Running head: Chinese Older, Middle-aged, and Young Participants' Stereotypes of Young Adults

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Abstract

This study examined stereotype traits of Chinese young adults generated by 180 older, middle-aged, and young Chinese participants. Trait lists were compared across age groups and to Western traits reported in earlier research. Results indicated a considerable overlap between stereotype traits generated by the Chinese participants and those from earlier studies with Western participants (e.g., energetic, ambitious, and reckless). Unique Chinese traits (e.g., filial, hedonistic, and individualistic) associated with young adults were also identified. Whereas the middle-aged and older participants listed an equal number of positive and negative traits, the young participants generated significantly more negative traits than positive ones. Discussion focuses on the impact of modernization and cultural change on perceptions of young adults in the Chinese society.

Key Words: stereotypes traits of Chinese young adults; aging and age groups; filial piety; modernization

The social cognitive perspective emphasizes that stereotypes are person perception schemas that reflect the attitudes, beliefs, personality traits, and behaviors of a group of people (Ashmore & Del, 1981; Hamilton & Trolier, 1986). In essence, stereotypes constitute a conscious or unconscious knowledge base that guides a person's judgments and communication behaviors (Hummert, 1990). From an intergroup communication perspective, age stereotypes and stereotypes of young adults influence and mediate the quality and expectations of intergenerational communication (Harwood & Williams, 1998; Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986). Guided by the Communication Predicament of Aging Model (CPA), which is grounded in the Communication Accommodation theory (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991), prior research has established that the negative age stereotypes of dependence and incompetence held by young adults induce inappropriate speech accommodation (e.g., patronizing talk) to older persons, which may damage older adults' self-esteem and eventually lead to the declines of older adults' physical and psychological heath (Ryan et al., 1986).

Patronizing talk, however, is a two-way street in the communication between the young and the elderly (Giles & Williams, 1994). In their series of studies, Giles and Williams (1994) examined young people's reactions to patronizing talk from older to younger adults. A fair proportion of the young participants reported that they were the recipients of patronizing talk (e.g., overparenting, nonlistening, and disapproving) from older individuals. In another study, Williams and Giles (1996) asked young participants to describe two recent conversations with an older person, one satisfying and the other dissatisfying. In dissatisfying conversations, three forms of stereotyping were frequently attributed as the source of dissatisfaction, namely, stereotyping the entire young generation, considering the youth naïve and using patronizing talk. These studies demonstrate although underaccomodation may predominate the old-to-young communication, older adults may adopt patronizing talk to

overaccommodate the negative aspects of young stereotypes, such as immaturity, lack of respect and experience (see also Nussbaum, Hummert, Williams, & Harwood, 1996; Harwood, 2000). Research examining intergenerational communication in the Chinese cultural context has also indicated that the negative stereotypes of young adults as being hedonistic and naïve motivate older adults' intrusive, superior, and sometimes controlling behaviors, which leads to communication dissatisfaction (Zhang & Hummert, 2001). However, very few studies have directly focused on stereotypes of young adulthood (Hummert, 1990; Slotterback, 1996).

Studies on how young people are stereotyped have been scarce (Matheson, Collins & Kuehne, 2000), however, a recent study conducted in the West by Matheson et al. (2000) indicates that older adults attribute a variety of stereotype traits to young people, revealing that positive perceptions of young adults co-exist with negative ones. Stereotype schemas have a basis in cultural beliefs (Zhang et al., 2002), the study conducted by Matheson et al. (2000) in the West may not represent the stereotypes of the young in other cultures. In addition, Matheson et al's (2000) only included views of older participants.

This study extends prior research on stereotypes of young people to consider multiple viewpoints (i.e., middle-aged and older adults, besides young adults) in the People's Republic of China (PRC). We begin with a brief overview of prior research on age stereotypes, which provides a context for this study in terms of research questions and methodology. Following that we outline how the cultural values of filial piety and hierarchy in the context of globalization and modernity in the PRC may impact perceptions of young adults, thus providing further significance for the current study and rational for our second research question on cross-cultural comparison of stereotype traits of young adults.

Research on Age Stereotypes and Implications for the Current Study

Prior research has examined the influence of trait-based age stereotypes on

intergenerational communication. For example, participants expected to have more positive and satisfying conversations with a perfect grandparent than with a despondent older adult (Harwood & Williams, 1998). In a similar vein, participants across three age groups had a tendency to use patronizing talk with the Despondent target than with the Golden Ager (Hummert, Shaner, Garstka, & Henry, 1998). Other researchers have demonstrated that the recognition of negative age stereotype traits leads to negative evaluations of older adults in terms of their personality, attitudes and communication competence (Hummert et al., 2004; Ryan, Kwong See, Meneer, & Trovato, 1992). Motivated by an interest in exploring the role of age stereotypes in shaping younger adults' communication behaviors toward older adults and a concern with older adults' physical and psychological well-being, a considerable amount of research has examined age stereotypes from multiple perspectives (Hummert, 1990; Hummert, Garstka, Shanner, & Strahm, 1994; Brewer & Lui, 1984; Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; Shmidt & Boland, 1986). In general, these studies have established that the category *older adult* is a superordinate label encompassing more specific subcategories, or constellations of traits that describe different types of older adults. Among these studies, Hummert et al.'s (1994) study on age stereotypes is the most systematic in that it solicited age stereotype traits from multiple viewpoints (i.e., young, middle-aged, and older adults), employed trait-generation and trait-sorting tasks with the participants, and adopted both emic and etic approaches to age stereotypes. The trait list included 97 age traits shared by the three age groups. In addition, the sorting task results showed that the complexity of the stereotype schemas increase across the age groups, which confirmed findings of previous studies (e.g., Brewer & Lui, 1984; Heckhausen, Dixon, & Baltes, 1989). According to the developmental explanation, as individuals age, they incorporate their own life experiences into their age schemas (Mueller, Johnson, Dandoy, & Keller, 1992; Baltes, 1987). The well-documented age stereotype research provides insights for this study in three important ways. First, these

studies (Hummert, 1990; Hummert, Garstka, Shanner, & Strahm, 1994; Brewer & Lui, 1984; Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; Shmidt & Boland, 1986) have confirmed the validity of the hypothesis that there are multiple stereotypes of a group of people, including young adults. Second, prior research on age stereotypes has established the importance of studying both the etic and the emic aspects of stereotypes of young adults. While the etic approach focused on the overall frequencies and valence of the stereotype traits, the emic approach emphasized the importance of studying the stereotype content of the population under study (i.e., by soliciting stereotype traits from participants) (Schmidt & Boland, 1986; Hummert et al., 1994). Third, prior research on age stereotypes have demonstrated the need to include multiple opinions from young, middle-aged and older adults and to compare them across the three age groups to gain a more comprehensive picture of images of young adults (Hummert et al., 1994). Altogether prior research on age stereotypes informs the development of our first research question and guides our research procedures and methodology.

RQ 1: What stereotype traits do Chinese young, middle-aged, and older adults associate with young people?

1a: What are the proportions of positive and negative traits?

1b: What are the similarities and differences across age groups in terms of the number of traits and valence?

Chinese Cultural Values, Age group Stereotypes and Intergenerational Communication

Stereotypes about young adults have been studied primarily in the context of examining older adults as the main target group with the younger target serving as a control group. Of the few studies available, Matheson and her colleagues' (2000) research assessed older adults' perceptions of young adults by soliciting traits from a group of older adults. Their findings included a list of 100 traits (55 positive traits and 45 negative ones) describing young people's physical, social, and personality traits. Hierarchical cluster analysis revealed

fifteen stereotypes, nine of which were positive in valence (i.e., Professional, Valedictorian, Outgoing, Jet Setter, Reliable, Talk Show Host, Student, Thoughtful, and Military Officer) and six of which were negative in valence (i.e., Hooligan, Cynic, Hopeless, Slob, Introverted Worry Wart, and Risk Taker).

The positivity reflected in stereotypes of young adulthood has been partly attributed to the idealization of youth in Western cultures. As we examine stereotypes of the young in China, such positive bias may be influenced or mediated by traditional Chinese values of filial piety and hierarchy. Filial piety, the doctrine that the older adults (who are wise and experienced) should be respected and supported, is an age-based norm that specifies a hierarchical intergenerational relationship with older adults having more power than young adults (Yue & Ng, 1998; Zhang & Hummert, 2001). Prior research has indicated that the Chinese cultural norms of filial piety and hierarchy impact perceptions of aging, young adults, and intergenerational communication in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side, some research has supported the belief of positive perception of aging in East Asian cultures due to the societal norm of filial piety (e.g., Levy & Langer, 1994). For example, Levy and Langer's (1994) study revealed that age stereotype traits generated by the Chinese participants were more positive than those given by American participants. In a similar vein, Zhang et al (2002) found that Chinese participants across the three age groups generated more positive age traits than negative ones. Chinese older and young interviewees also reported a shared positive view of Chinese young adults as being respectful and polite (Zhang & Hummert, 2001).

Other research findings, however, were not consistent with this view. For instance, several recent studies (Harwood et al., 1996, 2001; Giles et al., 1998) in the Pacific Rim countries have found that people in Asian countries (i.e., People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Korea, Philippines and Thailand) rated stereotypes toward the elderly similarly with or

more negatively than participants from Western countries (i.e., U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand). Other research revealed that Chinese older adults were bossy, controlling, and intrusive in intergenerational communication with Chinese young adults (Zhang & Hummert, 2002). These dissatisfying communication behaviors were induced by the interaction between age-based stereotypes of young adults (e.g., naive, hedonistic, and reckless; see Zhang & Hummert, 2000) and the Chinese cultural norms of filial piety and hierarchy (Zhang, 2004). In Chinese intergenerational communication context, the Chinese value of filial piety not only specifies obligations for young people to respect, care, and obey older adults, but also relegates responsibilities for older adults to exercise "tough love" (e.g., blunt criticism) for young people (Yue & Ng, 1999; Zhang & Hummert, 2001), which can be very dissatisfying to young people.

In general, communication and aging research involving Chinese societies has revealed a mixed picture of perceptions of aging and intergenerational communication with both positive and negative aspects (e.g., Giles, Harwood, Pierson, Clement, & Fox, 1998; Lin, Zhang, & Harwood, 2004; Ota, Giles, & Gallois, 2002; Williams et al., 1997; Zhang & Hummert, 2001). This complicated picture of both positive and negative perceptions of aging and intergenerational relationships has been also attributed to the coexistence of and interaction between traditional (e.g., filial piety) and modern (e.g., individualism) values (see Yang, 1996). As Yue and Ng's (1999) study of filial piety and filial expectations revealed, although older people in China continue to hold high filial expectations for young people and young people still feel strong filial obligations for the elderly, there have been changes from the traditionally-held beliefs of filial obligation, in that "Respecting the elders but not necessarily obeying them" appears to be a new cultural norm for fulfilling filial obligations in today's China. As Zhang and Hummert's (2001) interview study with Chinese older and young adults revealed, perceptual differences over filial piety exist between the two

generations. Older adults are stronger proponents of the age-based value than young adults (Zhang & Hummert, 2001; Zhang, Hummert, & Savundranayagam, 2004). Some research on younger Chinese adults suggests that the younger generation have adopted more Western-like values with respect to youth, in contrast to the older generation who have not (Sung, 2001). In view of the current study, these research findings provide grounds for us to infer that perceptions of young adults may be more sensitive to the Chinese traditional cultural norms and the globalization/modernization movement in China, which started much later than the Western world. In addition, Chinese young adults, who endorse modern values more than older adults (Zhang, Hummert, & Savundranayagam, 2004), are increasingly more individualistic, competitive, and less conservative, and hence may be perceived more negatively than their Western counterparts.

The inclusion of members of two other age groups (i.e., young and middle-aged) allowed the authors to analyze similarities and differences among the traits generated by different groups in terms of number and valence, however make the comparison with the Matheson et al's study (2000) more difficult since Matheson et al only solicited older adults' opinions. Selecting 60 age traits from prior research (e.g., Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Hummert et al., 1994; Levy, 1996; Routhbaum, 1983; Schimidt & Boland, 1986), Chasteen, Schwarz, and Park (2002) examined the typicality of these traits in describing young persons. They found that 22 of the stereotype traits were associated with young adults. To make the repertoire of stereotype traits of young adults in the West more comparable with the Chinese traits, traits associated with young adults from Chasteen et al. (2002) were also included. Hence, our second question addressed the nature of cross-cultural comparison of stereotype traits of young adults.

RQ 2: How do these traits compare to the 120 Western traits (i.e., 100 in Chasteen et al., 2000; 20 in Matheson et al., 2000)?

Method

Participants

Sixty young (30 males and 30 females; *M* age = 24.78; Age range: 21-39), 60 middle-aged (30 males and 30 females; *M* age = 46.38; Age range: 40-55) and 60 older Chinese adults (30 males and 30 females; *M* age = 66.50; Age range: 56-83) participated in this study in 2004 in the PRC. The younger participants were 42 student volunteers from a large Chinese university and eighteen local community residents in a coastal city in northeast China. The middle-aged and older participants were recruited through fliers and word of mouth from a two local communities in a small city in northeast China and a coastal city in East China respectively. One way ANOVAs revealed that years of education differed significantly among the three age groups, F (2, 172) = 31.70, $p < .001$. The LSD post hoc analyses showed that the young adults (M = 15.73; SD = 1.30) had significantly more years of education than did the middle-aged (M = 12.79; SD = 2.74) and older adults (M=11.81; SD = 3.79). The middle-aged adults' years of education did not differ significantly than those of the older participants.

Data Collection

Following the procedures used by previous stereotype-trait studies (e.g., Hummert et al., 1994; Schmidt and Boland, 1986), participants were provided with open-ended questionnaires in Chinese for trait generation. They were asked to write down the typical traits they associated with Chinese young adults by using short phrases or single words. Participants were informed that there was no limit on the number of descriptors they could list. Participants were allowed to take as much time and use as many sheets of paper they needed to complete the task. They finished the task either individually or in small groups with the presence of the research assistant.

Coding and Translation Procedures

Five major phases were involved in the coding process: 1) Eliminating the non-trait descriptions from the trait listings, 2) computing the total number of distinct descriptors listed by each participant, 3) coding the total number of distinct traits in terms of valence (positive, negative or neutral), 4) translating the final list of traits into English, and 5) Coding the English version of traits as either synonyms of one of the 120 Western traits (i.e., 22 traits in Chasteen et al., 2000; 100 traits in Matheson et al., 2000),

Eliminating the non-trait descriptions of Chinese young adults from the trait listings. The first step in this phase involved eliminating descriptors that were unrelated to traits of young adults (e.g., "magazines", "the world belongs to the young"). After training, two Chinese coders completed this task independently on the total sample, coding each descriptor as either a trait or a non-trait. Reliability was assessed for each age group by percentage agreement (young = .98, middle-aged = .99, and elderly = .98). Disagreement was resolved through discussion.

Computing the total number of distinct descriptors listed by each participant. The second step was to compute the total number of distinct traits reported by each participant in the original Chinese data. The coders examined the presence of semantic similarity among the traits. When two or multiple traits were judged to be synonyms, they were grouped and counted as a single trait. Decisions were made based on consensus between the two Chinese coders. Finally, the 180 open-ended questionnaires, which excluded non-trait descriptions and grouped synonyms as one trait, were retyped in word files in Chinese for the convenience of further coding. Treating each distinct descriptor as a case number and each participant (or each trait listing) as a variable, the total numbers of distinct traits listed by all participants and their frequency across participants were computed. This process resulted in 165 distinctive traits across 180 participants with frequency ranging from 1 to 66.

Coding the valence of the distinct traits. The two Chinese nationals coded each of the

165 traits into a positive, negative, or neutral trait independently. For the valence dimension, items that had a clearly positive (e.g., "energetic") or negative (e.g., "lazy") component were coded as positive and negative, respectively. The items that were coded as neutral either had no strong valence component, or reflected likes or dislikes of the rated group (e.g., "Idol-worshipping"). Some culturally sensitive items, such as "individualistic", that have no strong valence component denotatively but have a clear negative cultural connotation, were also coded as negative. Reliabilities were assessed by computing percentage agreement (i.e., 99.9%) and Scott's *Pi* (i.e., 98%). Disagreement was resolved through discussion and consultation of other Chinese nationals.

Translating the 165 distinct descriptors into English. Following detailed procedures used in Zhang et al (2002), the translation procedure involved examining the original Chinese descriptors for their semantic meanings and translating these descriptors into English in view of accuracy and cultural differences. Back translation was also used to enhance translation accuracy.

Comparing the 165 distinct traits with Western traits. The final step of coding involved coding master trait list (i.e., 165) generated by the Chinese participants as synonyms of traits or new traits by comparing them to the Westerns traits, the traits generated in Matheson et al (2002) and traits used in Chasteen et al (2000). The same coders completed the above coding independently and reliabilities were computed by percentage agreement (i.e., 98%) and Scott's *Pi* (i.e., .96).

Results

Number of Traits and Trait Valence

Participants generated a total of 165 distinct descriptors, with frequencies ranging from 1 to 66. In terms of valence, 76 of the descriptors were positive, 87 were negative, and one was neutral. The one neutral trait (i.e., idol-worshiping) had 9 mentions only by younger

adults; hence it was not included in the following cross-group analysis. A 2 (valence) x 3 (age group) analysis of variance with repeated measures was conducted to examine whether each age group generated an equal number of positive and negative traits. Results indicated a significant age group main effect (F (2, 177) = 27.68, p< .001), a significant valence main effect (F (2, 177) = 14.81, p< .001) and a significant interaction effect between age group and trait valence (F (2, 177) = 7.03, p < .01). Tukey's post hoc analyses of the age group main effect revealed that middle-aged adults (M = 8.35, SD = 5.79) and elderly adults (M = 8.85, SD = 6.12) generated significantly fewer traits than did young participants (M = 16.65, SD = 8.36) (M = 16.80, SD = 8.50). There was no significant difference between the number of traits generated by middle-aged adults and that by older adults. Analysis of the valence main effect indicated that participants on the whole generated significantly more negative traits (M = 6.35, SD = 5.34) than positive traits (M = 4.93, SD = 3.88), (F (2, 177) = 18.53, p < .001). Interaction contrasts revealed that young adults not only generated significantly more traits overall than did those in the other two groups, they also listed proportionately more negative traits than did middle-aged and older participants. However, there was no significant difference found between the numbers of positive and negative traits generated by the middle-aged group and the older-adult group respectively (see Figure 1).

Traits Reported with Significant Frequency

Of the 165 descriptors generated by the three age groups, only 98 (42 positive traits, 55 negative traits, and one neutral trait; see Table 1) of these traits were reported with significant frequency (p < .003, Binomial distribution; Kenney, 1987) to be considered traits of shared stereotypes. Based on Kenney's Binomial distribution formula (1987, p. 154), the probability of having the same single descriptor from the pool of 165 listed by six participants out of 180 is .003. This conservative standard was applied in previous age stereotype (trait) studies (Hummert et al., 1994; Zhang et al., 2002) and in the current one.

Among the 98 traits listed by at least 6 participants, two positive traits (i.e., "open-mined" and "energetic") and three negative traits (i.e., "hedonistic", "lazy" and "aimless") were listed by at least 20% or more of the participants in all three age groups. Specifically, "hedonistic" was the most frequently listed trait in the current study. It was listed by 35% or more of the participants in each age group. In addition, four positive traits (i.e., "trendy", "ambitious", "hardworking", and "educated) and three negative traits (i.e., "selfish", "incompetent", and "non-traditional") were listed by at least15% or more of the participants in all three age groups. "Reckless" was the most frequently (over 51%) listed trait by young participants, "lazy" was the most frequently (over 38%) listed trait by middle-aged participants, and "hardworking" was the most frequently (over 43%) listed trait by older participants. "Bold" and "materialistic" were listed by a relatively high percentage (i.e., 15% or more) of young and older participants, but not by middle-aged participants. "Individualistic" and "self-centered" were listed by a relatively high percentage (i.e., 15% or more) of young and middle-aged participants, but not by elderly participants. Interestingly, "filial" was listed by at least 5% or more of young and middle-aged adults, but it was listed by none of the older participants.

Comparison to Western Traits

As in Matheson et al.'s (2000) study, the 165 traits generated in the current study covered a number of different content domains. These domains included physical characteristics and physical well-being, such as "attractive" and "healthy", but predominately more social and personality characteristics, such as "open-minded", "outgoing" and "individualistic".

In comparison to the Western traits reported in early studies (Matheson et al., 2000; Chasteen et al., 2002), we found a considerable overlap between those Western traits and

traits reported in the current study. Results indicated that 71 (42 positive traits and 29 negative traits) of Matheson et al.'s (2000) 100 traits and 18 (9 positive traits and 9 negative traits) of Chasteen et al.'s (2002) 22 traits were mentioned at least by one Chinese participant; However, only 44 (21 positive traits and 23 negative traits; see Table 1) of these traits were reported with significant frequency ($p < .003$, Binomial distribution; Kenney, 1987) to be considered traits of shared stereotypes. Although a few of the frequently reported distinct Chinese traits shared semantic similarities with corresponding traits from Matheson et al (2000) (e.g., "trendy" versus "well-groomed", "patriotic" versus "national pride", "unorganized" versus "sloppy"), they were treated as unique Chinese and Western traits for different semantic emphases. The 71 Western traits (Matheson et al., 2000; Chasteen et al., 2002) that were listed infrequently or not listed by any of the participants included " considerate", "articulate", "idealistic", "spontaneous", and "sexually active" (see Table 1).

Among the frequently listed traits that corresponded to those from Matheson et al. (2000) and Chasteen et al (2002), four positive traits and two negative traits were listed by 15% or more of the participants in all three age groups, and these included "energetic", "ambitious", hardworking", "educated", "lazy", and "selfish". In addition, "healthy", "happy", "kind", "lack self-discipline", "vulnerable", "confused" and "rebellious" were listed by 20% or more of the young participants, but by a relatively low percentage (i.e., mostly lower than 10%) of middle-aged and older participants; Further, at least 10% or more of the young participants characterized themselves as "indifferent" and "thrill-seeker", but these traits were not listed by middle-aged and older adults.

Correlation among the Three Age Group Trait Lists

As reported above, there were differences in the frequencies among the three age groups in their listing of traits; however, the correlation analysis showed that the trait lists generated by the three age groups were positively correlated (see also Hummert et al., 1994;

Zhang et al., 2002). To examine the relationships between the trait lists generated by the young, middle-aged and older participants, each trait was treated as a case ($N = 165$) and the age group frequencies for each trait were treated as its variables (entered in three separate columns). Correlation analysis among these variables revealed that, despite differences across the age groups in the number and frequency of traits generated, their trait lists were significantly correlated ($p < .001$). Correlations ranged from .60 ($p < .001$) between the young and elderly lists, to .72 ($p < .001$) between the young and middle-aged lists, to .77 ($p < .001$) between the middle-aged and elderly lists, indicating that a single trait list can be used in measuring three age groups' perceptions of stereotypes or attitudes toward young adults in future research.

Discussion

Trait Variability and Out-Group Homogeneity

The results of this study indicate that participants across all three age groups hold multiple stereotypes of young adults. The participants in this study generated a number of opposite traits that could not be present in one and the same young adult (e.g., hardworking-lazy, realistic-unrealistic, honest-dishonest, mature-immature). In addition, the present study suggests that although the middle-aged and older adults were well informed of the diverse characteristics of young adults, and considerable variability (as judged by the number of traits listed) was shown in the young age traits they listed, they generated significantly fewer traits for the young than did younger participants, which is consistent with the notion of outgroup homogeneity bias observed in the West (Linville, 1982; Linville, Fischer, & Salovey, 1989) as well as in China (Du, Liu, & Li, 2003). The developmental view of aging may account for the variability of traits generated by the two age groups in that both middle-aged and older adults have experienced the young age stage; therefore, they have incorporated the outgroup (young group) heterogeneity into their stereotype schema (Baltes, 1987). Future research will

need to further examine the clusters and/or groupings (e.g., Hummert et al., 1994) of these traits, thus further testing the validity of these two perspectives.

Comparison with Western Traits

Consistent with the findings by Matheson et al. (2000), the traits generated by the participants in this study contained mostly social, personality and emotional characteristics, which shows a clear contrast to the age stereotype traits listed by young adults in Schmidt and Boland's (1986) study. Their research generated more traits that described the cognitive competence and physical qualities of older adults. According to Matheson et al. (2000), this suggests that respondents of any age group may focus more on social characteristics when describing young adults in contrast to their focus on characteristics of cognitive competence and physical qualities when describing older adults. As age stereotype studies have revealed, cognitive and physical characteristics of the elderly share more universal similarities (e.g., "slow-moving", "slow-thinking", "forgetful", "rambling"; see Zhang et al., 2002) than their social characteristics.

Universal stereotype traits of young adults. Overall, the results of this study indicate that some young age traits are universally associated with young adults in both the Chinese and Western cultures, while others reflect views of the young distinct to each culture. Although 71% (42 positive traits and 29 negative traits) of Matheson et al.'s (2000) 100 traits were listed at least by one Chinese participant in the current study, only 36% (18 positive traits and 18 negative traits) of these traits were reported with significant frequency to be considered traits of shared stereotypes. In this group, the frequently reported positive traits included "energetic", "ambitious", "confident", and "educated", which represent the Professional stereotype of Canadian young adults (Matheson et al., 2000). Other frequently listed positive traits such as "honest", "energetic", "hardworking" and "happy" constitute half of the traits in the constellation labeled as the Valedictorian stereotype by Matheson et al.

(2000). The frequently reported negative traits in this study included "lazy", "careless", "dishonest", "ignorant", "lack self-discipline", "immature", "confused", "indifferent", and "apathetic". These traits correspond to the Hooligan stereotype and Cynic stereotype identified for Canadian young adults (Matheson et al., 2000). The most frequently listed positive traits in this study such as "energetic", "healthy", "adventurous", and most frequently listed negative traits such as "lazy", "reckless", "rebellious", "inexperienced", and "wasteful" also correspond to the stereotypical Western young age traits reported by Chasteen and her colleagues (Chasteen, Schwarz, & Park, 2002), indicating these most frequently listed stereotype traits from the current study are universal in both the Chinese and Western cultures.

Traits unique to Western stereotypes of young adults. Thirty-three positive and 24 negative traits form Matheson et al. (2000) were either infrequently reported or not reported at all by the Chinese participants in the current study, suggesting that they are either infrequently associated with Chinese young adults or unique to Western young age traits. The positive traits in this category included "spontaneous", "talkative", "resourceful", "speaks mind", and "sophisticated". These are traits that correspond to the Talk Show Host stereotype of Canadian young adults, which was rated the most positive by Canadian older adult participants (Matheson et al., 2000). The absence of these traits on the Chinese participants' lists may suggest that this stereotype is not held in the Chinese high-context culture where considerable amount of meaning in communication is implicit and embedded in the communication context (Lustig & Koester, 2003). While in the Western culture in North America, verbal skills and a direct, spontaneous way of communication are encouraged and practiced, prudence, modesty and silence are more valued in Chinese culture for the maintenance of social order and harmony. We acknowledge that while the current study included multiple perspectives in studying young age traits, similar studies (e.g., Matheson et

al., 2000) conducted in the West did not include young and middle-aged participants' views. Interpretation of this group of traits (Table 2) as unique Chinese traits or shared traits between the East and the Western cultures should be done with great caution.

The 24 negative traits infrequently reported by the Chinese participants included "misunderstood", "poor prospects", "lost spirituality", "low-self-esteem", "conform to peer pressure", "cautious", and "sexually active". The first five of these traits correspond to the Hopeless stereotype of Canadian young adults, suggesting this stereotype is not endorsed in the Chinese culture. A highly popular Chinese metaphor compares young people to the rising morning sun, suggesting a common positive stereotype in the Chinese culture that relates youth to great hope and prospects. This may explain why the Hopeless stereotype is not endorsed in the Chinese culture, even for a negative subcategory of the young. To sum up, some of these infrequently reported traits may not reflect the reality of Chinese young adults (e.g., "independent", "feminist") or may not be appropriate in content (e.g., "sexually knowledgeable", "sophisticated") or in expression (e.g., " conform to peer pressure", "sexually active") to be used as descriptors within the Chinese culture.

Traits unique to Chinese stereotypes of young adults. Twenty-five and 39 negative stereotype traits were listed by the Chinese participants in this study, but were not mentioned in Matheson et al. (2000). The most frequently listed positive traits of this category included "open-minded", "trendy", "active", "competent", "bold", "healthy", "quick-thinking", "creative", "persistent", "optimistic", "adaptive", "career-oriented", and "realistic". This group of traits draws a picture of modern Chinese young adults who are likely to survive and thrive in an age when China is experiencing and undergoing economic development, and dramatic cultural and social changes. The most frequently listed negative traits that were not mentioned in Matheson et al. (2000) included "hedonistic", "materialistic", "wasteful", "individualistic", "irresponsible", "non-traditional", "conceited", and "self-centered". They

reflect more of a negative side of Chinese young adults in adapting to the drastic societal changes and conflicts between the traditional and modern values (e.g., individualism) associated with the Chinese younger generations. Contrary to the traditional Chinese values that emphasize thrifty, modesty, and patience, these traits show a tendency for the young to strive for more independent, individual, materialistic and comfortable life, a deviation from the traditional values towards modern Western values. In appearance, it would make more sense to associate these traits with Western young adults; however, we view that it is the unique Chinese cultural context (i.e., transition from a planned economy to a market economy; clashes between the traditional and modern values) in an age of globalization that have made these traits salient for describing Chinese young adults, who endorsed modern values more and traditional values less than did older adults (Zhang, Hummert, & Savundranayagum, 2004).

Cross-group comparison of the traits also lends support to the interaction of the traditional and modern values. For example, 8% and 5% of the young and middle-aged participants respectively listed "filial" as a trait of young adults, but it did not reflect older participants' views at all, indicating there may be a generational divide on perceptions of this trait. Altogether these results show that in the globalization era, some of the traditional Chinese values may be losing ground.

Valence of Traits

Results indicated that participants on the whole generated significantly more negative traits than positive traits; however, interaction contrasts revealed that the negativity was due to proportionately more negative traits generated by the young participants. There was no significant difference found between the numbers of positive and negative traits generated by the middle-aged group and the older-adult group respectively. This analysis suggests that while the middle-aged and older adults may hold mixed perceptions towards the young in

China, young adults themselves may have more negative perceptions toward their own age group. Young people may be indulged in self-criticism tendencies because they see themselves powerless as a group and thus disempowered, while middle-aged and older adults may be quite "benevolent" to outgroup members for their socially advantageous positions (Zhang & Hummert, 2001). This seems to contradict the in-group favoritism identified extensively in the social-psychological and communication literature ((Turner, 1978). However, we need to be cautious about this negative perception, and it needs further verification that involves sorting these traits into constellations that represent stereotypes of subgroups under the super-ordinate label of young adults.

Conclusion and Future Research

Future research needs to verify the universality and cultural distinctiveness of the stereotype traits generated in the current study by conducting research on stereotypes of young adults from multiple views in the West, validating the valence of these traits by soliciting perceptions from participants across different age groups. Following the methods used by previous stereotype studies (e.g., Schmidt & Boland, 1986; Hummert et al., 1994), the traits generated in this study could also be sorted into subsets that represent stereotypes subcategories of Chinese young adults. Further attitude, typicality, and valence ratings of those stereotype traits could show a more complete picture of how the young are stereotyped in the Chinese culture. This line of research could also reveal whether older adults have more complex stereotypes of young adults in comparison to younger participants. Earlier age stereotype research (e.g., Hummert et al., 1994) indicates that older adults have more complex stereotypes or schema than younger participants, even though they generated shorter age stereotype trait lists as compared to younger participants. Since both middle-aged and older participants generated significantly fewer stereotype traits than did the young participants in the current study, the line of research would be worth investigation.

In conclusion, this study revealed that some stereotype traits of the young are universally shared by people in both the Chinese and Western cultures, while others are culturally grounded. Perceptions of young adults in the Chinese culture are mixed and stereotypes of young adults are multiple. In many ways, the stereotype traits in the Chinese culture reflect the interaction between traditional Chinese values and modern values. In addition, analysis of the culturally distinct traits of Chinese young adults enhances our understanding of intergenerational relationships in the Chinese culture.

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Table 1. *Young Age Traits Reported Frequently [a] by Chinese Participants*

		Age Group (N = 180)		
		Young (n = 60)	Middle-Aged (n = 60)	Older (n = 60)
Positively Valenced Traits				
English	Chinese			
Open-minded*	思想开放的	35.0	35.0	26.7
Energetic	精力充沛的	40.0	21.7	20.0
Trendy*	时尚的	45.0	20.0	16.7
Ambitious	有理想、有雄心的	33.3	18.3	28.3
Hardworking	努力、勤奋的	15.0	15.0	43.3
Active*	积极、活跃的	38.3	15.0	13.3
Educated	有文化、受过教育的	15.0	28.3	21.7
Competent*	有能力的	20.0	11.7	21.7
Bold*	大胆、有魄力的	20.0	8.3	18.3
Healthy	健康的	25.0	5.0	11.7
Happy	快乐、幸福的	20.0	11.7	6.7
Kind	有爱心的	23.3	1.7	6.7
Quick-thinking*	思维敏捷的	6.7	15.0	10.0
Creative*	有创造力的	8.3	11.7	10.0
Image-conscious*	注重形象的	23.3	5.0	1.7
Persistent*	坚持不懈的	11.7	6.7	11.7
Confident	有自信心的	15.0	11.7	3.3
Attractive	有魅力的	13.3	10.0	5.0
Optimistic	乐观的	23.3	3.3	1.7
Outgoing	好交际的	13.3	10.0	5.0
Adaptive*	适应能力强的	5.0	6.7	15.0
Curious	求知好奇的	15.0	3.3	6.7
Career-oriented*	有事业心的	5.0	10.0	6.7
Realistic*	现实的	13.3	6.7	1.7
Righteous*	正直的	3.3	5.0	11.7
Responsible*	有责任心的	11.7	8.3	0.0
Romantic*	浪漫的	13.3	3.3	1.7

Intelligent	有聪明才智的	3.3	5.0	8.3
Adventurous	喜欢冒险的	8.3	5.0	1.7
Fun	富有情趣的	8.3	3.3	3.3
Filial*	孝顺的	8.3	5.0	0.0
Honest	诚实的	8.3	1.7	3.3
Sensitive*	敏感的	5.0	0.0	8.3
Friendly	友好的	10.0	0.0	2.0
Innocent*	天真的	6.7	5.0	0.0
Mature	成熟的	8.3	1.7	1.7
Stable	稳定的	8.3	1.7	1.7
Content*	满足的	1.7	1.7	6.7
Modest	谦虚的	5.0	3.3	1.7
Patriotic*	爱国的	3.3	0.0	6.7
Polite	有礼貌的	5.0	3.3	1.7
Prudent*	谨慎的	5.0	3.3	1.7

Negatively Valenced Traits

English	Chinese			
Hedonistic*	贪图享乐的	41.7	31.7	36.7
Lazy	懒惰的	33.3	38.3	33.3
Reckless	鲁莽、冲动的	51.7	18.3	13.3
Materialistic*	实利主义的	40.0	6.7	23.3
Selfish	自私的	33.3	20.0	16.7
Wasteful	浪费的、不节俭的	30.0	10.0	26.7
Individualistic*	个人主义的	40.0	21.7	3.3
Incompetent*	无能力的	23.3	18.3	21.7
Aimless*	没有目标的	20.0	20.0	20.0
Irresponsible	不负责任的	36.7	10.0	3.3
Non-traditional*	不符合传统的	15.0	16.7	18.3
Conceited*	自以为是的	30.0	11.7	6.7
Unrealistic*	不切实际的	28.3	10.0	8.3
Self-centered*	以自我为中心的	18.3	16.7	10.0
Competitive*	攀比的，争强好胜的	20.0	6.7	16.7
Vain	有虚荣心的	20.0	8.3	8.3

Lack self- discipline	缺乏自律的	21.7	10.0	3.3
Fickle*	易变的	23.3	5.0	6.7
Vulnerable	脆弱的、易受伤害的	21.7	10.0	3.3
Confused	迷惘的	25.0	3.3	5.0
Dependent	有依赖性的	13.3	10.0	8.3
Lack stamina*	缺乏毅力的	16.7	6.7	8.3
Addicted to the Internet*	迷恋网络的	13.3	13.3	1.7
Inexperienced	没有经验的	16.7	3.3	6.7
Rebellious	反叛的	21.7	3.3	1.7
Apathetic	缺乏感情的	10.0	10.0	5.0
Ignorant	无知的	13.3	6.7	5.0
Ostentatious*	爱炫耀的	13.3	6.7	5.0
Radical	激进的	16.7	3.3	3.3
Unethical*	缺乏道德修养的	1.7	8.3	13.3
Unrestrained*	不受约束的	16.7	1.7	5.0
Careless	粗心的	10.0	6.7	5.0
Dishonest	不诚实的	15.0	3.3	3.3
Immature	不成熟的	16.7	5.0	0.0
Eccentric*	古怪的，另类的	18.3	3.3	0.0
Unreasonable*	不讲道理的	13.3	5.0	3.3
Bad habits	有不良习惯的	13.3	3.3	3.3
Obese*	肥胖的	0.0	8.3	10.0
Stubborn	固执的	15.0	1.7	1.7
Conscious of generation gap*	有代沟的	11.7	0.0	3.3
Indifferent	漠不关心的	15.0	0.0	0.0
Stressed	有压力的	6.7	0.0	8.3
Introverted	内向的	6.7	1.7	3.3
Indecisive*	没有主见的、犹豫不决的	11.7	0.0	0.0
Vulgar*	粗俗的	8.3	1.7	1.7
Poor*	贫穷的	6.7	3.3	1.7
Non-health-conscious*	没有健康意识的	3.3	1.7	6.7
Aggressive*	好斗的	8.3	1.7	0.0
Depressed*	压抑的	8.3	1.7	0.0
Discontent*	不满足的	3.3	1.7	5.0
Impolite*	不礼貌的	1.7	5.0	3.3
Rule-bender*	不守规矩的	5.0	0.0	5.0

Thrill-seeker	寻求刺激的	10.0	0.0	0.0
Unorganized*	没有条理的	1.7	3.3	5.0
Neutrally Valenced Traits				
Egnlish	Chinese			
Idol-worshipping*	崇拜偶像的	15.0	0.0	0.0

Note: [a] Frequently means that young age traits reported by six or more people across the three age groups ($p < .001$, Binomial distribution; Kenney, 1987).

* stands for traits that were not reported by Matheson et al. (2000) and/or Chasteen et al. (2002).

Table 2. *Western Young Age Traits (Matheson et al., 2000; Chasteen et al., 2002) Reported Infrequently* [a] *or Not At All by Chinese Participants*

Positively Valenced Traits

English	Chinese
Affectionate	慈爱的
Articulate	善于表达的
Carefree	无忧无虑的
Common sense	有常识的
Considerate	考虑周到的
Disciplined	努遵守纪律的
Eager	热切的
Excited	兴奋的
Flexible	灵活的
Good	好的，优秀的
Good citizen	好公民
Good family values	有好的家庭价值观
Health conscious	有健康意识的
Hopeful	有希望的
Idealistic	理想主义的
Independent	独立的
Informal	不拘礼节的
Imaginative	有想象力的
Interesting	有趣味的
Knowledgeable of technology	了解技术的
National pride	有民族自豪感的
Neat and tidy	整洁的
Politically aware	有政治意识的
Proud	自豪的
Resourceful	足智多谋的
Respectful of others	尊敬人的
Sense of humour	有幽默感的
Sexually knowledgeable	了解性知识的
Speaks mind	心直口快
Sophisticated	老于世故的
Spontaneous	自然无约束的

Stamina	有耐力的
Talkative	爱说话的
Thrifty	节俭的
Tolerance	容忍的
Trustworthy	可信赖的
Vigorous	精力旺盛的
Well-groomed	穿着考究的
Well-organized	有条理的
Willing to help	乐于助人的
Willing to take chances	甘愿尝试的
Worldly	世故的

Negatively Valenced Traits

Angry	生气的
Burdened	有负担的
Cautious	小心谨慎的
Conform to peer pressure	顺从同龄人压力的
Cynical	愤世嫉俗的
Dangerous	危险的
Disrespectful	无礼的
Distrustfu;	不信任的
Feminist	女权主义者
Greedy	贪婪的
Impatient	不耐心的
Lack family values	缺乏家庭价值观念的
Live for today	为今天而活的
Lost spirituality	丧失精神寄托的
Loud and noisy	喧吵的
Low self-esteem	自尊心低的
Mean	卑鄙的
Misunderstood	被误解的
Naïve	幼稚的
Poor prospects	前景渺茫的
Rude	粗鲁的
Sexually active	性事活跃的
Shy	害羞的

Uncertain about the future	对未来不确定的
Sloppy	邋遢的
Uncompetitive	无竞争力的
Ungroomed	不修边幅的
Unhappy	不快乐的
Unsophisticated	不懂世故的

[a] Infrequently means that Western young age traits reported by five or fewer people across the three age groups ($p < .001$, Binomial distribution; Kenney, 1987).

Figure 1

Mean number of traits generated by participants in three age groups (1 = young adults, 2 = middle-aged adults, and 3 = older adults, for each age group the left bar represents negative traits).