

PORTRAYALS OF GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDPARENTING STYLES:  
A CASE STUDY OF *FRIEND OF OLD COMRADES*

BY

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## Abstract

This study employed content analysis to examine the portrayals of grandparents' images and their grandparenting roles in *Laotongzhi Zhiyou* (*Friend of Old Comrades*). With a current circulation of 480,000, *Friend of Old Comrades* is a national monthly magazine in China whose target audiences include retirees, institutions, and governmental agencies engaged in work and services related to the elderly. Articles ( $N = 195$ ) that feature grandparent-grandchild interactions were chosen from 156 issues—from 1995 to 2007—of the magazine and were content analyzed to uncover images of grandparents and portrayals of grandparenting roles. Results revealed that grandparents were predominantly portrayed as positive, healthy, and respected. In addition, positive age stereotypes such as *Perfect Grandparent*, *Golden Ager*, and *Honorable Elder* were prevalent with very little negative stereotyping (e.g., *Impaired Elder*, *Despondent*) found in the majority of the articles. Results also indicated that over half of the articles featuring grandparents and younger grandchildren depicted grandparents as adopting an *involved* grandparenting style, playing roles such as *caregiver*, *mentor*, *playmate*, and *spoiling grandparent*. Findings are discussed in light of cultivation theory and prior research on the media portrayal of intergenerational communication in both Eastern and Western cultural contexts.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Based on the research report by the China National Committee on Aging (Xiao, 2007), China became an aged society in 1999, with its older population (aged 60 and over) reaching 10% of its total population. By 2004, China's older population reached 143 million, constituting 10.97% of the nation's total population. The same report predicted that by 2020 the older population would reach 248 million, accounting for 17% of the total population. By 2050, the older population would exceed 400 million, making up 30% of the total population. This rapid demographic change of the older population has presented China with unprecedented challenges to its social security and welfare system for the elderly. Whereas Western developed countries first got rich and then old, population aging in China has emerged too early and too rapidly, under circumstances of relative socio-economic under-development (Boermel, 2006).

According to Boermel (2006), the current public discourses (e.g., official speeches, academic publications, media reports, etc.) in Beijing about "old age" tend to portray older people as a burden posed either quantitatively to the demographic composition of Chinese society, or qualitatively to their children as "empty nesters" in need of attention and care. She contends that what used to be the norm for the official press to systematically encourage a positive image of old age may have given way to the current negative portrayal of old age, which has been shaped by younger and middle-aged people out of their concern for the demographic forecast. Goh (2009)

confirms that this dominant discourse is also reflected in the academic arena where scholarly publications on aging in China tend to treat aging as a problem to be solved. However, researchers who examined the lived experience of older people in Beijing (Boermel, 2006) and grandparents in Xiamen (Goh, 2006; 2009) have considered older people in a positive light. The positive view of old age is also supported by communication research examining age stereotype traits of Chinese older adults (e.g., Levy & Langer, 1994; Zhang, Hummert, & Garstka, 2002). These multiple views about old age in China suggest that it might be premature to conclude that mass media in China have shifted from their prior support of a positive portrayal of older people to that of a rather negative one.

In the current era of social and cultural transformation in China, there are plural views about aging and the aged that are presented in multiple narratives told through various media venues by different social actors to achieve varied communicative purposes. Systematic analyses of media portrayals of older people can obtain a more insightful understanding of the issue. Therefore, it was the purpose of this research to uncover the media portrayals of older adults in the family context by examining the images of grandparents and the depiction of their grandparenting styles in a magazine for older adults in China—*Laotongzhi Zhiyou* (*Friend of Old Comrades*). Given that the majority of the research in this area has been conducted in the West, I will first turn to the research literature on the media portrayal of older adults and grandparents in the United States for a grasp of the context and

methodologies, and then discuss the implications of Chinese cultural values on the media portrayals of Chinese grandparents and their grandparenting roles.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted in the U. S. over the past several decades to explore media representations of older adults (e.g., Robinson, Skill, & Turner, 2004; Roy & Harwood, 1997; Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan, 1980). Guided by socialization and cultivation theoretical frameworks, the research has revealed that people's perceptions of aging and the aged are influenced by the media portrayals of older people (Kubey, 1980; Gerbner et al, 1980). For example, Gerbner et al. (1980) found a significant correlation between exposure to television and endorsement of the age stereotypes (e.g., eccentric and foolish) presented in television programs.

Research examining media images of older adults has established that the media portrayal of older people reflects social and cultural perceptions of aging and thus has the potential of reinforcing existing stereotypes toward older people and beliefs about the aging process (Harwood, 2000a; Miller, Leyell, & Mazachek, 2004; Zhang et al., 2006). Primarily from a content analysis approach, these studies have examined age related themes in prime time television programs, television commercials, and newspaper and magazine advertisements. Research findings reveal that older adults tend to be portrayed less frequently across diverse media in the U.S. than their actual presence in the population (Robinson et al., 2004; Harwood & Anderson, 2002). Furthermore, such portrayals of older adults tend to be negative in most media content (Robinson et al., 2004) except in recent advertising (Zhang, et al.,

2006; Roy & Harwood, 1997), where older adults are portrayed predominantly positively, and in family-oriented primetime television programs (Dail, 1988), where older adult images are relatively positive.

Research examining television portrayals of older adults in the family context shows that older adults are portrayed fairly frequently in family settings, but they are rarely found in interaction with grandchildren (Harwood & Anderson, 2001). Such representation of grandparent-grandchild interactions does not reflect the importance of the GP-GC relationship. For example, Lin and Harwood (2003) contend that the GP-GC relationship may be the closest intergenerational relationship, second only to the parent-child relationship. Research shows that the GP-GC relationship is important for both grandparents and grandchildren (Brussoni & Boon, 1998; Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981). Grandparents who report having close relationships with their grandchildren are likely to have better mental health and engage in more social activities, while grandchildren in a close GP-GC relationship are more likely to be influenced by their grandparents' values and beliefs (Brussoni & Boon, 1998), and their attitudes toward older adults are more positive (Lin & Harwood, 2003; Soliz & Harwood, 2006 ).

Given the importance of the GP-GC relationship and the potential effect of the media portrayals of grandparents, researchers have turned to children's books (e.g., Beland & Mills, 2001; Janelli & Sorge, 2001; Janelli, 1988) and greeting cards (e.g., Greene & Polivka, 1985) to examine images of grandparents. While greeting cards for Grandparents' Day tended to avoid the physical portrayal of the grandparent and

presented “the elderly as a benign, nondynamic and nonpowerful figure” (Greene & Polivka, 1985, p. 224), findings of recent studies examining children’s books revealed an improvement of images of grandparents in that grandparents were portrayed positively (e.g., they were happy, independent, wise and understanding) and in diverse ways (Beland & Mills, 2001; Janelli & Sorge, 2001).

Although grandparents represent a diverse social group in terms of their demographic variations, they share an important social identity—their age identity (Harwood, Giles, & Ryan, 1995)—due to the fact that most of them are older adults (Szinovacz, 1998). How grandparents are portrayed in the media is likely to have an effect on grandparents’ self-perceptions, influencing the ways in which they participate in social life and evaluate their own potentials and limitations. In addition, such images are likely to affect how young people view aging and the aged, and how they interact with the elderly (Kessler, Rakoczy, & Staudinger, 2004).

Cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986) posits that the more time individuals spend consuming mass media, the closer their views of reality are to the “world” created by the media. Gerbner (1990) argued that the mass media cultivate attitudes and values, which are already present in a culture: the media maintain and propagate these values amongst members of a culture, thus binding those members together. Hence, the mass media have the potential effect of perpetuating stereotypical images of grandparents as well as instilling cultural values concerning grandparenthood to media consumers. As a theory of media effects, cultivation theory has been applied to various kinds of media including magazines

(Raman, Harwood, Weis, Anderson, & Miller, 2008). Similarly, social cognitive theories (e.g., social learning theory) suggest that the mass media provide an institutional source for the social construction of reality for media users through vicarious learning (Bandura, 2001). Images presented by the media are processed by media users and symbolically encoded or enacted. Thus, heavy exposure to media representations tends to reinforce cognitive associations of those images with members of the social group. Research on media portrayal of grandparents, therefore, provides a means of understanding how grandparenthood is symbolically portrayed and the cultural values that are being maintained and propagated.

Media images of older adults in general, and of grandparents in particular, reflect cultural values attached to older adulthood, and cross-cultural examinations of such images provide us a window into the cultural norms and practices of nations with distinct cultural characteristics. However, very little work exists examining whether media portrayals of the elderly uncovered in U.S. studies are apparent across cultures (Ramen et al., 2008). Although limited, some studies related to media portrayals of older adults have been conducted in Asian countries in recent years. For example, Harwood and Roy (1999) compared the magazine images of older adult characters and the underrepresentation pattern of older female characters between the U.S. and India. Extending Harwood and Roy's (1999) study, Raman et al. (2008) examined portrayals of older adults and other age groups in Indian and U.S. magazine advertisements, concentrating on how cultural values influenced the underrepresentation of older adults and the characterization of their images. Similarly,

studies examining cultural values in television commercials revealed that filial piety/respect for older people was salient in television commercials in China (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Lin, 2001; Zhang & Harwood, 2004).

Filial piety is a notable cultural theme related to the study of aging and communication in China and other Eastern Asian countries (Ingersoll-Dayton & Saengtienchai, 1999; Yue & Ng, 1999; Zhang & Hummert, 2001; Sung, 2001). Older age in China is traditionally associated with wisdom, spiritual growth, respect, and higher social status. Thus, the elderly normally expect obedience and respect from younger generations, and younger generations endorse such expectations. Some analytical and empirical research has indicated that, because of the norm of filial piety, aging is viewed as positive and older adults' knowledge and experience are valued in the Chinese culture (e.g., Zhang & Hummert, 2001; Sung, 2001). However, in modern Chinese society, changes in cultural values and norms due to industrialization, urbanization, increasing education, and a move toward nuclear families, have presented challenges to this belief and the traditional norm of intergenerational relationships (Yue & Ng, 1999). If media portrayal reflects reality, both the traditional value of filial piety and the modern value of individualism may be reflected in the portrayals of grandparents and their grandparenting styles.

In line with these previous research efforts, the current study investigates how images and roles of grandparents and the values attached to grandparenthood are portrayed in China. Feature articles containing GP-GC interactions from *Laotongzhi Zhiyou* (*Friend of Old Comrades*) were selected for content analysis. *Friend of Old*

*Comrades* is a national monthly magazine in China whose target audiences are retirees, institutions, and governmental agencies engaged in work and services related to the older population (Friend of Old Comrades, 2004a). Magazines targeted at elderly readers are a good source for portrayals of GP-GC interactions. Such portrayals offer snapshots of grandparenthood and provide readers with validation, advice, and role models.

As the most populous nation on earth, China also has the largest older population, accounting for 20% of the world's total older population (Xiao, 2007), which indicates that an unprecedented number of grandparents are living in the country. Further, as a fast growing world economic power, China deserves more attention from scholars in its own right.

It is hoped that findings of this study will serve as an initial foray into the media characterization of elderly people in family settings in the Chinese culture, enhance our understanding of the dynamics of intergenerational communication, and provide a new perspective on how cultural beliefs and values influence media portrayal of the elderly and their role in the family.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Media Portrayal of Older Adults and Grandparents*

Concerned with the physical and psychological well-being of older adults in an aging society, researchers in the U.S. have conducted a great number of studies examining the image of older adults portrayed in mass media. Specifically, researchers examined the nature and valence (positive vs. negative) of such portrayals by focusing on the stereotype traits or characteristics of older adults as perceived by other characters in a program or by viewers. The traits examined included older adults' personality traits (e.g., friendly/unfriendly), cognitive competence (e.g., quick thinking/slow thinking), physical qualities (e.g., active/inactive), health status (e.g., healthy/unhealthy), sociability (e.g., sociable/unsociable), emotional characteristics (e.g., happy/unhappy), and economic status (e.g., rich/poor) (Dail, 1988; Robinson & Skill, 1995). Findings from these studies provide a mixed picture of both positive and negative images of older adults in mass media.

Studies of prime-time and day-time television programs and children's programming in the U.S. suggest that older adults, especially older women, are generally underrepresented (Davis, 1987; Robinson et al., 2004) and negatively portrayed (Gerbner et al., 1980; Robinson et al., 2004; Signorielli, 2004). For instance, older adults are often portrayed as unattractive, unhealthy, crotchety, complaining, and engaged in stereotyped activities (e.g., doing trivial things like playing bingo; Harris, 2004). In their extensive study, Gerbner et al. (1980) examined 1,365 prime-

time programs and weekend daytime programs. They found that older adults were often portrayed as foolish and eccentric, and were less likely to be treated with respect than were younger adult characters. In a more recent study, Harwood and Anderson (2002) examined the portrayals of older adults on prime-time television along with other social groups (e.g., women and minorities). They content analyzed 43.5 hours of sitcom programs and prime-time dramas and found that older adult characters continue to be underrepresented in prime-time television programs in the U.S. They are treated similarly to minority and other marginalized groups.

By contrast, studies examining aging images in television commercials and magazine advertisements have provided evidence that older adults in general are portrayed in rather positive ways, although less positive than other age groups (Zhang et al., 2006.). For example, Harwood and Roy (1999) content analyzed print advertisements in both the United States and India and found that older adults in both cultures were portrayed in a relatively positive light—they were active, healthy and happy. Based upon the findings of age stereotype studies of Hummert and colleagues (1990, 1994), Miller, Miller, McKibbin, and Pettys (1999) examined stereotypes of the elderly in 1,944 ads that appeared in issues of *Life*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Popular Mechanics* magazines published from 1956 to 1996. Their findings showed that little negative stereotyping of the elderly appeared in these ads, while positive stereotypes appeared more commonly. For example, 14% of the ads included the *Perfect Grandparent* stereotype and 9.3% contained the *John Wayne Conservative* stereotype. The most prevalent stereotype was *Golden Ager*, which

appeared in 37% of the ads.

In another study, Dail (1988) found that older adult characters in family-oriented prime-time programs were portrayed relatively positively in comparison to middle-aged characters on dimensions of cognitive abilities, physical behaviors, personality traits, and social status. Also, they received more positive responses (affirming, respectful, and engaging) from other characters than did middle-aged characters.

In addition, a series of content analysis studies have examined images of grandparents in children's books. Earlier studies (e.g., Ansello, 1977; Hurst, 1981) found that grandparents were depicted in a rather negatively stereotypical fashion. They were weak, sick, and made no important decisions. Researchers argue that there has been a gradual improvement of the depiction of older adults in children's literature, although not all grandparents are depicted in a positive light (Beland & Mills, 2001). For example, Janelli and Sorge (2001) analyzed 37 children's books published between 1991 and 1999 and found more positive and modern images were portrayed in these books than did Janelli's (1988) study. Their study showed that grandparents were active and engaged in diversified activities, such as teaching grandchildren and being engaged in recreational activities, though negative images (e.g. overweight and physically impaired) of grandparents still existed in about 18% of the books. Moreover, Beland and Mills' (2001) content analysis of 64 children's books showed that grandparents were portrayed overwhelmingly positively with characteristics such as happiness, independence, wisdom, and understanding,

including those with physical disabilities.

The aforementioned literature presents a mixed picture of media portrayals of older adults and grandparents. In Western mass media, older adults are generally underrepresented and negatively portrayed, especially in television shows, with relatively positive images represented in advertising. However, when they are portrayed in family-oriented prime-time programs or as grandparents in children's books, their image is predominantly positive. One possible explanation is that, unlike non-family older adults, grandparents possess a shared identity with grandchildren (i.e., shared family identity), which may ameliorate some of the negative effects of age salience on people's perceptions (Harwood, 2004; Soliz, Lin, Anderson, & Harwood, 2005). Moreover, some print media targeted at older adults, such as the *Retirement Choice* magazine in the U.K., have been involved in advocating and establishing images of positive aging by promoting an active and positive life style. Specifically, older adults are portrayed in relatively glamorous, youthful, and healthy images, which has contributed to a more positive image of older adults today than decades ago (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1995).

In view of the current study, when portrayals of grandparents are examined in GP-GC interactions, traits associated with the *Perfect Grandparent* stereotype such as kind, loving, and supportive are likely to be observed. Like *Retirement Choice*, *Friend of Old Comrades* is a magazine targeted at retirees; it may also promote an active and positive lifestyle with a positive and healthy image of grandparents. Therefore, traits associated with positive stereotypes (e.g., *Golden Ager*), such as

healthy, happy, and independent, are likely to be observed in the portrayals of grandparents in this magazine. One important dimension of stereotyping is health, and there has been extensive research examining the association between aging and health (Estes et al., 2001). Older adults with health problems may be portrayed with negative stereotypes and display traits such as dependence and incompetence. Therefore, health is examined specifically in this study with respect to the image of grandparents.

#### *Chinese Cultural Values, Image, and Grandparenting Styles*

Motivated by an interest in cross-cultural comparison of aging and intergenerational communication, studies related to media portrayal of older adults have been extended to the Chinese culture. For example, a group of studies examined Chinese and U.S. television commercials to uncover the dominant cultural values (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Lin, 2001). Their findings demonstrated that respect for older adults was salient in the Chinese television commercials, a finding supported by recent research (e.g., Zhang & Harwood, 2004; Zhang, Song, & Carver, 2008). Specifically, the value of filial piety or respect for older adults was used to promote products (e.g., refrigerators) to be purchased by young adults as gifts for elders to show love and respect for them.

Advertising images reflect culture and capture the prevailing ethos in a particular society (Raman et al., 2008). Filial piety is a cultural principle that mandates respect, care, obedience, and material aid to one's elders, especially parents and grandparents (Ho, 1996; Sung, 2001). The theme of filial piety/elder respect (i.e.,

respect for the elderly. The term “elder” denotes parent, grandparent, other elderly relative, and elders in general) reflected in Chinese television commercials is likely to be salient in the portrayals of grandparents in the current study. Furthermore, filial piety is a cultural value likely to be attached to grandparenthood in the portrayals of GP-GC interactions in the articles of *Friend of Old Comrades*.

“Grandparenthood derives its meaning from the specific social and cultural characteristics of a particular locality” (Ikels, 1998, p. 40). Research has established that Chinese cultural values are a salient factor influencing Chinese intergenerational communication and perceptions of the elderly (Zhang & Hummert, 2001; Zhang, Hummert, & Savundranayagum, 2004). A primary dimension of cultural variability influencing cultural practices is individualism vs. collectivism (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Triandis, 1995). Individualism emphasizes independence by prioritizing individual rights and autonomy, whereas collectivism emphasizes interdependence by promoting solidarity and harmony with others. Whereas youth and individualism are glorified in Western societies, intergenerational continuity and collectivism are emphasized in the Chinese society, which in turn is reflected in their respective mass media (Liu, Ng, Loong, Gee, & Weatherall, 2003).

In addition, filial piety and the emphasis on interdependence promoted the tradition of intergenerational co-residence and the household norm of extended families with grandfather as the authoritative head, and grandmother as the household manager. Although modernization and globalization have brought social, economic, and cultural changes in Chinese society—such as the shift towards a nuclear family—

some fundamental traditional values such as filial piety and relational harmony remain strong (Zhang & Hummert, 2001).

Other factors also contribute to the co-residence of grandparents with grandchildren in China. These include government policies that explicitly place the care of elderly parents on the shoulders of the children, a housing shortage in urban areas, a poorly developed health care system for the frail elderly in most parts of the country, and a lack of childcare provision for employed women. As a result, many older adults choose to co-reside with their married children to solve the practical problems faced by the extended family; many younger women also find a solution to the childcare problem within the family (Goh, 2006).

Two large-scale surveys conducted by Logan and associates (Logan, Bian, & Bian, 1998) in Shanghai and Tianjin (two large cities in China) found that 43% of parents aged 60 or older lived with a married child. Related to the norm of filial piety, co-residence has traditionally been patrilineal (Liu, 2004). However, some research shows that better-educated parents are less likely to conform to the traditional son preference (Logan & Bian, 1999), and better-educated couples are more likely to live with the wife's parents, given a choice (Liu, 2004). It would be interesting to see if paternal grandparents or maternal grandparents are portrayed as more frequently involved in providing childcare to their grandchildren in the articles of *Friend of Old Comrades*.

Under the current one-child policy in China, rearing the only child in an extended family has become a joint mission fulfilled by both parents and

grandparents. Hence, many grandparents who co-reside with their grandchildren, or live in the vicinity, play an important caregiver role. According to the findings of recent ethnographic and survey research conducted by Goh (2006, 2009) in Xiamen, China, the grandparents examined in the studies played the primary caregiver role, with the parents giving secondary care to their child in the evenings and weekends. The Chinese grandparents were willing to help with the childcare and the parents considered grandparents to be the most trustworthy childcare providers. Given the emotional bonds developed between grandparents and grandchildren, grandparents tended to indulge and pamper their grandchild, with the parents being the disciplinarians. Occasionally, such a disciplinary role could also be reversed, when grandparents—who provided full-time care to their grandchild—played the role of disciplinarians, with the parents being the indulgent ones. While they felt happiness and satisfaction in providing childcare, the grandparents also expressed ambivalence. For example, they felt their life revolved around their grandchild, were often exhausted, and had few social networks or social activities.

In addition to playing the caregiver role, Chinese grandparents are also involved in their grandchildren's lives in other ways, such as playing the role of a mentor. For example, Falbo (1991) found that living with better-educated grandparents had a positive impact on Chinese grandchildren's school performance.

Under Confucian ethics, children and grandchildren belong to the entire extended family, not just to their parents; hence, Chinese grandparents are likely to get involved in the lives of their grandchildren, especially when their grandchildren

are at a young age. To apply Cherlin and Furstenberg's (1986) classification of grandparenting styles, Chinese grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren are likely to have the characteristics of the *involved* grandparenting style (characterized by consistent caregiving and jointly raising the grandchildren with the parents).

In a study with grandparents across the U.S., Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) classified the participants' grandparenting styles into three categories: companionate, involved, and remote. Of the 510 participants, most grandparents (55%) defined their relationships with their grandchildren as *companionate* (characterized by play and companionship), followed by the *remote* style (30%), and the *involved* style (15%). The remote relationship between grandparents and grandchildren was more often a result of geographic distance, not necessarily due to emotional remoteness.

Wolf (1984) argued that the ideology of the traditional Chinese family system and the ideology of the state are mutually supportive, both upholding a system of generation and age hierarchies. Given the state-ownership nature of the majority of Chinese mass media (including *Friend of Old Comrades*), it is reasonable to expect that the cultural value of filial piety is likely to be promoted in the magazine articles, and Chinese grandparents and their involved grandparenting style are likely to be portrayed in a positive light. Such expectations are reasonable in view of the information published on the website of *Friend of Old Comrades*. According to the magazine's guidelines to its writers (Friend of Old Comrades, 2004b), correct guidance of public opinion is an important criterion to decide an article's publication.

As indicated, 95% of the articles published in the magazine are in line with “positive propaganda,” which is conducive to the protection of the rights of the elderly, to portraying a positive image of the elderly, and to maintaining social stability. The editors of the magazine also encourage writers to submit articles that reflect real life.

As Kamo (1998) contends, cultural values influence the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. In addition, research also shows that types of GP-GC relationships vary considerably due to age and gender of the grandchild/grandparent, marital status, and geographical location (Janelli & Sorge, 2001). Hence, portrayals of the grandparents in the magazine are likely to show that the grandparents play multiple grandparenting roles and adopt different grandparenting styles.

The discussion above leads the author to state the goals of the current study and specific research questions. This study sought to extend our understanding of how grandparents are portrayed in the mass media in China by examining articles featuring GP-GC communication in *Friend of Old Comrades*. Specifically, this study aimed to examine images of the grandparents featured in the articles by focusing on valence (positive /negative), respect (respected/disrespected), health (healthy/unhealthy), and stereotypes.

RQ1: What age stereotypes are reflected in the portrayals of grandparents?

RQ1a: Are the stereotypes of grandparents associated with the age of grandchildren interacting with them?

RQ2: Are grandparents portrayed predominantly positively?

RQ3: Are grandparents portrayed as respected?

RQ4: Are grandparents portrayed as healthy or unhealthy?

Second, this study aimed to identify the grandparenting styles of Chinese grandparents portrayed in the articles by looking at the specific grandparenting roles they were portrayed to play. Traditionally, co-residence in China has been patrilineal, but research has indicated that better-educated couples are more likely to live with the wife's parents (Logan & Bian, 1999; Liu, 2004). Thus, the current study also attempted to explore whether paternal grandparents were portrayed more frequently as childcare givers than maternal grandparents.

RQ5: What major grandparenting roles are played by grandparents?

RQ6: Are paternal grandparents portrayed more frequently as caregivers than maternal grandparents?

Lastly, this study attempted to examine whether grandparents playing different grandparenting roles are portrayed differently with respect to the valence (positive vs. negative) of their characterization.

RQ7: Is the valence of the portrayals associated with grandparenting roles?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHOD

This study employed content analysis to examine the portrayals of grandparents and their grandparenting styles in *Laotongzhi Zhiyou (Friend of Old Comrades)*.

#### *Sample*

One hundred and fifty six issues of *Friend of Old Comrades* from January 1995 to December 2007 were included in the analysis. As a national monthly magazine with a current circulation of 480,000, the largest of its kind, *Friend of Old Comrades* offers entertainment and service-oriented content to help its elderly readers lead richer and more-fulfilling lives. The magazine has five major sections which cover heroic figures and role models, current affairs and past events, leisure and lifestyle, health and medicine, and information and knowledge. These five sections break down into over 40 columns such as feature stories on elderly figures, family life, intergenerational affection, and medical tips. Distributed in every province and region of China, the magazine covers a broad spectrum of tastes and caters to a diverse elderly readership (Friend of Old Comrades, 2004a). Its editorial content, targeted elderly readership, and reasonably high level of circulation were the main reasons this magazine was chosen.

Because only a small portion of the articles in the magazine include descriptions of interactions between grandparents and grandchildren, the first step involved determining whether an article contained descriptions of both grandparent

and grandchild. Two Chinese graduate students read through all of the articles, over 7,000, in the sampled issues and eliminated those articles that did not feature GP-GC interactions. The resulting sample included 195 articles that featured GP-GC interactions and were subject to content analysis. There was at least one article from each issue of the magazine included in the analysis.

### Pilot Study

A pilot study was developed to identify coding categories for Research Question 5 and to detect any potential problems embedded in the design, coding scheme, and coding procedures of this study. In addition, it familiarized coders with the coding scheme and provided an opportunity to test intercoder reliability.

### *Coding Categories*

To address Research Question 1, 10 stereotype clusters developed in a prior study (Zhang et al., 2004) were used. The stereotype clusters were developed by having young, middle-aged, and older Chinese participants generate stereotype traits. Then those traits were sorted into categories that would describe the same elderly person. A cluster analysis of the data produced four positive stereotypes, five negative stereotypes, and one neutral stereotype. These 10 stereotypes contain constellations of beliefs about the traits that describe types of older adults. Since the stereotype categories were developed for Chinese older adults in the Chinese culture, they were deemed appropriate to be used in the current study.

Positive stereotypes (see Table 1) include *Perfect Grandparent*, *Golden Ager*, *Honorable Elder*, and *Elder States Person*. As coding categories, *Perfect*

*Grandparent* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as loving, supportive, kind, understanding, etc.; *Golden Ager* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as healthy, happy, active, fun-loving, etc.; *Honorable Elder* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as capable, wise, knowledgeable, productive, confident, etc.; *Elder States Person* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as well-informed, political, sociable, responsible, hard-working, self-sacrificing, etc. Negative stereotypes (see Table 2) include *Chinese Feudalist*, *Despondent*, *Shrew/Curmudgeon*, *Bossy Superior*, and *Impaired Elder*. *Chinese Feudalist* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as dependent, superstitious, prejudiced, conservative, poor, etc.; *Despondent* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as frustrated, depressed, sad, hopeless, bored, and lonely; *Shrew/Curmudgeon* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as ill-tempered, inflexible, bitter, selfish, stubborn, etc.; *Bossy Superior* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as meddling, nosy, complaining, demanding, etc.; *Impaired Elder* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as sick, feeble, slow-moving, slow-thinking, etc. Another stereotype, *Traditionalist* (see Table 3), presents a neutral image of Chinese elders. It refers to the portrayal of grandparents as family-oriented, content, noncompetitive, nostalgic, etc.

To address Research Question 1a, the age of the grandchildren in the articles was coded.

Table 1.

*Trait Clusters of Positive Stereotypes of Chinese Older Adults*

<u>Perfect Grandparent</u>	<u>Golden Ager</u>	<u>Honorable Elder</u>	<u>Elder States Person</u>
Honest	Health-conscious	Capable	Well-informed
Polite	Healthy	Wise	Political
Loving	Tidy	Knowledgeable	Patriotic
Supportive	Happy	Productive	Sociable
Kind	Young-at-heart	Skilled	Liberal
Understanding	Active	Experienced	Tough
Friendly	Fun-loving	Determined	Self-sacrificing
Generous	Mellow	Confident	Responsible
	Self-accepting	Principled	Hard-working
	Future-oriented	Independent	Well-traveled

Table 2.

*Trait Clusters of Negative Stereotypes of Chinese Older Adults*


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<u>Chinese Feudalist</u>	<u>Shrew/Curmudgeon</u>	<u>Impaired Elder</u>
Dependent	Boastful	Forgetful
Afraid	Face-conscious	Careless
Naïve	Ill-tempered	Slow-thinking
Superstitious	Inflexible	Incoherent
Prejudiced	Bitter	Slow-moving
Male-favoritism	Snobbish	Incompetent
Old-fashioned	Selfish	Sick
Conservative	Miserly	Feeble
Poor	Jealous	Sedentary
<u>Despondent</u>	Stubborn	
Frustrated	<u>Bossy Superior</u>	
Sad	Complaining	
Hopeless	Laodao	
Bored	Gossipy	
Depressed	Nosy	
Lonely	Meddlesome	
	Worried	
	Demanding	

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Table 3.

*Trait Cluster of Neutral Stereotype of Chinese Older Adults*

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Traditionalist

Content

Noncompetitive

Quiet

Family-oriented

Frugal

Prudent

Reminiscent

Nostalgic

Emotional

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To address Research Question 2, the valence of the portrayals of grandparents was coded as positive, negative, or neutral. To address Research Question 3, the grandparents in the articles were coded as respected, disrespected, or unspecified. To address Research Question 4, the grandparents in the articles were coded as healthy, unhealthy, or unspecified. To address Research Question 5, coding categories of grandparenting roles were developed through a qualitative investigation of the sampled articles and with reference to prior studies (e.g., Goh, 2006; Cherlin & Ferstenberg, 1986; Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981). The principal investigator and the two coders read all of the 195 articles several times to identify patterns of

grandparenting roles. A grandparenting role was defined as a role or function played by a grandparent in his or her grandparenting practices in a GP-GC relationship. The resulting patterns with considerable frequencies (i.e., identified in at least 10 articles or 5% of the total sample [ $N = 195$ ]) included *caregiver*, *playmate*, *mentor*, and *spoiling grandparent*. To address Research Question 6, types of grandparents were coded.

Other coding categories included authorship of the articles and types of grandchildren. Operationalized definitions and coding instructions were developed in consultation with my advisor, Dr. Yan Bing Zhang, and with reference to prior studies (e.g., Zhang et al., 2004; Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981).

#### *Coder Training*

For the purpose of coder training, 20 articles were randomly chosen from the total sample. The articles used for coder training were then put back into the pool and were excluded from the testing of intercoder reliability. First, the coders (two graduate students from China) read through the coding protocol carefully and familiarized themselves with each variable and definition. To make sure that each trait of the stereotypes was understood without ambiguity, Chinese translations of those traits were provided side by side with their English equivalents. Then, several sessions of practice coding were conducted on the 20 articles. These practice sessions led to reduced ambiguity in some of the coding tasks and some refinements in the coding sheet. For example, grandparents' age in some articles was not clearly delineated or referenced. In order to increase intercoder reliability, the age of

grandparents was not coded and grandchildren's age remained as a variable.

Furthermore, to differentiate an adolescent from a young adult in coding the age of a grandchild, certain specific references (e.g., a high school student was considered an adolescent, while a college student was considered an adult) were added.

### *Pilot coding*

#### *Sample*

Fifteen percent of the articles ( $n = 30$ ) were randomly selected from the total sample ( $N = 195$ ) and were used for the pilot coding. Both coders independently analyzed all 30 articles on each variable.

#### *Coding protocol*

Treating an individual article as the unit of analysis, each article was coded using the coding categories described above. The major tasks were to code the grandparents depicted in the articles with respect to their images and grandparenting roles. When there was more than one grandparent mentioned in an article, the coders were instructed to determine if there was sufficient description of both grandparents to merit an overall assessment of a portrayal of both grandparents. For example, if both grandparents were described as providing care to a grandchild, then the image should be coded based on the overall assessment of the portrayals of both grandparents. However, if only one grandparent was portrayed and there was a lack of description of the other, then the coders should just code the image based on their assessment of the portrayal of the grandparent with sufficient description.

In coding what stereotypes were reflected in an article, it was determined that simple ordinal scales should be used to measure the consistency of the portrayals with each of the ten stereotypes (see Tables 1, 2, and 3) upon the basis of pretesting and prior research (Zhang et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). The coders were instructed to use an ordinal scale of 0, 1, and 2 to code each portrayal based on their overall assessment of a portrayal while considering the presence of the traits in each stereotype cluster. If a coder considered that a portrayal was consistent (i.e., the majority of the traits were present) with a stereotype, it was assigned a score of 2. If a coder considered that a portrayal was somewhat consistent (i.e., half or less than half of the traits were present) with a stereotype, it was assigned a score of 1. Similarly, if a coder judged there was no consistency (i.e., two or less than two of the traits were present) between a portrayal and a stereotype, it was assigned a score of 0. The coders rated each article according to the consistency of the content with the traits associated with each stereotype cluster. Thus, they looked for words, phrases, and sentences in the form of direct mentions, descriptions, and propositions referring to the grandparent(s) within the article that were synonymous with those included in the trait clusters of each stereotype.

The coders were allowed to be inductive if necessary in coding the images of the grandparents. For example, several articles indicated that the grandparents suffered from cerebral thrombosis. The term “cerebral thrombosis” is not included in any of the trait clusters. However, this condition is consistent with *sick* and *slow-moving* included in the trait cluster of the *Impaired Elder* stereotype.

To address RQ1a, the age of the grandchildren in the articles was coded into one of the three categories: preschool (under 6), school age to adolescence (6 to 18), and adult (19 or above). The coders were instructed to look for explicit statements about the grandchildren's chronological age and any other references (e.g., going to a daycare center or elementary school, his/her grade level, going to college, being married, having his or her own children, etc.).

The valence of the images of grandparents was coded separately. A portrayal of grandparents was coded as *positive*, *negative*, or *neutral*. *Positive* was coded if the image of grandparents was promoted in an article. Grandparents may be depicted as having laudable qualities such as being kind, loving, supportive, unselfish, self-sacrificing, compassionate, responsible, hardworking, wise, happy, etc. *Negative* was coded if grandparents were depicted as disregarding others' feelings or interest and was not well accepted. Grandparents may be described as having qualities such as selfish, unreasonable, inconsiderate, indifferent, intrusive, annoying, meddlesome, ill-tempered, complaining, overly dependent, etc. *Neutral* was coded when grandparents demonstrated a mixture of positive and negative qualities, or there was a lack of information for the coders to determine the nature of a portrayal.

The respect dimension of each portrayal of grandparents was coded as *respected*, *disrespected*, or *unspecified*. *Respected* was coded if grandchildren or others showed deferential regard, courtesy, or obedience to grandparents. Examples included, but were not limited to, using expressions of deference or esteem, expressing filial obligations, or showing willingness to reciprocate care and love

received from grandparents. *Disrespected* was coded if grandchildren and/or others showed contempt, impoliteness, disregard, discourtesy, or irreverence to grandparents. *Unspecified* was coded if there was a lack of information for the coders to determine whether the grandparent under analysis was respected.

The physical health dimension of each portrayal of grandparents was coded as *healthy*, *unhealthy*, or *unspecified*. *Healthy* was coded if grandparents were depicted as being able to maintain an active or normal lifestyle or they were depicted as being able to take care of their grandchildren with no signs of ill health. *Unhealthy* was coded if grandparents were depicted as being unable to maintain an active or normal lifestyle due to obvious health problems, such as being weak, chronically ill, bed-ridden, or hospitalized. *Unspecified* was coded if there was a lack of information to determine the quality of the grandparents' physical health.

To address RQ5, the grandparents in the articles were coded with respect to the grandparenting roles they were judged to play:

*Caregiver* was coded if the grandparents provided part-time to full-time care for preschool and school-age grandchildren, prepared them for school (e.g., cooking, doing laundry, providing day care for grandchildren), or functioned as “substitute parents,” from feeding grandchildren to taking care of their other daily needs. A score of 1 was assigned to the grandparent(s) in an article if the caregiver role was played; a score of 2 was assigned if the grandparent(s) did not play the role; a score of 3 was assigned if there was a lack of information for the coders to determine whether such a role was played. The caregiver role was coded as a separate variable from the

other major grandparenting roles, for the preliminary reading showed that it was the most prevalent and dominant grandparenting role depicted in the articles.

The other major grandparenting roles were coded as a four-category variable, and the grandparents in the articles were coded into one of four categories: *playmate*, *spoiling grandparent*, *mentor*, or *other*, depending on whichever role was depicted as the most dominant.

*Playmate* was coded if grandparents and grandchildren enjoyed each other's company in specific activities, such as playing games or reading riddles. The focus was on playfulness and having fun.

*Spoiling Grandparent* was coded if grandparents displayed lenient attitudes toward their grandchildren's mischievous behaviors without applying authority or discipline; they enjoyed the opportunity to indulge their grandchildren, or even bought their affection with gifts (e.g., indulging mischievous behaviors). While they might be playmates, the focus here was on grandparents' obvious behavioral manifestations of spoiling grandchildren.

*Mentor* was coded if grandparents shared skills and talents, taught knowledge, provided advice and guidance, listened to their grandchildren, or showed understanding to them (e.g., sharing knowledge with grandchildren, teaching grandchildren to respect the elderly).

*Other* was coded if grandparents played a role other than a playmate, a spoiling grandparent, or a mentor.

To address RQ6, the grandparents in the articles were coded as paternal grandfather, paternal grandmother, maternal grandfather, maternal grandmother, paternal grandparents, or maternal grandparents, based on direct mentions, references, implications, or other clues in an article.

In addition to the coding categories described above, each article was also coded with respect to the authorship of the article and the types of grandchildren described in the article.

*Authorship.* The writer of each article was coded as grandfather, grandmother, grandchild, or *other*, based on direct mentions, references, implications, or other clues in the article or in the author's name.

*Types of grandchildren.* The grandchildren in the articles were coded as grandson, granddaughter, or both grandson and granddaughter, based on direct mentions, references, implications, or other clues in the articles.

#### *Intercoder Reliabilities*

Intercoder reliabilities were computed using percent agreement, and the reliability for each variable was acceptable: authorship = 1, type of grandparents = 1, type of grandchildren = 1, age range of grandchildren = .93, caregiver = .97, other roles = .90, positivity/negativity = .93, respect = .93, physical health = 1. The intercoder reliabilities for the stereotype variables were also computed using percent agreement, and they were adequate for each stereotype variable: *Perfect Grandparent* = .97, *Golden Ager* = .93, *Honorable Elder* = .93, *Elder States Person* = .90, *Traditionalist* = .97, *Chinese Feudalist* = .97, *Despondent* = .93, *Shrew/Curmudgeon*

= 1, *Bossy Superior* = 1, *Impaired Elder* = .97. Disagreements were discussed and resolved based on consensus between the coders.

## Main Study

### *Sample*

All of the 195 articles with descriptions of GP-GC interactions were included in the main study for analysis.

### *Coding protocol*

The same coding protocol used in the pilot study was followed in the main study.

### *Procedures*

The main study followed the same coding procedures used in the pilot study. Twenty percent of the total articles ( $n = 40$ ) were randomly chosen to assess intercoder reliabilities. The 30 articles which had been used for pilot coding were excluded from this selection and were not used for the reliability check of the main study. Each coder was then randomly assigned to code 50% of the remaining articles (77 and 78 articles respectively) independently from the data set. In order to avoid “coder drift,” intercoder reliabilities were assessed after each coder finished coding 35 articles. Then both coders independently coded the 40 articles which had been chosen to assess intercoder reliabilities. For variables except stereotypes, the intercoder reliabilities were computed using percent agreement, and the reliability for each variable was acceptable (authorship = .98, type of grandparents = 1, type of grandchildren = 1, age range of grandchildren = .93, caregiver = .98, other roles = .93,

positivity/negativity = .95, respect = .95, physical health = 1). The intercoder reliabilities for the stereotype variables were computed using percent agreement and Scott's Pi, and they were adequate for each variable (see Table 4). Three stereotype variables (*Chinese Feudalist*, *Shrew/Curmudgeon*, and *Bossy Superior*) were judged to be inconsistent with the portrayals of grandparents in the 40 articles, but reliabilities for these variables in percent agreement were also acceptable (*Chinese Feudalist* = .98, *Shrew/Curmudgeon* = 1, *Bossy Superior* = 1). Disagreements were discussed and resolved based on consensus between the coders. After the intercoder reliability check, each coder finished coding the remaining assigned articles independently.

Based on discussions between the principal investigator and the two coders, it was determined that the coding of the major grandparenting roles was to be conducted in two steps. First, the articles that contained sufficient description of at least one major grandparenting role (i.e., caregiver, mentor, playmate, spoiling grandparent) were selected out of the total sample ( $N = 195$ ), resulting in 141 articles. Then, each of the 141 articles was coded for the caregiver role and the other major grandparenting roles following the procedures used in the pilot study.

Table 4.

*Coding Reliability by Variable*

Stereotype	Number of Responses	Observed Agreement	Expected Agreement	Scott's Pi
Perfect Grandparent	80	.98	.73	.92
Golden Ager	80	.95	.43	.91
Honorable Elder	80	.95	.48	.90
Elder States Person	80	.92	.40	.87
Traditionalist	80	.98	.55	.94
Despondent	80	1.00	.86	1.00
Impaired Elder	80	1.00	.90	1.00

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The sample contained 195 articles which were mainly nonfictional stories describing the lived experience of grandparents with grandchildren. They were written by grandparents (respectively, 50.8% by grandfathers, 8.7% by grandmothers), grandchildren (20.5%), and others (20.0%, including parents and nonfamily members). Chi-square analyses were employed to address the research questions.

#### Quantitative Results

##### *RQ1 and RQ1a: Stereotypes*

RQ1 asked about the stereotypes reflected in the portrayals of grandparents. Frequencies and percentages of the five negative stereotypes and the one neutral stereotype are presented in Table 5. Very few negative stereotypes were found. The most frequent was *Impaired Elder*, with one article (.5%) rated as consistent and 11 (5.6%) articles rated as somewhat consistent with the stereotype. One article (.5%) was rated as consistent and six articles (3.1%) were rated as somewhat consistent with the *Despondent* stereotype. Similarly, five articles (2.6%) were rated as somewhat consistent with the *Chinese Feudalist* stereotype, and only a single article (.5%) was rated as consistent with the *Shrew/Curmudgeon* stereotype and the *Bossy Superior* stereotype respectively. The only neutral stereotype, *Traditionalist*, was reflected (i.e., consistent or somewhat consistent) in 25 articles (12.9%).

Table 5.

*Negative and Neutral Stereotypes of the Grandparents in the Articles (N = 195)*

Stereotypes	Consistent		Somewhat Consistent		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Impaired Elder	1	.5	11	5.6	12	6.1
Despondent	1	.5	6	3.1	7	3.6
Chinese Feudalist	0	.0	5	2.6	5	2.6
Shrew/Curmudgeon	0	.0	1	.5	1	.5
Bossy Superior	0	.0	1	.5	1	.5
Traditionalist	5	2.6	20	10.3	25	12.9

In contrast, much of positive stereotyping was found. Table 6 shows the frequencies and percentages for the four positive stereotypes. Specifically, 91.3% ( $n = 178$ ) of the articles were reflective (i.e., consistent or somewhat consistent) of the *Perfect Grandparent* stereotype, 73.9% ( $n = 144$ ) of the articles were reflective of the *Golden Ager* stereotype, and 67.7% ( $n = 132$ ) of the articles were reflective of the *Honorable Elder* stereotype. *Elder States Person* was rated the least frequent among the four positive stereotypes, with 36.5% ( $n = 71$ ) of the articles reflective of the stereotype. McNemar tests indicated that the percentage of the articles reflective of

*Perfect Grandparent* was significantly higher than that of *Golden Ager*,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 195) = 24.75, p < .001, ES = .17$ . A similar pattern was found between *Honorable Elder* and *Elder States Person*,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 195) = 49.32, p < .001, ES = .31$ . However, the percentages of the articles reflective of *Golden Ager* and *Honorable Elder* were not found to be significantly different,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 195) = 2.33, p = .13$ .

Table 6.

*Positive Stereotypes of the Grandparents in the Articles (N = 195)*

Stereotypes	Consistent		Somewhat Consistent		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
	Perfect Grandparent	137	70.3	41	21.0	178
Golden Ager	90	46.2	54	27.7	144	73.9
Honorable Elder	89	45.6	43	22.1	132	67.7
Elder States Person	20	10.3	51	26.2	71	36.5

RQ1a asked whether stereotyping of the grandparents with grandchildren of different age groups showed differences. Table 7 shows the frequencies and percentages (i.e., percentage within the age group) for the stereotypes of grandparents corresponding to the three age categories of grandchildren. There was a large degree

of difference in the number of articles across the three age categories. Grandparents with preschool grandchildren appeared in 66 articles (33.8%), and those with school-age/ adolescent grandchildren appeared in 99 articles (50.8%). Only 30 articles (15.4) included grandparents with adult grandchildren. Since *Shrew/Curmudgeon* and *Bossy Superior* were reflected only in one article respectively, they were excluded from further analyses due to their low frequencies. No significant relationship emerged between grandchildren's age and the percentages of articles reflecting *Despondent*, *Chinese Feudalist*, and *Traditionalist—Despondent*:  $\chi^2 (2, N = 195) = .27, p = .87$ ; *Chinese Feudalist*:  $\chi^2 (2, N = 195) = 3.04, p = .22$ ; *Traditionalist*:  $\chi^2 (2, N = 195) = 1.31, p = .52$ . However, results indicated a significant relationship between grandchildren's age group and the percentage of articles reflecting the *Impaired Elder* stereotype,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 195) = 18.12, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .30$ . Percentages revealed that the grandparents with adult grandchildren were more likely to be portrayed as *Impaired Elder* than those with grandchildren of the other age groups. Specifically, 3% of the grandparents with preschool grandchildren, 3% of the grandparents with school-age/adolescent grandchildren, and 23.3% of the grandparents with adult grandchildren were depicted as *Impaired Elder*.

Table 7.

*Stereotypes of Grandparents by Age Category of Grandchildren*

Stereotypes	Preschool		School age/ Adolescence		Adult	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Total Articles Portraying	66		99		30	
Impaired Elder	2	3.0	3	3.0	7	23.3
Despondent	3	4.5	3	3.0	1	3.3
Chinese Feudalist	2	3.0	1	1.0	2	6.7
Traditionalist	6	9.1	15	15.2	4	13.3
Perfect Grandparent	64	97.0	91	91.9	23	76.7
Golden Ager	52	78.8	77	77.0	15	50.0
Honorable Elder	45	68.2	73	73.7	14	46.7
Elder States Person	20	30.3	39	39.4	12	40.0

With respect to the positive stereotypes, first, cross-tabulation analysis indicated a significant relationship between grandchildren's age and the percentage of articles reflecting the *Perfect Grandparent* stereotype,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 195) = 10.79, p < .01$ , Cramer's  $V = .24$ . The grandparents with younger grandchildren were more likely to be associated with this stereotype than were those with adult grandchildren. Results showed that 97.0% of the articles containing grandparents with preschool grandchildren and 91.9% of the articles containing grandparents with school-age/adolescent grandchildren were reflective of *Perfect Grandparent*. In contrast, 76.7% of the articles containing grandparents with adult grandchildren were reflective of this stereotype.

Second, analysis revealed a significant relationship between grandchildren's age and the percentage of articles reflective of *Golden Ager*,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 195) = 10.46, p < .01$ , Cramer's  $V = .23$ . The pattern of proportions indicated that the grandparents with younger grandchildren were more likely associated with this stereotype than were those with adult grandchildren, with 78.8% of the articles containing grandparents with preschool grandchildren, 77.8% of the articles containing grandparents with school-age/adolescent grandchildren, and 50.0% of the articles containing grandparents with adult grandchildren reflective of this stereotype.

Third, analysis indicated a significant relationship between grandchildren's age and the percentage of articles reflective of *Honorable Elder*,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 195) = 7.73, p < .05$ , Cramer's  $V = .20$ . The percentages revealed a similar pattern to those of the two positive stereotypes described above, indicating that the grandparents with

younger grandchildren were more likely associated with this stereotype than were those with adult grandchildren, with 68.2% of the articles containing grandparents with preschool grandchildren, 73.7% of the articles containing grandparents with school-age/adolescent grandchildren, and 46.7% of the articles containing grandparents with adult grandchildren reflective of the stereotype.

However, analysis did not indicate a significant relationship between grandchildren's age and the percentage of articles reflective of *Elder States Person*,  $\chi^2(2, N = 195) = 1.61, p = .45$ . There were about equal percentages of articles containing the three groups of grandparents respectively that were reflective of this stereotype.

Although age of grandparents was not clearly mentioned or referenced in a small number of articles, careful examination of these articles showed that the age of the grandparents in interaction with adult grandchildren was all mentioned or referenced, revealing that they belonged to the old-old adult group (75 and above). It is reasonable to assume that the grandparents with younger grandchildren tend to be younger than do those with adult grandchildren. Therefore, the patterns of association between stereotypes and grandchildren age categories could actually reflect the distribution of those stereotypes across age categories of grandparents (i.e., young-old and mid-old adults vs. old-old adults). A cross-tabulation of *authorship by age range of grandchildren* revealed that, of the 116 articles written by grandparents, 44.0% of them ( $n = 51$ ) described the grandparent authors' personal interactions with preschool grandchildren, 53.4% of them ( $n = 62$ ) described the grandparent authors' interactions with school-age/adolescent grandchildren, and only 2.6% of them ( $n = 3$ ) described

grandparent authors' interactions with adult grandchildren. In other words, the grandparent authors were predominately young-old and mid-old adults, and their self-perceptions were quite positive.

*RQ2: Valence*

To assess the overall proportions of positive and negative portrayals, each article was coded as positive, negative, or neutral. Based on the overall assessment of the grandparent(s) in each article, 92.3% ( $n = 180$ ) of the articles were rated as positive, 3.1% ( $n = 6$ ) of the articles were rated as negative, and 4.6% ( $n = 9$ ) of the articles were rated as neutral. Chi-square analysis revealed that portrayals of the grandparents were significantly positive,  $\chi^2(2, N = 195) = 305.26, p < .001, ES = .78$ . As expected, the proportion of positive portrayals indicated that the grandparents were portrayed predominantly positively.

*RQ3: Respect*

As previously reviewed, respect for elderly people in China was found salient in the Chinese television commercials (Cheng & Schweitzer, 1996; Lin, 2001; Zhang & Harwood, 2004; Zhang, Song, & Carver, 2008). Content analysis revealed that the grandparents in most of the articles in this data set were also portrayed as respected. Specifically, 93.8% ( $n = 183$ ) of the articles portrayed grandparents as respected, and 3.1% ( $n = 6$ ) of articles portrayed grandparents as disrespected, with six articles (3.1%) placed in the unspecified category. Chi-square analysis revealed that the grandparents were predominantly respected,  $\chi^2(2, N = 195) = 321.32, p < .001, ES = .82$ .

*RQ4: Health*

With respect to physical health, 79.0% ( $n = 154$ ) of the articles depicted grandparents as healthy, and 18.5% ( $n = 36$ ) of the articles depicted grandparents as unhealthy, with five articles (2.6%) placed in the unspecified category. Chi-square analysis indicated that the grandparents were portrayed as significantly healthy,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 195) = 190.18, p < .001, ES = .49$ .

To investigate possible relationships between the variables of health and valence, and health and respect, the categories of unhealthy and unspecified were collapsed, since there were only five (2.6%) unspecified cases, resulting in dichotomous variables (healthy vs. unhealthy/unspecified). Similarly, for the valence variable, neutral and negative were collapsed into neutral/negative, resulting in dichotomous variables (positive vs. neutral/negative). The variables of disrespected and unspecified were also collapsed into disrespected/unspecified, resulting in dichotomous variables (respected vs. disrespected/unspecified) (see Table 8).

A 2 (healthy/unhealthy) x 2 (positive/negative) chi-square analysis investigated whether unhealthy grandparents were distributed equally across positive and negative portrayals. Health and valence were not found to be significantly related,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 195) = .352, p = .06$ .

Further, a 2 (healthy/unhealthy) x 2 (positive/negative) chi-square analysis investigated whether unhealthy grandparents were distributed equally across respected and disrespected portrayals. The result indicated that health and respect were not significantly related,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 195) = .15, p = .70$ .

Table 8.

*Valence, Respect, and Physical Health*

Images	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Positive	180	92.3	15	7.7	195	100.0
Respected	183	93.8	12	6.2	195	100.0
Healthy	154	79.0	41	21.0	195	100.0

*RQ 5: Grandparenting Roles*

Content analysis showed that, of the 141 articles with sufficient description of at least one major grandparenting role, 66.0% ( $n = 93$ ) of them depicted grandparents as caregivers, 14.2% ( $n = 20$ ) of them depicted grandparents as non-caregivers, and 19.8% ( $n = 28$ ) of them were placed in the “unspecified” category. In other words, 47.7% ( $n = 93$ ) of the total sample ( $N = 195$ ) depicted grandparents as caregivers. Further analysis showed that 71.2% ( $n = 47$ ) of the grandparents with preschool grandchildren were caregivers, compared with 40.4% ( $n = 40$ ) of the grandparents with school-age/adolescent grandchildren. When these two groups were examined together, 52.7% of the grandparents with grandchildren under 19 were caregivers.

With respect to the other major grandparenting roles, analysis of the 141 articles showed that the most frequent was *mentor* (44.7%;  $n = 63$ ), followed by *playmate* (28.4%;  $n = 40$ ) and *spoiling grandparent* (7.1%;  $n = 10$ ), with 19.8% ( $n =$

28) of the articles placed in the “other” category. The articles in the “other” category depicted grandparents as caregivers without playing one of the other major grandparenting roles. Chi-square tests indicated that the frequency of the *mentor* role was significantly higher than that of the *playmate* role,  $\chi^2(1, N = 103) = 5.14, p < .05$ , and the frequency of the *playmate* role was significantly higher than that of the *spoiling grandparent* role,  $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 18.00, p < .001$ . Analysis also revealed that no grandparents with adult grandchildren assumed the *playmate* role.

*RQ6: Paternal Grandparents vs. Maternal Grandparents*

Content analysis showed that 34.9% ( $n = 68$ ) of the grandparents were paternal grandfathers, followed by paternal grandmothers (15.4%;  $n = 30$ ), and maternal grandfathers and maternal grandmothers with equal proportions (respectively, 10.3%;  $n = 20$ ). The rest of the articles depicted grandparents in pairs: 21% ( $n = 41$ ) were paternal grandparents and 16% ( $n = 16$ ) were maternal grandparents. Further analysis showed that 71.3% ( $n = 139$ ) of the articles ( $N = 195$ ) described paternal grandparents, while 28.3% ( $n = 56$ ) described maternal grandparents. Chi-square analysis indicated that there were significantly more paternal grandparents identified in these articles than there were maternal grandparents,  $\chi^2(1, N = 195) = 35.33, p < .001, ES = .18$ . With respect to the caregiver role, 72.0% of the grandparents ( $n = 67$ ) depicted as caregivers were paternal grandparents, and 28.0% ( $n = 26$ ) were maternal grandparents. Chi-square analysis indicated that there were significantly more paternal grandparents who were depicted as caregivers than there were maternal grandparents,  $\chi^2(1, N = 93) = 18.08,$

$p < .001$ ,  $ES = .19$ . It appeared that the traditional patrilineal co-residence pattern was reflected in the sampled articles.

#### *RQ 7: Valence of Portrayals vs. Grandparenting Roles*

Chi-square analyses were conducted to assess possible relationships between the valence of the portrayals of grandparents and grandparenting roles. A cross-tabulation of the caregiver role (yes/no, excluding unspecified) and valence (positive/negative) indicated that whether the grandparents were portrayed positively or negatively was not related to whether or not they played the caregiver role,  $\chi^2(1, N = 144) = 1.00, p = .32$ . A cross-tabulation of the other roles (*playmate/mentor/spoiling grandparent*) and valence (positive/negative) indicated that these two variables were significantly related,  $\chi^2(2, N = 113) = 33.19, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .54$ . Of the 113 articles that depicted grandparents as *playmate, mentor, and spoiling grandparent*, 4.4% ( $n = 5$ ) portrayed grandparents negatively. Among the five articles, one (20%) depicted grandparents as *playmate*, and four (80%) depicted them as *spoiling grandparent*. Chi-square tests indicated that the grandparents who played the *playmate* role and the *mentor* role were portrayed equally positively,  $\chi^2(1, N = 103) = 1.59, p = .21$ , but the grandparents who played the *spoiling grandparent* role were portrayed less positively,  $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 12.50, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .50$ .

#### Qualitative Results

One of the aims of this study was to explore how Chinese grandparents and their grandparenting styles are portrayed in mass media in China. While the quantitative analyses shed insight into the patterns for such portrayals with statistical

power, the representative examples reported below illuminate a more nuanced understanding of the content themes of grandparenting roles and images of Chinese grandparents revealed in the sampled articles.

### *The Caregiver Role*

As content analysis revealed, about 48% of the total sample ( $N = 195$ ) depicted grandparents as caregivers, and the percentage was much higher among grandparents in interaction with preschool grandchildren (71.2%). Many grandparents who co-resided with their grandchildren or lived in the vicinity took up this role as soon as they transitioned into grandparenthood. Others moved in with their adult children and became childcare providers after their grandchildren were born. The essence of this role was to tend day-to-day needs of grandchildren. Apart from doing house chores and cooking meals, grandparents also spent time playing with grandchildren, telling stories, and routinely preparing them for school. Out of concern for the safety of their young grandchildren who went to kindergarten or elementary school, some grandparents accompanied their grandchildren to and from school on weekdays all year round, and sometimes had to wait at the school gate for their grandchildren to be released from school. The following excerpts are examples illustrative of the caregiver role:

I noticed lately that my grandson had been saving up the money we had given him for breakfast and popsicles . . . One day, he walked up to me holding a well-wrapped gift box in his hand, smiling. “Grandpa, here is a nice pen for you as a gift.” . . . It was the first gift from my grandson, and the first

repayment for the seven years' hardships his grandma and I have gone through in caring for him. I was so happy and moved that tears welled up in my eyes. . . .

Little Hai Han [the grandson] is the center of attention in the family, especially to his grandmother and me. We take careful care of his life, from eating to sleeping. He has even been sleeping with us in the same bed since he was weaned. Ever since he started kindergarten at three, I have been walking him to and from school every day, rain or shine. Back home from school, I also tutor him in Chinese, math, and drawing . . . to nurture his learning habit. Once I asked him with smiles on my face, "Hai Han, Grandma and Grandpa take such good care of you, how are you going to treat us with filial piety when you grow up?" He thought for a while and said, "I will become a scientist, make a robot, and let it serve tea for Grandpa and Grandma and give you massage." The whole family had a good laugh. (Article 92, *The First Gift from My Grandson*; Qing, 2001, p. 21).

This article was also rated as reflective of the *mentor* role. The image of the grandparents was judged to be positive, respected, healthy, and consistent with the *Perfect Grandparent* and *Golden Ager* stereotypes.

At 18 months old, my granddaughter is smart, cute and lovely. . . . With this little kid at home, I have no time to take a rest. "Grandpa" has become the substitute word for "milk." Whenever she calls "Grandpa," I will get the milk ready for her. . . . Seeing her growing up day by day . . . I feel so happy

despite the hard work. Now I have come to realize what it means when people say “*Ge Bei Qin*” [grandparents are more fond of grandchildren than their own children]. It all boils down to the saying, “Blood is thicker than water.”

(Article 102, *Granddaughter Says “No”*; Shan, 2001, p. 19).

This article was also rated as reflective of the *playmate* role. The image of the grandfather was judged to be positive, respected, healthy, and consistent with the *Perfect Grandparent* and *Golden Ager* stereotypes.

It is worth noting that most grandparents played the caregiver role in normal families, but they also took up the role during times of family crisis, such as when a parent died or when parents got divorced. For example, in *Grandpa, I Will Repay You with My Whole Life* (Article 106; Guo & Zhang, 2002), the grandfather actually became the surrogate parent of his granddaughter when his son died and his daughter-in-law abandoned the family. Overcoming his physical handicap of having only one eye, the grandfather supported the family by selling recycled materials collected from garbage dumpsites. In order to pay for his granddaughter’s education, the grandfather even sold his only property, a shabby bungalow. Now at college, the granddaughter’s greatest wish was to repay her grandfather “with her whole life.”

#### *The Mentor Role*

The *mentor* role appeared most frequently (32.3% of the total sample) among the other grandparenting roles. The grandparents who played the *mentor* role transmitted their knowledge and skills, and helped younger grandchildren with their schoolwork. Some grandparents started playing the *mentor* role before their

grandchildren started school. They taught them Chinese characters, classical Chinese poems, and even updated their own knowledge so as to make their stories interesting. Grandparents also listened to older grandchildren, gave advice and guidance, and sometimes acted as a trusted counsel. In addition to knowledge and skills, grandparents also passed down cultural values and heritage, and inspired their grandchildren to pursue their dreams. The following excerpts illustrate this role:

A seven-year old girl has become a seventh grader . . . she owes her early intellectual growth to her family education, especially the ingenious teaching method of his 70-year old grandfather. When Zou Suying [the granddaughter] was four years old, Zou Xinsheng [the grandfather] began to teach her Chinese characters. Within 11 months, Zou Suying had learned 3,000 Chinese characters. Zou Xinsheng had a unique way of teaching Chinese characters, incorporating interesting stories . . . and his personal experiences. (Article 124, *A 70-Year Old Grandfather and His Seven-Year Old Granddaughter*; Tian, 2004, p. 45).

This article was also rated as reflective of the *caregiver* role. The image of the grandfather was judged to be positive, respected, healthy, and consistent with the *Perfect Grandparent*, *Golden Ager*, and *Honorable Elder* stereotypes.

Seven years ago, 60-year old Ye Heshun retired from his position as an engineer . . . Encouraged by his granddaughter, Ye Heshun bought a computer in August 2003 and began surfing the Internet. . . . Worried with his granddaughter's addiction to online chatting . . . he was determined to help his

granddaughter and other teenagers with Internet addiction. . . . He applied for a user name . . . and started chatting with his granddaughter in a chat room. Soon his granddaughter at the other end of the Internet took him as a good friend. . . . She told him that her grades were not good, and all her parents did was scold her. Only her grandfather considered her as a friend, and even learned to surf the Internet from her . . . Ye Heshun persuaded her with the tone of a friend to shape up and not let online chatting affect her school performance.

In order to get his granddaughter back on the right track, Ye Heshun also communicated with his son and daughter-in-law, and with their assistance, his granddaughter put her mind back to studies within a month (Article 166, *An Online Forum Moderator Advises Teenagers Addicted to the Internet*; Da & Qin, 2006, p. 30).

According to this article (Da & Qin, 2006), the grandfather was later hired by a newspaper in Beijing as a moderator of its online forum and became a “cyber mentor” for hundreds of its young readers by giving advice to them. In addition to the *mentor* role, the image of the grandfather was also judged to be positive, respected, healthy, and consistent with the *Perfect Grandparent*, *Golden Ager*, *Honorable Elder* and *Elder States Person* stereotypes.

It is worth noting that in families with handicapped children, grandparents’ role as *mentor* as well as *caregiver* was described as indispensable. Three articles described how three grandmothers helped their grandchildren (respectively, one

diagnosed as deaf, one with spinal disease, and the other with cerebral palsy) overcome unimaginable difficulties and obtain comparable education to that of a typical child. Thanks to the grandmothers' years of endurance, all three completed high school education. The grandson with cerebral palsy was even admitted into college.

### *The Playmate Role*

This is the second largest category among the other roles, depicted in 20.5% of the total sample. The grandparents who played this role participated in harmless fun and games with their grandchild, such as playing Chinese chess, kicking jianzi (an Asian shuttlecock game), playing building blocks, playing soccer, or enjoying the outdoors. The focus was on having fun together without bending rules. The following excerpts illustrate this role:

My six-year old grandson Wang Jiashuai has been living with me since he was born, and the emotional bond between us is very strong. We often play together to our hearts' content and have become "*wangnianjiao*" [intergenerational buddies]. . . . He likes playing Chinese chess, and I am his opponent, turning the chessboard into our battleground. He likes toy guns, and I explain to him the different types of weapons—their structures, functions and uses, to enlarge his knowledge scope (Article 5, *My Competitive Grandson*; Zeng, 1995, p. 18).

This article was also rated as reflective of the *caregiver* role. The image of the grandfather was rated as positive, respected, healthy, and consistent with the *Perfect Grandparent*, *Golden Ager*, and *Honorable Elder* stereotypes.

I am an old man and an introvert, and don't have much of a hobby. Lucky for me, I have a granddaughter by my second son who has not started kindergarten yet. . . . It is great fun to go hiking in the hill with my granddaughter. We go kite flying, pick wild flowers, and catch grasshoppers . . . . The most interesting of all is the role reversal game, where she is the teacher and I am the kindergartener (Article 146, *The Joy of Role Reversal Games*; Zheng, 2005, p. 25).

This article was also rated as reflective of the *caregiver* role. The image of the grandfather was judged to be positive, respected, healthy, and consistent with the *Perfect Grandparent* stereotype.

#### *The Spoiling Grandparent Role*

This is the least frequent grandparenting role, depicted only in 5.1% of the total sample. The grandparents who played this role were lenient toward their grandchild's misbehaviors, and were reluctant to apply authority or discipline. They enjoyed the opportunity to indulge their grandchild, and sometimes such indulgence involved going against the parents' wishes, giving the child a double message about behavior standards. The following excerpt is illustrative of the *spoiling grandparent* role:

Speaking of grandparents' fondness for grandchildren, I cannot help telling

stories of my father and my son. . . . Every time we go to visit my father . . . he is all smiles when seeing his grandson. He will raise his voice and say, “Here, dear grandson, come to Grandpa and let me give you a big hug. Ha, you’ve grown taller. Come with Grandpa and I will buy you something good to eat.” Then, off they go to the supermarket . . . and will bring back a big sack of snack food. . . . I will say, “Pa, no more snack food for the kid, for it is expensive but not nutritious.” My father will roll his eyes and retort, “It’s ok as long as the kid likes it.”

My son is very naughty, and every time we are at his grandpa’s, he will soon turn the whole room into a mess. When my wife cannot take it anymore and begins to criticize him, my father will display a long face and say, “Don’t discipline the child in front of me, it’s their nature to be naughty.” Backed up by his grandfather, my son will talk back to his mother boldly, “Go away!” My wife and I can do nothing about it when faced with this grandfather-grandson bond (Article 115, *It’s Better to Be a Grandson than a Son*; Wang, 2003, p. 27).

The grandfather in this story not only pampered his grandson, he also offered to take care of him when needed. The grandfather was fully aware that his indulgence was against the parents’ wishes, but he told his son that he just could not help it. In addition to the *spoiling grandparent* role, this article was also rated as reflective of the *caregiver* role. The image of the grandfather was judged to be positive, respected, healthy, and consistent with the *Perfect Grandparent* and *Golden Ager* stereotypes.

In contrast, four articles depicted indulgent grandparents in a rather negative light. For example, *I Spoiled My Grandson* (Article 6; Zhang, 1995) illustrates the adverse effects of spoiling a grandchild. The grandparents depicted in the article had been entrusted by their only son to raise his only son. The grandfather was a successful businessman and had indulged his grandson with material comfort for years. He had rarely set and enforced any rule, even when his grandson caused trouble at school and was expelled from a junior high school and subsequently a driver training school. The grandson was eventually involved in a gang fight and was convicted of murder. The grandfather was regretful that he had spoiled his grandson and ruined his life with indulgence and money.

It should be noted that the disciplinary role was reversed in some articles where grandparents were described as the ones that felt responsible to discipline their grandchildren's misbehaviors while the parents were depicted as the indulgent ones.

The grandparenting roles played by grandparents were not limited to the four major categories described above. As content analysis showed, 27.7% ( $n = 54$ ) of the articles had insufficient description of a major grandparenting role, but the grandparents depicted in the articles interacted with their grandchildren in other ways. Most of these articles described interactions between grandparents and adolescent or adult grandchildren. Several of these articles depicted grandfathers as wise and authoritative figures in the family, and they were involved in making important family decisions. For example, in *A First-ranking Hero Concealed for 43 Years* (Article 96; Yu, 2001), the grandfather, who was a first-ranking hero in the army 43

years before, urged his grandson to join the army to protect the country and for him to relive his youth through his grandson. However, his grandson was more keen on making money and enjoying his life. Eventually, due to the authoritative status of the grandfather in the family, the grandson was summoned back to the village where the family lived from a big city where the grandson was working as a migrant worker (i.e., a worker from a rural area holding a temporary job in a city). Out of veneration for his grandfather and reluctance to hurt his feelings, the grandson agreed to join the army. The role of authoritative family figure is closely related to the cultural value of filial piety, but it was not coded as a separate category due to its low frequency.

In addition, some of these articles depicted grandparents as students of their grandchildren. For example, one grandfather learned to surf the Internet from his grandson, one grandmother learned to speak Mandarin Chinese from her granddaughter, and another grandmother who lived in Beijing became interested in learning English from her son and grandson after Beijing won the competition to stage the 2008 Olympics. Furthermore, some articles described grandparents as actively engaged in activities of their own interest—writing articles for newspapers and magazines, practicing Chinese calligraphy, or going to “laoren daxue” (university of elders). For example, in *A 77-Year-Old New Investor in Stocks* (Article 98; Cong, 2001, p. 15), the author described her grandmother as “a person who likes to keep herself busy.” Undeterred by her age and illiteracy, the grandmother learned to invest in the stock market. As the author commented at the end of the article, “This is my grandmother, an elderly lady who is high-spirited, optimistic, hardworking, and

enterprising.” Although these articles contained insufficient description of a major grandparenting role, they were examined with respect to how images of grandparents were portrayed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

This study was designed to explore media portrayals of grandparents in China (the PRC) as reflected in the magazine *Friend of Old Comrades*. Specifically, the goal of this study was to examine major images of Chinese grandparents and their grandparenting styles as portrayed in the sampled articles that feature GP-GC interactions. The content analysis results revealed proportions of positive images vs. negative images and the major grandparenting roles played by grandparents. The excerpts from the feature stories further illustrated scenarios in which the images and grandparenting roles were identified and illuminated a concrete and nuanced understanding of the characterization of Chinese grandparents. The discussion addresses media representation of grandparents with respect to Chinese social and cultural values and in comparison to the findings of previous media and intergenerational communication studies. The implications of the cultivation and social cognitive perspectives are also addressed.

#### *Images of Grandparents*

The images of Chinese grandparents were assessed by examining the portrayals of the grandparents in the sampled articles in valence, health, and respect dimensions. They were also assessed with respect to the stereotypes of the portrayals from a cognitive perspective. This method allowed for analysis of specific stereotypes in addition to the overall assessment of positive or negative portrayals. Analysis showed that 87.3% of the articles were rated consistent with at least one stereotype

among the ten stereotypes of Chinese older adults discovered in the minds of Chinese participants by Zhang et al. (2004). Overall, the grandparents were portrayed as predominantly positive, healthy, and respected. Such positive portrayals of grandparents are in line with the findings of the studies that examined the lived experience of older people in Beijing (Boermel, 2006) and the grandparents in Xiamen (Goh, 2006; 2009), indicating that when older people in China are studied with respect to their lived experience, either in real life or in the portrayals of this magazine, a positive image is likely to emerge.

The most common positive stereotype reflected in the articles was *Perfect Grandparent* (91.3%), followed by *Golden Ager* (73.9%) and *Honorable Elder* (67.7%). This is similar to the pattern of typicality ratings reported by Hummert et al. (1993; 1995) involving U.S. participants. They found that U.S. participants believed that positive stereotypes such as *Perfect Grandparent* and *Golden Ager* were more typical of the elderly than were negative stereotypes. Such a pattern was also identified by Miller et al. (1999) in their study of stereotypical portrayals of older adults in magazine advertisements. These similarities indicate that people in both the Chinese and American cultures share the belief that positive stereotypes of older adults are more typical than negative ones.

In contrast to the prevalence of positive stereotypes, results of this study showed that there was very little negative stereotyping of grandparents in the articles. Only 10.8% of the articles contained negative stereotypes, most of which were reflective of *Impaired Elder*, with one article rated as consistent and 11 articles rated

as somewhat consistent with the stereotype. None of the grandparents in these 12 articles was depicted in a ridiculous manner. Only one 93-year-old grandmother with Alzheimer's disease was described as mentally disoriented, but she was taken good care of by her family members, who tried different ways to please her.

One could argue that the small proportion of negative stereotypes in the articles is a reflection of the diverse characteristics of subgroups of grandparents or the fact that the magazine is targeted at an older population. Furthermore, when the health dimension was cross-examined with valence and respect dimensions of the portrayals of grandparents, it was found that the health status of grandparents was not associated with whether grandparents were portrayed as respected or whether they were portrayed positively. As shown in *Grandpa, I Will Repay You with My Whole Life* (Guo & Zhang, 2002), even a physically handicapped grandparent was portrayed in a positive light. This is consistent with findings of Beland and Mills' (2001) study of U.S. grandparents and shows similarities between the characterizations of grandparents in both cultures.

The rest of the negative stereotypes reflected in the articles all had a low frequency, ranging from 0.5 percent for *Bossy Superior* to 3.6 percent for *Despondent*. Although these two negative stereotypes appeared infrequently, they are worth further examination because they are often related to problematic intergenerational communication.

The *Despondent* stereotype was mostly reflected in articles where grandparents were not treated with respect by their children or grandchildren. For

older grandparents, they were not provided with instrumental or emotional care by the younger generation. For younger grandparents who were also caregivers of their grandchildren, they felt exploited by the middle generation when the parents of their grandchildren thrust the burden of childcare onto their shoulders without providing instrumental or emotional support. The grandparents felt that their unconditional love for their grandchildren had been manipulated to the advantage of the parents. In both scenarios, the parents were described as treating the grandparents with a lack of filial piety, and the articles invariably carried a reprimanding tone. For example, when a teenage granddaughter objected to the way her mother treated her grandmother, she warned her mother by saying, “Remember, I am your daughter, and someday you will be old too” (Wang, 1995, p.19).

The *Bossy Superior* stereotype is also related to the concept of filial piety, which stipulates that older adults have higher relational hierarchical status than younger people by virtue of age, experience, and wisdom. The traits of the *Bossy Superior* stereotype, such as meddlesome, demanding, and “*laodao*” (nagging, especially by older women), were identified with high frequency in Taiwanese television shows (Lien, Zhang, & Hummert, 2005) and are similar to the dissatisfying intergenerational communicative behaviors of older adults as described by young participants in studies conducted both in China (Zhang & Hummert, 2001) and the United States (Williams & Giles, 1996). However, this negative stereotype was only reflected in one article (Article 133, *Grandma’s Special Care*; Ou, 2004) in this study where the granddaughter described her grandmother as overly protective and

meddlesome. The grandmother interfered in her young adult granddaughter's romantic relationship and nagged her not to date her boyfriend. Instead of obeying her grandmother or confronting her, the granddaughter brushed it aside and continued dating her boyfriend secretly.

Apparently, this negative stereotype was overshadowed by the understanding image of grandparents reflected in the *Perfect Grandparent* stereotype. For example, in *There Is a Modern Girl in My Family* (Article 116; Chuan, 2003), the grandfather showed his tolerance and understanding to his disobedient granddaughter, and even considered young people's rebellious behaviors as a sign of "liberated human nature." He gave credit to his granddaughter's generation for being pioneers in fashion, in promoting the creation and dissemination of information technology, and in leading a new way of life. Previous research on grandparenthood has shown that grandparents are valued as people who can listen and have the time to do so (Hagestad, 1985; Kornhaber, 1996). Listening to grandchildren and showing understanding to them has been considered an important element in grandparenting (Kornhaber, 2002), and such accommodative communication behaviors are related to intergenerational communication satisfaction (Harwood, 2000b; Williams & Giles, 1996).

One interpretation for the low frequency of the *Bossy Superior* stereotype is that the behaviors of a bossy superior are often manifested between older adults and young adults (Zhang, 2004; Lien et al., 2005). There were only a small number of articles ( $n = 30$ ) featuring interactions between young adult grandchildren and their grandparents, which may indicate that interactions between grandparents and older

grandchildren were minimal in the first place. Furthermore, most of the articles were written by grandparents or adult grandchildren, and problematic communication between the two generations may have been avoided intentionally.

Results showed that stereotypes reflected in the articles varied across grandparents interacting with grandchildren of different age categories, indicating variation of stereotypes between older and younger grandparents. Consistent with the findings of Hummert et al. (1993; 1995), the *Impaired Elder* stereotype was associated more with old-old grandparents than with young-old and mid-old grandparents. With respect to positive stereotypes, *Perfect Grandparent*, *Golden Ager*, and *Honorable Elder* were more associated with younger grandparents than with older grandparents, further reinforcing a more positive image for younger grandparents than for older grandparents. This finding indicates that “older adult” is an umbrella under which there are diversities especially among young-old, mid-old, and old-old adults.

### *Grandparenting Roles*

Previous studies in the U.S. have shown that grandparents in children’s storybooks are also involved in extensive childcare. For example, Janelli and Sorge’s (2001) study showed that the theme of grandparental caregiving was found in 45% of the depictions of grandmothers and 21% of the depiction of grandfathers in the children’s books they analyzed. In comparison, results of this study showed that more than half of the grandparents interacting with grandchildren aged 1 to 18 were depicted as caregivers. The percentage was even higher for the group of grandparents

interacting with preschool grandchildren. While grandparents are enlisted as surrogate parents in the U.S. for a variety of reasons, including parental drug addiction, illness, incarceration, and change of family structure (Jendrek, 1994), Chinese grandparents often find themselves pulled into the caregiver role as soon as they transition into grandparenthood. The prevalence of grandparental caregiving identified in this study may have resulted from a plethora of cultural and economic factors. Many Chinese grandparents are expected to provide care for their grandchildren, especially in families where both parents are working. On one hand, this has been a long-held tradition in China; on the other, economic and social factors prompt many grandparents to shoulder this obligation as soon as they become grandparents.

As depicted in the articles, grandparents took it as a family obligation as well as a socially ascribed role to care for their grandchildren. As shown in the stories in this magazine, grandparental caregiving was not limited to custodial care; caregiving involves the companionship and the passing on of values. In addition to attending to the day-to-day needs of their grandchildren, grandparents also played the grandparenting roles of *mentor*, *playmate*, and *spoiling grandparent* mostly to younger grandchildren who were still dependent on their care. The mentor role and the playmate role were viewed more positively than the spoiling grandparent role. This finding is not surprising considering the involved style of the grandparents depicted in these articles.

The majority of the grandparents depicted in these articles had an “involved” relationship with their grandchildren. They either lived in the same households with

their grandchildren, or lived close to and had frequent contacts with them. Given that 71.3% of the grandparents depicted in these articles were paternal grandparents, this may be a reflection of the patrilineal pattern of intergenerational co-residence—elderly parents living with adult children, particularly adult sons. These grandparents were involved in raising, nurturing, and disciplining their grandchildren. In addition, the “companionate” relationship was also depicted in a small number of articles, which featured play and displays of affection without grandparents’ worrying about responsibilities. However, most grandparent caregivers did not have the luxury of enjoying and indulging their grandchildren in a carefree style. They revolved their life around their grandchildren, day in and day out, basking in the joy of loving and taking care of their grandchildren and deriving satisfaction from their identity of being a grandparent. At the same time, they often felt physically exhausted and mentally strained, especially when the parents thrust the common mission of raising the grandchildren solely on the shoulders of grandparents.

Consistent with the findings of Goh (2006), results of this study indicated that caring for the only child in an extended family in China is a common mission for both parents and grandparents. The studies of children’s books in the U.S. showed that there was a much greater proportion of grandmothers than grandfathers giving care to grandchildren. In contrast, grandfathers in the magazine articles in this study were depicted as equally important with respect to care giving. It is worth noting that 50.8% of the articles were written by grandfathers and only 8.7% were written by grandmothers. This seems to challenge kin-keeper theories, “which suggest that

women maintain stronger ties with family members and are more involved than men in activities that maintain family ties” (Beland & Mills, 2001, p. 648). This finding further indicates that grandparenting roles are not static and may be negotiated at the family level, but are also influenced by changes at the societal level.

#### Implications of Cultivation and Social Learning Perspectives

A return to the theoretical perspectives from the introduction yields several conclusions. Both the cultivation and social learning perspectives emphasize that people’s social perceptions are influenced by presentations of social reality in the mass media. How older people are portrayed in magazines such as *Friend of Old Comrades* may influence heavy readers’ perceptions of age and the aging process, and may affect their own strategies to cope with life in old age.

The positive portrayals of grandparents and the major grandparenting roles reflected in the articles may serve as a vicarious learning opportunity for would-be grandparents as they seek information from the magazine to prepare them for grandparenthood. The magazine is one of the sources for them to obtain information about grandparenthood and construct their reality.

For grandparent readers, the positive depiction may echo their real life experience and result in a “double dose” of the media message, thus providing validation and reinforcement for their grandparenting practices. For readers who identify themselves with the grandparents portrayed in the magazine articles, the positive representation of grandparents may activate their psychological potential and improve their self-esteem. Several studies on implicit age stereotyping and self-

stereotyping have demonstrated that exposing older people to a positive age stereotype has positive effects on motor and mental functioning (e.g., Levy, 1996; Levy, 2000; Levy, Hausdorf, Hencke, & Wei, 2000). Furthermore, cultural values attached to grandparenthood, such as the salient theme of filial piety, may be reinforced in the minds of heavy readers and further bind them within the cultural norm of grandparenthood in China.

On the other hand, the predominant positive stereotyping may also have negative consequences on heavy readers of the magazine. Such positive stereotyping may exert pressure on some grandparent readers to conform to the stereotypes and grandparenting styles, which may cause an overemphasis on contribution and sacrifice to the extended family at the expense of grandparents' own well-being—financially, physically, or emotionally. Furthermore, for older adults with few resources, the predominant positive portrayals of grandparents may lower their self-esteem and discourage their active participation in social life. This argument is supported by research findings that downward comparisons are important for well-being (Heidrich & Ryff, 1993; Pinguart, 2002).

#### Limitations and Future Research

One of the limitations of this study is that it only examined grandparent images and grandparenting roles portrayed in one magazine for the elderly readers. Although this case study included 195 articles from 156 issues of the magazine, it has only uncovered one piece of the puzzle of the media portrayal of grandparents in China. This sampling method limits the scope of generalization for the findings of the

current research.

In addition, more than half of the articles were written by grandparents who were well-educated and lived in urban areas of China. The characterization of the grandparents in these articles may be more representative of Chinese grandparents living in urban areas. For example, the traditional male favoritism is still prevalent in many parts of China, particularly in rural areas. However, male favoritism, a trait in the cluster of the *Chinese Feudalist* stereotype, was not identified in any of the articles in this study.

Future research should include multiple magazines published in different regions of the country. In addition, comparative studies need to be done with international magazines (such as AARP in the U.S.) in order to better assess the similarities and differences between the patterns of the portrayals of grandparents/older people across cultures. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of media portrayals of Chinese grandparents/older adults, future research should also explore other media outlets (e.g., television programs) and different genres (e.g., news, advertisements, primetime shows) to compare patterns of portrayals of grandparents and the quality and nature of such portrayals (e.g., news may focus more on social issues associated with the aging population while fictional or non-fictional stories and programs may focus more on the depiction of older adults' attributes).

Finally, the assumptions about the psychological effects of the media portrayals of grandparents require empirical testing. The nature of content analysis is

more descriptive than explanatory. Future research should combine research approaches to gain a holistic picture of how grandparents/older people are characterized in the mass media and the potential effects of such media portrayals in China. Employing additional research methods (e.g., thematic analysis, discourse analysis, experimental design) to complement content analysis could validate claims about media effects and enhance the overall validity of conclusions.

### Conclusion

“The images of the old in any society, either traditional or industrial, have both positive and negative aspects” (Wada, 1995, p. 57). How elderly grandparents are portrayed in the mass media reflects the kinds of cultural resources we draw upon to give meaning to later life. In the Chinese society, the Confucian value of filial piety is one of those resources. Congruent with this traditional value, most of the sampled articles in this study depict family relationships, especially GP-GC relationships, in a picture of harmony. In this picture, the majority of grandparents were respected and perceived positively. Younger grandparents were happily engaged in offering affection and care to their grandchildren, and older grandparents enjoyed their well-earned leisure of later years with respect, dignity, and care from their families. Although tension did exist in family relationships, harmony dominated this picture. In Chinese culture, family is considered a basic unit in the macro-social structure, and harmonious relationships in the family are essential for maintaining social integration and stability in society (Zhang & Hummert, 2001). While projecting positive images of grandparents and harmonious family relationships, the magazine fulfills its socially

ascribed role of propagating moral and cultural values.

The essence of the traditional value of filial piety specifies proper behaviors in the hierarchical relationships between the old and the young. The elderly should be respected and obeyed by virtue of their age. The “obeying with reluctance” phenomenon among adolescent and young adult grandchildren observed in some articles (e.g., *A First-ranking Hero Concealed for 43 Years*; Yu, 2001) in this study mirrors the findings of intergenerational communication research in real life. Research conducted in the Chinese cultural context (e.g., Zhang & Hummert, 2001; Yue & Ng, 1999; Zhang, Hummert, & Savundranayagum, 2004) has shown that older adults are stronger proponents of the intergenerational hierarchical relationship, and with modernization and the introduction of Western values that emphasize equality and individuality, young people are becoming strong proponents of equal status in communication with elders. This new imbalance adds to the dynamics of intergenerational communication in a society undergoing dramatic economic, political, and ideological changes, and may well become a source of tension in intergenerational relationships.

“In the present era all age groups have to share the burden of adjusting to change” (Strom, Strom, Shen, Li, & Sun, 1996, p. 388). When grandparents show understanding and tolerance to the disobedient behaviors of their adolescent and young-adult grandchildren and engage themselves in learning from the younger generation, it demonstrates their effort to adjust to change and to sustain the harmony in the intergenerational relationship. However, support for this new orientation of a

more equal intergenerational relationship may not be easy to obtain, for such an orientation can be misconstrued as an attempt to challenge or even abandon the Confucius tradition of elder respect. The balance of harmony and tension in the GP-GC relationship also symbolizes a balance between continuity and change, indicating the nature of the GP-GC relationship—especially between grandparents and older grandchildren—is changing from transmission to negotiation (Hagestad, 1985). Thus, in portraying grandparents as understanding, tolerant, and willing to learn from younger generations, the magazine is actually fulfilling its role of being an agent for social changes. Moreover, the older generation's open-mindedness not only helps to sustain harmony in intergenerational relationships, but it may be beneficial to their own psychological well-being.

It is generally acknowledged that characteristics of the GP-GC relationship are influenced by myriad factors. The age of grandparents, as well as that of grandchildren, is one important factor. With the majority of grandchildren in the articles being preschool and school-aged children, grandparents' caring image and their caregiver role permeate the GP-GC relationship. Such portrayals of grandparents indicate that older adults, especially young-old and mid-old adults, continue to make contributions to families. They are often caregivers rather than care recipients. Although there are more and more nuclear families in China, it is still common for Chinese grandparents and grandchildren to live in the same extended family household. Consistent with previous findings of research in real life (e.g., Kamo, 1998; Goh, 2006; 2009), the majority of the grandparents in the sampled articles had

an “involved” relationship with their grandchildren. The grandparents did not seem to endorse the “non-interference policy” adhered to by Western grandparents, for they saw grandchildren as an extension of the family. Although direct confrontation between grandparents and parents was rare, ambivalent feelings of parents towards the grandparents’ way of child rearing are not hard to observe. How grandparents and parents communicate and negotiate their roles in child rearing and caregiving is another issue that involves the balancing between cultural traditions and modern ideology, and it surely calls for researchers’ special attention as well as that of the parties involved.

A return to the findings about old age in Beijing (Boermel, 2006) indicates that multiple narratives about old age coexist in China and they may be presented in various media venues and genres. Contemporary Chinese society may address different aspects of older people (e.g., old age, aging population, grandparenthood) in differing, and even contradictory ways. Multiple narratives, such as those about social inclusion, aging population prediction and implications, resource distribution and dependency rate in an aged society, and older people’s contribution to families and society, all compete for media coverage at the same time. When the emphasis is on treating the aging population as a social issue, old age tends to be framed as a problem to be solved. However, when older people’s lived experience is explored both in real life and in media portrayals, the positive image of older people still dominates. It appears that media portrayals of older adults in China are more positive than negative, but variations exist in different media outlets and genres. One could

also argue that the themes of the aging of Chinese society and the increase in the number of “empty nesters” in news reports not only show the attention the mass media give to the rapid demographic changes in recent years and in future projections, but also indicate a concern for the urgency to transform and build a new and more reliable social security and welfare system that will be capable of providing care for the elderly in addition to the care that is provided at the family level if available. The coexistence of multiple narratives about older people in China also indicates that no single narrative about old age has achieved hegemony, and the only theme that permeates public discourses may be that of continuity and change.

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## Appendix A

### Coding Protocol

#### *Introduction*

This coding protocol is aimed at addressing how grandparents are portrayed in the articles featuring grandparent-grandchild interactions from *Laotongzhi Zhiyou* (*Friend of Old Comrades*) with respect to their images and grandparenting roles.

#### *Procedure*

Variables associated with the research questions are coded by treating each article as a unit of analysis. When there is more than one grandparent mentioned in an article, determine if there is sufficient description of both grandparents to merit an overall assessment of the portrayal of both grandparents. For example, if both grandparents are described as providing care to a grandchild, then the image and grandparenting roles should be coded based on the overall assessment of the portrayals of both grandparents. However, if only one grandparent is portrayed and there is a lack of description of the other, then code the image and grandparenting roles based on your assessment of the portrayal of one grandparent.

There are nine variables in addition to the 10 stereotype variables (i.e., each stereotype is considered a variable) on the coding sheet. Definitions and coding instructions for the variables are listed below in the order of the sequence of the variables on the coding sheet. Check the corresponding bracket next to the coding category of your choice. Before the variables are coded, technical data for each article (i.e., article number, year/issue/page) should be recorded on top of the first page of

the coding sheet.

*Article Number:* Code the article number as a number from 1 to 195, beginning with the first article in the January issue of 1995 and end with the last article in the December issue of 2007.

*Year/Issue/Page:* Code the year, issue number, and page number of each article (e.g., 07/08/12-13 stands for pages 12-13, August 2007).

*Authorship:* Code the writer of each article as 1) grandfather, 2) grandmother, 3) grandchild, or 4) other, based on direct mentions, references, implications, or other clues in the article or in the author's name.

*Type of Grandparents:* Code the grandparent(s) in each article as 1) paternal grandfather, 2) paternal grandmother, 3) maternal grandfather, 4) maternal grandmother, 5) paternal grandparents, or 6) maternal grandparents, based on direct mentions, references, implications, or other clues in the article.

*Type of Grandchildren:* Code the grandchild(ren) in each article as 1) grandson, 2) granddaughter, or 3) both grandson and granddaughter, based on direct mentions, references, implications, or other clues in the article.

*Age Range of Grandchildren:* Code the grandchild(ren) in each article as one of the three categories: 1) preschool (under 6), 2) school age to adolescence (6 to 18), or 3) adult (19 and above). Focus on explicit statements about the grandchildren's chronological age and any other references (e.g., the grandchild goes to a day care center or elementary school, his/her grade level, is at college, is married, has his/her own children, etc.).

*Caregiver*: Code the grandparent(s) in each article as *caregiver* if the grandparent(s) provided part-time to full-time care for preschool and school-age grandchildren, prepared them for school (e.g., cooking, doing laundry and providing day care for grandchildren), or functioned as “substitute parents,” from feeding grandchildren to taking care of their other daily needs. A score of 1 is assigned to the grandparent(s) if the caregiver role was played; a score of 2 is assigned if the grandparent(s) did not play the role; a score of 3 is assigned if there is a lack of information to determine whether the role was played.

*Other Roles*: Code the grandparent(s) in each article as one of four categories of grandparenting roles—*playmate*, *spoiling grandparent*, *mentor*, or *other*.

- 1) *Playmate* is coded if grandparents and grandchildren enjoyed each other’s company in specific activities, such as playing games and enjoying outdoor activities. The focus is on playfulness and having fun.
- 2) *Spoiling grandparent* is coded if the grandparents displayed lenient attitudes toward their grandchildren’s mischievous behaviors without applying authority or discipline; they enjoyed the opportunity to indulge their grandchildren, or even bought their affection with gifts (e.g., indulging mischievous behaviors). While they might be playmates, the focus here is on grandparents’ obvious behavioral manifestations of spoiling grandchildren.
- 3) *Mentor* is coded if the grandparents shared skills and talents, taught

knowledge, provided advice and guidance, listened to their grandchildren, or showed understanding to them (e.g., sharing knowledge with grandchildren, teaching grandchildren to respect the elderly).

- 4) *Other* is coded if the grandparents played a role other than a playmate, a spoiling grandparent, or a mentor.

*Valence*: Code portrayals of grandparents in each article as *positive*, *negative*, or *neutral*:

- 1) *Positive* is coded if the image of grandparents was promoted in the article. Grandparents may be depicted as having laudable qualities such as being kind, loving, supportive, unselfish, self-sacrificing, compassionate, responsible, hardworking, wise, happy, etc.
- 2) *Negative* is coded if grandparents were depicted as disregarding others' feelings or interest and was not well accepted. Grandparents may be described as having qualities such as selfish, unreasonable, inconsiderate, indifferent, intrusive, annoying, meddlesome, ill-tempered, complaining, overly dependent, etc.
- 3) *Neutral* is coded when grandparents demonstrated a mixture of positive and negative qualities, or there is a lack of information to determine the nature of a portrayal.

*Respect*: Code the grandparent(s) in each article as *respected*, *disrespected*, or *unspecified*.

- 1) *Respected* is coded if grandchildren or others showed deferential regard,

courtesy or obedience to grandparents. Examples include, but are not limited to, using expressions of deference or esteem, expressing filial obligations, showing willingness to reciprocate care and love received from grandparents.

- 2) *Disrespected* is coded if grandchildren and/or others showed contempt, impoliteness, disregard, discourtesy, or irreverence to grandparents.
- 3) *Unspecified* is coded if there is a lack of information to determine whether the grandparents under analysis were respected.

*Health*: Code grandparents in each article as *healthy*, *unhealthy*, or *unspecified*.

- 1) *Healthy* is coded if grandparents were depicted as being able to maintain an active or normal lifestyle or they were depicted as being able to take care of their grandchildren with no signs of ill health.
- 2) *Unhealthy* is coded if grandparents were depicted as being unable to maintain an active or normal lifestyle due to obvious health problems, such as being weak, chronically ill, bed-ridden, or hospitalized.
- 3) *Unspecified* is coded if there is a lack of information to determine the quality of grandparents' physical health.

*Stereotypes*: In order to code the 10 stereotypes accurately, it is essential that each coder understand without ambiguity the meaning of each trait in the cluster of each stereotype in addition to the overall image each stereotype projects.

Positive stereotypes include *Perfect Grandparent*, *Golden Ager*, *Honorable Elder*, and *Elder States Person*:

*Perfect Grandparent* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as loving, supportive, kind, understanding, honest, polite, friendly, and generous.

*Golden Ager* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as healthy, happy, active, fun-loving, health-conscious, tidy, young-at-heart, mellow, self-accepting, and future-oriented.

*Honorable Elder* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as capable, wise, knowledgeable, productive, confident, skilled, experienced, determined, principled, and independent.

*Elder States Person* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as well-informed, political, sociable, responsible, hard-working, self-sacrificing, patriotic, liberal, tough, and well-travelled.

Negative stereotypes include *Chinese Feudalist*, *Despondent*,

*Shrew/Curmudgeon*, *Bossy Superior*, and *Impaired Elder*:

*Chinese Feudalist* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as dependent, afraid, naïve, superstitious, prejudiced, conservative, poor, old-fashioned, and male-favoritism.

*Despondent* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as frustrated, depressed, sad, hopeless, bored, and lonely.

*Shrew/Curmudgeon* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as boastful, face-conscious, ill-tempered, inflexible, bitter, snobbish, selfish, miserly, jealous, and stubborn.

*Bossy Superior* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as complaining, *Laodao* (唠叨), gossipy, meddlesome, nosy, worried, and demanding.

*Impaired Elder* refers to the portrayal of grandparents as sick, feeble, slow-moving, slow-thinking, forgetful, careless, incoherent, incompetent, and sedentary.

*Traditionalist* is a neutral stereotype. It refers to the portrayal of grandparents as content, noncompetitive, quiet, family-oriented, frugal, prudent, reminiscent, nostalgic, and emotional.

An ordinal scale of 0, 1, and 2 is to be used to code each portrayal based on your overall assessment of a portrayal while considering the presence of the traits in each stereotype cluster. Look for words, phrases, and sentences in the form of direct mentions, descriptions, and propositions referring to the grandparent(s) within the article that are synonymous with those included in the trait cluster of each stereotype. If you consider that a portrayal is consistent (i.e., the majority of the traits are present) with a stereotype, assign the article a score of 2. If you consider that a portrayal is somewhat consistent (i.e., half or less than half of the traits are present) with a stereotype, assign the article a score of 1. Similarly, if you judge there is no consistency (i.e., two or less than two of the traits are present) between a portrayal and a stereotype, assign the article a score of 0.

You are allowed to be inductive if necessary in coding the portrayals of grandparents with respect to the consistency with the stereotypes. For example,

if grandparents are depicted as suffering from cerebral thrombosis, it can be inferred that this condition is consistent with *sick* and *slow-moving* included in the trait cluster of *Impaired Elder*.

## Appendix B

## Coding Form

Article #: \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

Year/Issue/Page: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

**Authorship**

- 1. Grandfather
- 2. Grandmother
- 3. Grandchild
- 4. Other

**Types of Grandparents**

- 5. Paternal Grandfather 爷爷
- 6. Paternal Grandmother 奶奶
- 7. Maternal Grandfather 姥姥
- 8. Maternal Grandmother 姥爷
- 9. Paternal Grandparents
- 10. Maternal Grandparents

**Types of Grandchildren**

- 1. Grandson 孙子或外孙
- 2. Granddaughter 孙女或外孙女
- 3. Both Grandson and Granddaughter

**Age Range of Grandchildren**

- 1. Preschool
- 2. School Age to Adolescence
- 3. Adult

**Roles of Grandparents****Caregiver**

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Unspecified

**Other Roles**

- 1. Playmate
- 2. Spoiling Grandparent
- 3. Mentor
- 4. Other

**Image of Grandparents****Valence**

- 1. Positive
- 2. Negative
- 3. Neutral

**Respect**

- 1. Respected
- 2. Disrespected
- 3. Unspecified

**Physical Health**

- 1. Healthy
- 2. Unhealthy
- 3. Unspecified

### Age Stereotypes of Grandparents

0 = inconsistent. Two or less than two of the traits are present in the portrayal of grandparents;

1 = somewhat consistent. Half or less than half of the traits are present in the portrayal of grandparents;

2 = consistent. The majority of the traits are present in the portrayal of grandparents

#### 1. Perfect Grandparent:

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Honest		Polite		Loving		Supportive		Kind	
Understanding		Friendly		Generous					

#### 2. Golden Ager:

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Health-conscious		Healthy		Tidy		Happy		Young-at-heart	
Active		Fun-loving		Mellow		Self-accepting		Future-oriented	

#### 3. Honorable Elder:

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Capable		Wise		Knowledgeable		Productive		Skilled	
Experienced		Determined		Confident		Principled		Independent	

**4. Elder States Person:**

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Well-informed		Political		Patriotic		Sociable		Liberal	
Tough		Self-sacrificing		Responsible		Hard-working		Well-traveled	

**5. Chinese Feudalist:**

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Dependent		Afraid		Naïve		Superstitious		Prejudiced	
Male-favoritism		Old-fashioned		Conservative		Poor			

**6. Traditionalist:**

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Content		Noncompetitive		Quiet		Family-oriented		Frugal	
Prudent		Reminiscent		Nostalgic		Emotional			

**7. Despondent:**

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Frustrated		Sad		Hopeless		Bored		Depressed	
Lonely									

**8. Shrew/Curmudgeon:**

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Boastful		Face-conscious		Ill-tempered		Inflexible		Bitter	
Snobbish		Selfish		Miserly		Jealous		Stubborn	

**9. Bossy Superior:**

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Complaining		<i>Laodao</i>		Gossipy		Nosy		Meddlesome	
Worried		Demanding							

**10. Impaired Elder:**

0		1		2					
Extremely Weak		Weak		Average		Strong		Extremely Strong	
Forgetful		Careless		Slow-thinking		Incoherent		Slow-moving	
Incompetent		Sick		Feeble		Sedentary			