differences in Eastern and Western perceptions of intergenerational interactions.

Eastern Perspectives on Communication and Aging

We do have some basis on which to make predictions regarding attitudes toward aging in the East. For example, in very general terms, intercultural scholars describe Eastern cultures as relatively more collectivistic (ingroup oriented), whereas Western cultures may tend to be relatively more individualistic (individual oriented). As part of a collectivistic orientation, the Eastern traditional ethic of filial piety has purportedly guided relations between the generations for more than 2,000 years. Filial piety—the Confucian doctrine of *Hsiao Ching*—teaches that elderly people should be respected and

that it is children's responsibility to care for parents and grandparents in their old age (J. Chen, 1980; P. N. Chen, 1979; Ikels, 1983). This applies particularly, but not only, within the family. As Yuan (1990) claimed in China, "any acts of disrespect or abuse toward the aged are restricted by law and open to moral condemnation" (p. 32), and the Hong Kong government (1965) declared that "it is the family's moral responsibility to care for the aged or infirm" (p. 5). Likewise in Korea, Park and Kim (1992) claim that "growing old represents signs of grace, respect and piety, and age is the first consideration when Koreans communicate with each other" (p. 399). The ethic of filial piety has been well documented across the Asian Pacific Rim, in China (Turkowsky, 1975), Japan (Tobin, 1987), and Hong Kong (Ikels, 1975), and a considerable body of research supports the notion of a powerful and respected role for elderly individuals in Asian cultures (e.g., Ho, 1994; Levy & Langer, 1994; Martin, 1988; Sung, 1995; Yum, 1988).

Some research also suggests that the life experience and knowledge of the elderly is valued in Chinese culture because it provides a continuous link with ancestors, history, and cultural traditions (Wong, 1979). Other writers make links between Eastern attitudes to age and traditional values of harmony, suggesting that aging is seen as a positive personal experience because it reflects harmony with a natural process and thus harmony with the environment. Such representations may lean rather heavily on traditions such as ancestor worship and ancient philosophical teachings of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. It has also been proposed that East and West differ because Eastern cultures view older people as more productive than do their Western counterparts. Nagasawa (1980) characterizes older people's productivity as providing intergenerational bonding within families. Sher (1984), as a result of fieldwork in Shenyang, presents a very positive image of older people within Chinese society. Sher claims that traditional respect and honor of the elderly has remained in spite of substantial changes in Chinese society.

Taken at face value, the above suggests that due to philosophical traditions and cultural values that honor age and wisdom, continuity between the past and the present, human heartedness, harmony, filial piety, and the like, we will find very different perceptions of aging and intergenerational communication in Eastern as compared to Western contexts.

However, other images of aging in the East are emerging. Ikels et al. (1992) conducted research on perceptions of the life course in four cultures, including Hong Kong. Their Hong Kong participants (18-59 years of age) reported rather negative views of "old people" that included boredom, physical decline, material insecurity, being cast aside by society, and lacking any decision powers. Important to our research context is the finding that older

people are thought to be at the center of poor intergenerational relations, causing family conflict and being described by younger people as long winded and nagging (Ikels, 1989). In addition, these authors suggest that a common Eastern approach to the elderly is one whereby they should be treated well but their views need not be taken seriously—a characterization that stands in stark contrast to the familiar Western stereotype of the inscrutable, wise old Asian sage.

Some researchers connect negative Western attitudes toward the elderly to values of individualism and liberalism combined with industrialization and urbanization (Bennett & Eckman, 1973). Ikels (1975) suggests that Hong Kong may evidence a similar pattern, especially among young people. Her explanation rests on extensive Westernization and rejection of traditional values. Tien-Hyatt (1987) discusses such a pattern in Taiwan where Taiwanese Chinese elderly have less positive self-perceptions of aging than either Anglo-Americans or Chinese Americans. Again, findings are explained in terms of the rapid changes that are occurring in Taiwanese culture, to which the elderly may have trouble adjusting. In Hong Kong, Chow (1983) outlines how changes in family structure resulting in the predominance of the nuclear family increase the need for government and community care of older people.

A recent study conducted by Giles, Harwood, Pierson, Clément, and Fox (in press) found that adults' stereotypes toward the elderly were actually more positive in California than in Hong Kong, where sociostructural constraints of the elderly target group, in terms of status and institutional support, were perceptually weaker (Harwood, Giles, Pierson, Clément, & Fox, 1994). A comparison of young people's stereotypes of three age groups (young, middle age, and old) across seven cultures (the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Korea, and Hong Kong) revealed patterns such that participants from the United States, Canada, and Australia perceived declines in personal vitality (attractiveness, activity, health, and strength) and increases in sociability (wise, kind, and generous) with age increases; to a lesser extent, Korea showed a similar pattern. New Zealand and the Philippines were clustered together in that they both failed to differentiate between middle- and older-age targets. The results for Hong Kong were the most negative; these participants perceived sharp declines in personal vitality and moderate declines in sociability with increasing age.

Knowledge of such intergenerational attitudes (as they relate to gender and so forth) and ensuing communicative practices will ultimately provide a clearer picture of how age is understood and construed around the Pacific Rim. At the present time, most of what is known about intergenerational communication and social perceptions of age is derived from Western re-

search and theory that, at least initially, will provide an informative springboard for further research in the Pacific Rim.

Communication and Aging in the West

As an age-conscious society, we nurture a wide range of beliefs and naive theories about aging. These beliefs range from popular notions of intergenerational conflict characterized by the generation gap to assumptions of the inevitability of developmentally staged decline. Much existing research on age stereotyping suggests that elderly people in Western societies are viewed negatively (see Kite & Johnson, 1988, for a meta-analysis of this research). For example, as a group, older people are frequently viewed as feeble, egocentric, incompetent, abrasive, frail, and vulnerable (Williams & Giles, 1991) and considered overly self-disclosive and controlling in intergenerational encounters (Coupland, Coupland, & Giles, 1991; Dillard, Henwood, Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1990). An array of recent reviews has also suggested that communicative practices of older people are seen as less efficient and socially skilled than those of their younger counterparts (Nussbaum, Thompson, & Robinson, 1989). The communication and sociolinguistic literatures are replete with accounts to explain these findings in terms of natural, biological deficits as one ages. Furthermore, television comedy and news media caricatures depicting negative aspects of aging—for example, young people groaning or yawning as an older person appears to egocentrically ramble on about their aches and pains—are a rather familiar offering by Western media (e.g., Dail, 1988). Indeed, recent research shows that what is generally assumed to be positive images of the elderly on NBC's popular "Golden Girls" is in reality quite ageist and thereby available to sustain rather than counteract prevailing negative stereotypes of older people (Harwood & Giles, 1992).

As a consequence, it could be argued that many younger people are not likely to choose to spend their leisure (or other) time with those much older than themselves. Indeed, data gathered from students in California suggests that this is precisely the case (e.g., Giles, Fox, & Smith, 1993; Harwood, Giles, Fox, Ryan, & Williams, 1993; Williams & Giles, 1996). Moreover, when intergenerational contact does occur outside the family, we have discerned from young participants' accounts that it is unlikely to be quality time and more likely to be dissatisfying (Williams & Giles, 1996). Some researchers, both in the intergroup (Hewstone & Brown, 1986) and the intergenerational domain (Fox & Giles, 1993), afford a central role to the quantity and, perhaps more important, the quality of contact between generations as influencing attitudes and stereotypes, particularly of older people (see Fox & Giles, 1993).

Given that our communicative behaviors are, at least in part, fueled by social stereotypes, it is perhaps not surprising to find Western studies showing that some young people overaccommodate elderly people (Edwards & Noller, 1993; Kemper, 1994), oftentimes irrespective of the latter's functional autonomy (e.g., Caporeal & Culbertson, 1986). In other words, some young people "linguistically depersonalize" their elder interlocutors by becoming overly polite, warm, and grammatically and/or ideationally simple in their presence. Such overaccommodations are not valued as entirely appropriate for or by many older people (Ryan & Cole, 1990) and are often viewed as demeaning and patronizing.

Indeed, by the time they reach retirement age, many people will have been well primed to accept the above sociolinguistically framed messages, given that they are likely to have received (as well as colluded in) ageist remarks and sentiments throughout their adult life (e.g., birthdays of 30-, 40-, and 50-year-olds; see Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). Although everyday intergenerational discourse can, of course, often be supportive of and energizing for elderly people (see Giles, Coupland, & Wiemann, 1991), it can also contribute to the social construction of aging and psychological or physical demise (Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986; Williams, Giles, Coupland, Dalby, & Manasse, 1990).

Overaccommodating (patronizing) talk may not necessarily be confined to talk from younger to older people. Giles and Williams (1994) performed a series of studies examining younger people's reactions to patronizing talk from older to younger adults. Undergraduates reported that they, too, were the recipients of patronizing speech and that this bothered them. They were asked to describe how older people patronized them and from a content analysis of these data, eight categories emerged. In a second study, undergraduates were presented with two examples of each of these categories and were asked to make similarity judgments of each combination. Multidimensional scaling showed that they cognitively represented the different kinds of patronizing speech in three clusters: nonlistening (e.g., "the elderly don't listen to what I have to say"), stereotypical disapproving communication (e.g., "you're all party animals!"), and overparenting (e.g., "when you get older you will see that this was best"). In a third study, these different kinds of patronizing forms were used for social evaluation in a vignette study alongside a nonpatronizing (control) variety. Patronizing of any of the types by a 70-year-old or by a 40-year-old was seen very negatively by young adults, but a hierarchy of judgments did emerge depending on the question posed. Stereotypically disapproving communication was considered by judges to convey the most negative intent, but nonlistening was considered the most difficult to manage communicatively, with overparenting considered the least

offensive of the three. Different motives and intents were attributed to speakers who patronized when they were middle-aged compared to elderly (e.g., "age-envy" in the former).

In addition, we have noted in other studies that older communicators are construed as underaccommodating their younger interlocutors when talking excessively about their own situations (often painful) and in ways that younger participants find difficult to manage (Coupland et al., 1991). In a study designed to elicit what young people found satisfying and dissatisfying in intergenerational encounters, Williams and Giles (1996) asked young undergraduates in the United States to recall and describe recent conversations with older nonfamilial persons. In open-ended written accounts, they were asked to describe in detail two conversations, one satisfying and the other dissatisfying. The resultant data was coded and content analyzed to find the most frequent underlying themes in these accounts. Results showed that satisfying conversations were those where older people were reportedly accommodative to the needs of the young person. In doing so, they were supportive, listening, and attentive to the younger person, giving compliments and telling interesting stories. Satisfying conversations were also those where a mutual understanding was achieved and both the old and the young person expressed positive emotions. Interestingly, age differences in these conversations were frequently discounted by the young—satisfying older people either violated rather ageist expectations or else age was completely discounted and thought to have no bearing on the conversation.

Reports of dissatisfying conversations included frequent characterizations of older people as being underaccommodative. Subcategories of underaccommodation included portrayals of older people as inattentive, nonlistening, close-minded, out of touch, and forcing unwanted attention on young interlocutors. Dissatisfying conversations were also those where communication was restricted in a number of ways, and this was often attributed to older people's physical problems such as deafness and failing cognitive abilities. Elders in these conversations reportedly complained in an angry accusing fashion about their ill health and problematic life circumstances (see also, Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988). Moreover, a number of young participants felt that older people negatively stereotyped the young as irresponsible and/or naive. In doing so, older people were thought to be patronizing to youth. On the other hand, young people tended to describe themselves as "reluctantly accommodating" to older dissatisfying partners—they had to restrain themselves by "biting their tongue" and felt under an obligation to show respect for age. Young people frequently felt defensive in response to such conversations.

Obviously, there are many avenues to explore further, not least of which includes satisfaction and dissatisfaction among older populations and considering more gender and contextual issues. Some of this work is presently under way. However, a no less pressing concern is the need to consider intergenerational communication in Asian Pacific contexts, where the above findings and processes are likely to be totally different.

The research we report here is part of an interdisciplinary research program investigating communication and aging across the Pacific Rim. Such a program is important for a number of reasons. First, it moves us away from a myopic, one-sided cultural view of aging and communication. Second, although studies have examined differences in Eastern and Western sociolinguistics and communication behaviors (e.g., Kwok & Bolton, 1992), no attention to gerontological issues has thus far emerged. Similarly, although Eastern and Western contrasts are becoming more common in aging studies (e.g., Martin, 1988), again, little attention is paid to matters of communication. Third, it allows us to consider ramifications of this work for international exchanges at many levels (e.g., student, sojourner, business), where often intergenerational encounters can become prevalent and misattributed due to a lack of reciprocal intercultural knowledge on all sides. Fourth and relatedly, Asian Pacific immigration to the United States and to other anglophone, individualistic societies in the Pacific Rim (e.g., Australia and New Zealand) would benefit from a closer examination of their different conceptions of aging (see, for example, Cheung, 1989; Kendis, 1989). At the moment, acculturation occurs on many levels, not least of which can be the real stress of adapting to the host community's radically different views of the aged, young, and middle aged. Fifth, the idealization of aging that is held out as supposed characteristic of Eastern societies is changing rapidly as a function of urbanization, industrialization, modernization, the growth in electronic media technologies, familial mobility, and the shrinking size of nuclear and extended families in the Asian Pacific (as well as among Asian Pacific communities within the United States and Australia and New Zealand).

The Present Research

We determined to measure beliefs about intergenerational communication across cultures. A measuring instrument was devised by forming the dimensions of intergenerational communication satisfaction and dissatisfaction investigated in the Williams and Giles (1996) study discussed above into rating scales. Having accomplished this, we were interested in exploring

dimensions of young people's perceptions of intergenerational communication and in making comparisons across cultures.

The study reported here was conducted across four so-called individualistic and five so-called collectivistic societies. The United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada were chosen as representatives of Western cultures at different locales, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, and the Philippines represented Eastern cultures. In general, the following hypotheses were of interest. First, it was hypothesized (Hypothesis 1) that young people from Eastern cultures would have different beliefs about intergenerational conversations when compared to young people in Western cultures. It was also hypothesized (Hypothesis 2) that there would be differences among Eastern nations as well as among Western nations.

Method

Participants

The questionnaire was completed by volunteers drawn from introductory undergraduate classes at large universities at each site. For the most part, volunteers took part in research for extra credit. Although this sample is composed of undergraduate students, which puts certain limits on generalization, we felt that this was acceptable for this initial exploratory research and generalizations to other samples could be made at later stages of the research program. Thus, there were 205 (100 males) participants from Hong Kong, 183 (57 males) from the PRC, 223 (109 males) from Korea, 228 (95 males) from Japan, 191 (46 males) from the Philippines, 136 (46 males) from the United States, 168 (72 males) from Australia, 150 (69 males) from New Zealand, and 147 (54 males) from Canada. Because this study was aimed at young people's evaluations, we controlled for participant age by eliminating those who were not "young adults" (defined for these purposes as being between 18 and 29 years of age). The resultant age range of the participants was therefore 18 to 29 years. The average age in years for each sample was 20.2 (Hong Kong), 18.97 (PRC), 20.8 (Korea), 20 (Japan), 20.1 (Philippines), 20.3 (United States), 19.5 (Australia), 20.7 (New Zealand), and 19.9 (Canada).

Participants were selected such that their ethnicity reflected the ethnic majority at their location. For example, Hong Kong participants were all Chinese from Hong Kong and in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, participants with an Anglo or Western background were selected. Likewise, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, and PRC participants were selected in those locations. Questionnaires were administered (translated

and back-translated) in the appropriate language for each location. However, in the Philippines, questionnaires were in English because this is the language used for tertiary education at that locale.

The questionnaire instrument, Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication (PIC), was devised from the previous intergenerational satisfaction-dissatisfaction self-report study (Williams & Giles, 1996) and was composed of two sections that were counterbalanced in the usual way. Participants were asked to consider conversations they had "over the years" with older people (aged 65-85 years) who were not family members (nor who were people they considered to be "like family"). Participants were required to rate these conversations on 7-point Likert-type scales where 1 = *totally agree* and 7 = *totally disagree*.

Section 1 focused on perceptions of elder behavior. Participants were asked to agree or disagree with the statement "During conversations in general I have found elders to be . . ." on each of the following items in turn: "close-minded, out of touch, they forced their attention on me, made angry complaints, complained about their lives and health, negatively stereotyped young people, told interesting stories, were supportive, gave useful advice, complimented me, were attentive, did not act superior, did not pry."

In section 2 of the questionnaire, participants were asked to complete scales relating to their perceptions of their own behavior. They were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "During conversations with older people I have generally . . ." on each of the following items: "felt obliged to be polite, had to bite my tongue, felt defensive, been emotionally positive, felt satisfied, found age differences did not matter." Because there is a possibility that frequency of contact may influence such perceptions, participants were also asked to estimate their frequency of contact with nonfamilial elders.

Analysis

The data from each of the nine nations was analyzed using principal components (factor) analysis with varimax rotation to reveal underlying factors that would be applicable to all cultures.² Two factor analyses relating to the two sections of the questionnaire described above were completed for each culture. First, perceptions of older persons' behavior were analyzed and next, self-perceptions were analyzed. On the basis of the previous research concerned with satisfaction and dissatisfaction cited above, it was expected that each section would contain two underlying factors. Individual items were dropped from the factor analyses where the loadings were split across factors and where they were not consistent across nations. In a final analysis, data

from the nine nations were combined and analyzed together, as before, with varimax rotation. The results of the overall factor analysis closely reflected the individual analyses. The resultant factors were further employed in MANCOVA analyses followed by post hoc tests conducted according to guidelines established by Toothaker (1993).

Results

Factor analysis

As can be seen from Table 1, four factors were indicated as an overall summary of the results across the nine nations. Two factors emerged from analysis of section 1 of the questionnaire, relating to perceptions of elder behavior, and two from section 2 of the questionnaire, relating to the young person's perceptions of his or her own behavior.

Factor 1, Elder Nonaccommodation, explained 29.9% of the variance and was composed of items indicating that older people were considered angry and complaining, close-minded, out of touch, forcing attention, and negatively stereotyping young people. The items with the highest loadings on this factor were elders make angry complaints, are close-minded, and out of touch. Because of these high loadings, it was considered that this factor reflected a very negative view of elders' communication behavior. Together, the items indicate elder nonaccommodation both cognitively and communicatively in that older people were believed to be close-minded and out of touch, complaining, and overbearing (i.e., forced attention; eigenvalue = 3.89, Cronbach's alpha reliability = 0.76).

Factor 2, Elder Accommodation, explained 17.7% of the variance and was composed of items that described older people as supportive, giving compliments and useful advice, attentive to the younger person, and telling interesting stories. The items that loaded highest on this factor were support, useful advice, and compliments. Together with telling stories and attention, this factor clearly indicates a perception of older people as highly attuned to the conversational needs of younger people (eigenvalue = 2.39, Cronbach alpha reliability = 0.81).

Factor 3, Respect-Obligation, explained 37.5% of the variance and was composed of three items that indicated that young people were guarded in their communication with elders. They felt obliged to be polite, restrained themselves from free expression (bit their tongues), and felt defensive (eigenvalue = 2.25, Cronbach's alpha reliability = 0.59). Of all the factors, this had the lowest reliability, not only within each culture but across all cultures

Table 1
Summary of Overall Factor Analysis for Nine Nations

Item	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Primary Loading	Secondary Loading
Factor 1 (elder)	3.89	29.9		
1. Close-minded			0.69	0.07
2. Out of touch			0.67	0.07
3. Forced attention			0.56	0.09
4. Complain angry			0.71	0.09
5. Complain			0.66	0.07
6. Health/life young			0.68	0.08
Factor 2 (young negative stereotypes)				
7. Interesting stories	2.30	17.7	0.70	0.03
8. Supportive			0.79	0.03
9. Useful advice			0.75	0.02
10. Compliments			0.73	-0.04
11. Attentive			0.70	0.16
12. Not act superior			0.59	0.29
13. Not pry			0.50	0.29
Factor 3 (self)				
14. Obligated polite	2.25	35.5	0.76	-0.19
15. Bite tongue			0.81	0.21
16. Defensive			0.63	0.21
Factor 4				
17. Emotion positive	1.48	24.6	0.85	-0.04
18. Satisfied			0.85	0.09
19. Age did not matter			0.69	0.20

Note: Cronbach's alpha reliability for items 1-6 = 0.76, items 7-11 = 0.81, item 14 = 0.59, and item 17 = 0.73.

together. Reliability could be rather low because this factor was relatively less well defined by containing only three items. Because this is an initial and exploratory stage of questionnaire development, reliabilities were considered acceptable for initial investigation and this factor was retained for further analysis.

Factor 4, Age-Irrelevant Positivity, accounted for 24.6% of the variance and was composed of the following items: age did not matter, the older person was emotionally positive, and the interactions were satisfying (eigenvalues = 1.47, Cronbach's alpha reliability = 0.73). In general, this factor reflected overall positive feelings and decreasing importance of age differences.

Testing Hypotheses

To test the hypotheses, the factors were retained and used as dependent variables in a MANCOVA analysis with the nine cultures as the independent

variable. Further, because some studies indicate that frequency of contact with older people who are not family influences perceptions and attitudes toward older people (for a review, see Fox & Giles, 1993), perception of frequency of contact was employed as a covariate. With the use of Wilks's criterion, the combined dependent variables were significantly related to the covariate, $F(4, 1,578) = 40.25, p < .001$, and to the culture main effect, $F(32, 5,820) = 16.28, p < .001$ (all adjusted means, nonadjusted means, and standard deviations for the dependent measures are displayed in Table 2).

To investigate the power of the covariate to adjust dependent variables, multiple regressions were run for each dependent variable in turn, with the covariate acting as the predictor. The covariate provided significant adjustment to all four dependent variables. The beta value for Elder Nonaccommodation was significantly different from zero, $t(1,578) = 2.86, p < .004$, as was the beta value for Elder Accommodation, $t(1,578) = 8.53, p < .001$, Respect-Obligation $t(1,578) = 2.56, p < .011$, and Age-Irrelevant Positivity, $t(1,578) = 12.14, p < .001$. Participants who reported more frequent contact were more inclined to disagree with items loading on Elder Nonaccommodation, and agree with Elder Accommodation, Respect-Obligation, and Age-Irrelevant Positivity. In general, increased frequency of contact appeared to be related to more positive perceptions of older people (means for the covariate can be found on Table 2).

Effects of culture on the dependent variables after adjustment for the covariate was investigated with univariate analyses. After adjusting for the covariate, the culture main effect was significant for all four dependent variables. Elder Nonaccommodation, $F(8, 1,581) = 9.08, p < .001$; Elder Accommodation, $F(8, 1,581) = 30.01, p < .001$; Respect-Obligation, $F(8, 1,581) = 27.76, p < .001$; and Age-Irrelevant Positivity, $F(8, 1,581) = 17.87, p < .001$.

To investigate the hypotheses further, post hoc analyses were conducted in two stages. First, complex comparisons were conducted using Scheffé tests to compare overall means for Eastern and Western nations. Second, the Games-Howell method for comparing pairs of adjusted means with unequal sample sizes was used to investigate means within the Eastern and within the Western nations. These procedures were undertaken to control inflation of Type 1 error, and alpha was set at 0.05 (see Toothaker, 1993). All post hoc tests were conducted using means adjusted for the covariate.

For Factor 1, Elder Nonaccommodation, Scheffé tests were not significant. Taken as a group, participants from Eastern nations were not more inclined than those from the West to perceive older people as nonaccommodative and as stereotyping young people. Subsequently, differences among the Eastern and among the Western nations were investigated using Games-Howell procedures for pairwise multiple comparisons. This revealed that PRC par-

Table 2
Means, Adjusted Means, and Standard Deviations for Nine Cultures on Four Dependent Measures and One Covariate

	Hong Kong	China	Korea	Japan	Philippines	United States	Australia	New Zealand	Canada
Elder nonaccommodation									
Mean	3.83	3.44	4.25	3.96	3.88	3.89	3.89	3.78	3.46
Adjusted mean	3.90	3.43	4.20	3.91	3.88	3.89	3.91	3.76	3.48
Standard deviation	0.96	0.98	0.91	1.15	1.01	1.03	1.24	1.07	1.09
Elder accommodation									
Mean	4.02	3.96	4.16	4.26	4.66	5.07	4.94	4.84	5.08
Adjusted mean	3.80	3.99	4.30	4.41	4.66	5.05	4.88	4.88	5.03
Standard deviation	0.85	1.34	1.02	1.07	1.23	0.96	1.24	1.00	1.22
Respect obligation									
Mean	3.92	3.61	5.11	4.77	4.12	4.45	4.77	4.76	4.06
Adjusted mean	3.99	3.60	5.07	4.72	4.12	4.45	4.79	4.75	4.08
Standard deviation	1.16	1.28	0.92	1.11	1.39	1.27	1.25	1.14	1.36
Age-irrelevant positivity									
Mean	4.00	3.87	3.35	3.72	4.31	4.44	4.30	4.22	4.70
Adjusted mean	3.69	3.91	3.55	3.93	4.31	4.41	4.22	4.28	4.62
Standard deviation	1.13	1.23	1.01	1.13	1.00	1.21	1.24	1.09	1.45
Frequency of contact									
Mean	4.98	3.35	2.63	2.52	3.51	3.65	3.92	3.25	3.88
Standard deviation	1.45	1.65	1.44	1.58	1.35	1.62	1.72	1.69	1.72

Note: For elder nonaccommodation, elder accommodation, respect-obligation and age-irrelevant positivity, values are on a scale where 1 = *totally disagree* and 7 = *totally agree*. For frequency of contact, 1 = *very infrequent* and 7 = *very frequent*.

ticipants were significantly less likely than participants from any of the other Eastern nations to agree that elders were nonaccommodative and stereotyped young people (PRC, $M = 3.31$; Hong Kong, $M = 3.90$; Korea, $M = 4.20$; Japan, $M = 3.91$; and the Philippines, $M = 3.87$). On the other hand, Korean participants ($M = 4.20$) were significantly more likely to agree that elders were nonaccommodative and stereotyped young people than participants from Hong Kong ($M = 3.90$), the PRC ($M = 3.31$), and the Philippines ($M = 3.87$). There were no other differences.

Differences among the Western nations were investigated in the same way. Results revealed that Canada ($M = 3.48$) was significantly different from the United States ($M = 3.89$) and Australia ($M = 3.91$) but not New Zealand ($M = 3.76$). Examination of the means revealed that Canadian participants were the least likely to agree that older people were nonaccommodative in an intergroup fashion.

Factor 2, Elder Accommodation, was investigated similarly. Scheffé tests revealed an East-West split among the nations ($t = 12.989, p < .001$). Overall, participants from Eastern nations were more likely to disagree that older people were communicatively positive toward them in terms of support, attentiveness, compliments, and the like. Examination of differences among Eastern cultures using Games-Howell revealed that Hong Kong ($M = 3.80$) was significantly different from Korea ($M = 4.30$), Japan ($M = 4.41$), and the Philippines ($M = 4.66$) but not the PRC ($M = 3.99$). The PRC was significantly different from Japan and the Philippines, and the Philippines was significantly different from all other Eastern nations, apart from Japan. There were no other differences. Thus, among Eastern nations, Hong Kong participants were significantly less likely than all others except China to perceive elders as accommodative. At the other end of the scale, participants from the Philippines tended to be more likely than all other nations, apart from Japan, to perceive elders as accommodative. Comparisons of means for the Western nations revealed no differences.

For Factor 3, Respect-Obligation, Scheffé tests revealed no significant differences between East and West. Games-Howell pairwise comparisons showed a wide range of differences among the Eastern nations on this factor. In fact, the only nonsignificant difference was between Hong Kong ($M = 3.99$) and the Philippines ($M = 4.12$). To summarize the results in a hierarchical fashion, participants most likely to agree with this factor (obliged to be polite, bite tongue, and be defensive) were Koreans ($M = 5.07$) followed by Japanese ($M = 4.71$), then the Philippines ($M = 4.12$) and Hong Kong ($M = 3.99$); and finally, PRC participants were the least likely to agree ($M = 3.60$). Tests for differences between means from Western nations revealed that Canadian participants ($M = 4.08$) were significantly less likely to agree with this factor

than Australians ($M = 4.75$) or New Zealanders ($M = 4.75$). There were no other differences.

Scheffé tests on Factor 4, Age-Irrelevant Positivity, were significant for East versus West differences ($t = 8.737, p < .001$). Overall, Eastern nations were less likely than Western nations to agree with items loading on this factor—they were less likely to view their interactions with older people as generally positive and satisfying or to agree that age did not matter. Again, Games-Howell pairwise comparisons were used to investigate differences among Eastern nations. Results indicated that the Philippines ($M = 4.31$) were significantly more likely to rate interactions positively than all other Eastern nations: Korea ($M = 3.55$), Japan ($M = 3.93$), PRC ($M = 3.91$), and Hong Kong ($M = 3.69$). In fact, inspection of the means revealed that the Philippines were closer to a Western pattern. Additionally, Korean participants were more likely to disagree with this factor than Japanese participants. Again, there were no differences among Western nations on this dimension.

Discussion

Our first foray into young people's perceptions of intergenerational communication across the Pacific Rim and comparing East to West has involved the construction and testing of an initial questionnaire instrument that taps into four dimensions of young people's perceptions of intergenerational communication. These dimensions fit well with previous research concerning intergenerational communication and were accordingly labeled elder nonaccommodation, elder accommodation, respect-obligation, and age-irrelevant positivity. Therefore, while being mindful that the instrument needs further development, not the least of all to include items that might be important in Eastern contexts, the analysis reported here is the first to lend validity to the previous intergenerational communication satisfaction research. There is still some work to be done to further develop the questionnaire because the reliability of Factor 3 needs to be improved and more than one dimension may eventually emerge from further elaboration of these items on the questionnaire. This can be comfortably accomplished by devising more specific and carefully crafted items that tap into these dimensions, and, in fact, work is presently under way to achieve this aim, as well as to further establish the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

Overall, Hypothesis 1, predicting an East versus West difference, received mixed support and in the opposite direction to that which would be expected from many reports of Eastern attitudes toward old age. Hypothesis 2 suggested differences among Eastern and among Western nations and, for the

most part, was only confirmed for the East. There was more variability of opinion among Eastern than among Western cultures.

Considering the findings in more detail, results for Elder Nonaccommodation did not confirm Hypothesis 1 because the East versus West comparison was nonsignificant. Inspection of the means as well as subsequent pairwise tests reveals that the primary reason for this result is the variation between Eastern nations. Among the so-called collectivistic cultures, Korea stood apart from Hong Kong and the PRC as more likely to endorse the viewpoint that elders were nonaccommodative in terms of being close-minded, out of touch, complaining, forcing their attention on the young, and stereotyping them in negative ways. Looking at the pattern of means across the nine nations reveals that the means for the PRC are significantly different from those for the other Eastern nations and are, in fact, similar to Canada's means, being more favorable toward elders in their responses to these items. Among Western nations, Canada had the most positive views, and significantly so, compared to the United States and Australia.

When it came to Elder Accommodation, Hypothesis 1 was confirmed by a clear East-West split, with Eastern cultures less inclined to agree that elders were accommodative to them on dimensions of support, advice, compliments, and so on. This time, Hong Kong, followed closely by the PRC participants, can be characterized as tending to reflect the most negative view of elders. Among Eastern nations, the most positive views were held by participants from the Philippines, who tended toward a Western pattern of responding. There were no differences among Western cultures.

Hypothesis 1 was not confirmed for Respect-Obligation. This counter-intuitive result came about, again, because of the large variability among Eastern nations. Interestingly, once again Hong Kong and the PRC anchored the low end of the scale but were also significantly different from each other. The PRC was the most likely to disagree that they felt obliged to be polite, needed to bite their tongues, or felt defensive during intergenerational conversations. On the other hand, Korea anchored the high end of the scale, being the most likely to agree with these items, followed by Japan and then the Philippines. All were significantly different from each other, reflecting a wide range of responses to these items. Coming to the West, overall we have a range of means that represents rather high respect-obligation toward elders, with Canada at the lowest end and significantly different from Australia and New Zealand.

Turning to the final factor, Age-Irrelevant Positivity, testing Hypothesis 1 did reveal East versus West differences such that Eastern cultures tended to be less likely to agree that their contact with elders was emotionally positive, that they were satisfied, and that age did not matter. Among the Eastern

nations, Koreans rated these items the lowest and Japanese and Filipino participants rated them the highest. Further, the Philippines was significantly different from all other Eastern nations and examination of the means reveals that they are probably closer to Western responses. Among the Western nations, there were no differences.

Taking the results together, some patterns and trends can be discerned. Clearly, the data show that participants from Eastern cultures may have a less positive view of their interactions with generalized older people compared to participants from Western cultures overall. The relative negativity would be surprising if we were to accept unquestioningly the lay view that the ethic of filial piety as it concerns nonfamilial elders means that young people in Eastern cultures view age in an idealized and positive fashion such that older people are respected and honored as wise and venerable community elders. However, these results may not be so surprising if we consider the possibility that the ethic concerns itself less with young people's needs or satisfaction and is geared more toward obliging young people to accommodate their elders, to honor and respect them regardless of young people's actual feelings that their needs are not met, that they are dissatisfied, and so forth. Rather, the ethic mandates that these feelings should be kept under wraps and not revealed. Also, elders are not required to honor the young in the same way; they are not obliged to satisfy the young by being complimentary and so forth, although they are supposed to return respect and honor with love (see Ho, 1994; Sung, 1995). Interestingly, the obligation for politeness and self-restraint in these interactions is relatively high for all cultures but perhaps most of all for Koreans. Although the data reveal a general Eastern versus Western split of opinion, there is also strong evidence that popular glosses of an Eastern versus Western or collectivistic versus individualistic split actually mask significant variability, particularly among Eastern nations; an observation that has been recognized for some time by intercultural scholars such as Triandis (1995).

Mindful of the dangers of overgeneralization, we suggest that these data can be summarized in the following profiles that group those nations who exhibit similar patterns together. Hong Kong participants were around the group midpoint for questions pertaining to elder nonaccommodation but were quite negative compared to others on elder accommodation. They were less likely to agree that they feel obligated to show self-restraint and respect and less likely to agree with the age-irrelevant positivity factor. Taken together, these results suggest that they feel that age does matter and they are one of the least positive and one of the least respectful Eastern cultures. The PRC showed a somewhat similar pattern across the factors, apart from their more positive ratings for elder nonaccommodation. However, they were even less

likely than Hong Kong participants to agree that they felt obliged to be polite or bite their tongue. Thus, apart from more positive PRC ratings of elder nonaccommodation, results indicate a rather negative pattern emerging for the PRC and Hong Kong. The most negative interpretation of these results is that this reveals a breakdown of oft-cited traditional respect norms in these cultures. If so, this could have very detrimental results for the elderly in these cultural contexts and deserves further research attention.

The means for Korea and Japan often patterned together. Overall, compared to the other nations, Korean participants were quite negative about intergenerational communication. They were most likely of all Eastern nations to agree that elders were nonaccommodative, although they were not so extreme for elder accommodation. What distinguished Korea and Japan from Hong Kong and the PRC was the finding that this general negativity was combined with very high ratings on respect and politeness obligation. As for age-irrelevant positivity, Koreans were the least likely to agree, reinforcing the view that age always matters in Korean interactions. The results for Japan indicate a slightly modified version of the same pattern.

Results also suggest that the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand could be patterned together. Although, for analysis, the Philippines were clustered with Eastern nations, they stood apart from the other nations in this set. The pattern of their means actually puts them closer to Australia and New Zealand. These nations are all more positive than the Eastern nations about elders in intergenerational conversations and maintain medium levels of respect and obligation; in addition, age matters less than for the Eastern nations.

Finally, means for the United States and Canada show tendencies toward the same pattern. They were more positively disposed toward elders than the other nations overall, especially if the means for elder nonaccommodation and elder accommodation are considered as a set. They were around the midpoint on respect, maintaining the levels but perhaps not feeling the pressure of Koreans; they were most positive on age-irrelevant positivity and (like Australia and New Zealand) age did not matter as much as for the Eastern nations.

Although there were few differences among the Western cultures, Canada was distinguished as the most positive of all the nations. The trend indicates that Canadian participants tend to report less elder nonaccommodation, more elder accommodation, and age-irrelevant positivity combined with moderate ratings of respect-obligation. This pattern could reflect the fact that Canada, of all the nations studied, has a well-established social welfare

system for the elderly and the public in this culture are becoming well informed and more sensitized to elderly welfare issues.

Obviously, this study has merely scratched the surface of cross-cultural differences in young people's beliefs about intergenerational communication. There is much to be done and our immediate efforts are directed toward developing our questionnaire further and establishing validity and reliability within and across cultures so that all relevant dimensions can be measured in future research. Our future research will also examine, in more sophisticated multivariate designs, the relationships between intergenerational communication beliefs and a host of other variables such as filial piety, intergenerational contact, stereotypes of the elderly, and the structural vitality (in terms of status, institutional support, and demographics) of age groups. There are a number of other future directions possible, not least of which is devising ways to collect similar viewpoints on relevant dimensions from elderly people themselves and across cultures. Other research will make comparisons between beliefs about intergenerational communication and beliefs about young and elderly peer communication. Notably, this research has focused on nonfamilial others and the results must be interpreted in this light because the opinion profile for familial elders (currently under analysis) may be very different. As an addendum, we should note that all our research was carried out in modern urban areas and large cities and participants from more rural and traditional areas may show a quite different pattern of opinion.

In summary, this research suggests that negative views of elders are indeed prevalent in the East and in fact are often stronger than those in the West. Added to this, Eastern participants (apart from the PRC and Hong Kong) were reportedly under considerably more obligation to be polite and to bite their tongue. This suggests that, apart from the PRC and Hong Kong, negative views may be more heavily disguised and unexpressed than in Western cultures. This is a far cry from popular Western lay beliefs that older people in Eastern cultures enjoy a more enhanced social role than in the West.

One explanation could be that in some contexts, especially modern urban contexts, strong norms of filial piety are colliding with modernization and young people are beginning to hold views of older people that they did not have in the past when such cultures were more rural and elders were considered as purveyors of cultural wisdom. Too, the so-called generation gap may be much larger in those cultures that have undergone rapid technological development and modernization and where older people have, in many senses, been left behind by such changes. Or indeed, the same may apply to those cultures with a history of dramatic social change, such as the Chinese

Cultural Revolution, which at times focused heavily on the social “sins” of the older generation. The PRC may be a culture with competing values—for example, revolutionary writers urged a transformational move from traditional hierarchical values (such as the “three bonds” between ruler-subject, husband-wife, father-son) to equality (Xiao, 1996)—a move that perhaps has not been comfortably made.

In the future, it is going to be vitally important to consider what effects the opinion profiles revealed in this study may be having on older people in these cultures. Especially so if, as our data are beginning to suggest, older people in the East and to a lesser extent in the West are generally viewed negatively but are treated with a veneer of respect or even tolerated and excused (see Williams, 1996, for an account of such phenomena in a Western context). Ideally, we should work to promote more positive and perhaps more equal relationships built on mutual respect and understanding. This is important not only for how intergenerational communication is affected in the here and now, but also how such effects in turn influence the way older people are treated and cared for now and in the future as societies grow and change further. We must also consider the effects on older people’s health, social and psychological well-being, and the seeds that such profiles plant for young people’s own subsequent aging in various cultural contexts.

Notes

1. The research reported here was funded by a University of California Pacific Rim Research Planning grant awarded to the third author. An earlier version of this article, featuring all nations except the PRC, was presented at the 46th annual conference of the International Communication Association held in Chicago, May 1996. The authors would like to acknowledge the hospitality of the Hong Kong America Center at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and thank Professor William Gudykunst and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

2. As a preliminary analysis, gender was entered into a MANOVA as an independent variable. The results showed no main effect for gender but there was a significant interaction between culture and gender. Further investigation revealed that gender differences were minimal, being restricted to differences between men and women in New Zealand and Canada and to only one of the three dependent measures. In conclusion, gender was thought to have little bearing on the results and was dropped from subsequent analyses.

As a double check, a culture-free factor analysis was performed on the data by standardizing the scores within cultures prior to factor analysis. This analysis supported the results reported here, apart from two relative minor differences: Item 13 had a relatively lower loading on Factor 2 and Item 16 double loaded with Factor 1 and 4. Because these differences are negligible, it was considered that this analysis validated the factor structure as reported here.

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