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Abstract:

This study extended Harwood, McKee, and Lin's (2000) research on intergenerational communication schemas by examining young adults' cognitive representations of communication with older adults in Taiwan. Following Harwood et al.'s (2000) procedures, forty-one Taiwanese college students (*M* age = 20.36) described conversations with an older adult in response to a variety of interviewer prompts. Transcripts were read and content analyzed by the first two authors. To capture the characteristics of the conversation descriptions, eleven coding dimensions were generated based on schema theory. All conversation descriptions were coded along these dimensions on a four-point Likert scale. Coding results were submitted to hierarchical cluster analysis, yielding five schemas: *Mutually satisfying*, *helping*, *mixed feelings*, *small talk*, and *mutually unpleasant* conversations. Results are discussed in terms of similarities and differences from Harwood et al.'s (2000) study, schema theory, intergenerational communication, and Chinese cultural norms.

Keywords: Aging, Cultural values, Intergenerational communication, Schemas, Taiwan

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Taiwanese young adults' intergenerational communication schemas

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A considerable amount of work examining factors that influence the processes and

consequences of intergenerational communication has been produced as the aging population has

increased (e.g., Coupland, Coupland, & Giles, 1989; Giles, Fox, & Smith, 1993; Williams &

Nussbaum, 2001). Since most of theory in this area is developed from a North American or

Western European perspective, cultural issues gain particular salience when the research focus

shifts to a non-Western society. Core cultural values have a profound influence on perceptions

and behavior, and a society's value systems are largely enacted through its members'

communicative practices in social relationships. The current study examined young people's

perceptions of intergenerational communication in Taiwan from a communication schemas

perspective (Harwood, McKee, & Lin, 2000).

Schemas are our cognitive structures about people or events which guide the ways in which we

approach interactions (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Encompassing multiple components, (e.g., visual, verbal,

emotional, evaluative, etc.), communication schemas are cognitive representations of our context-based

communication with a target person or group, derived from our accumulated knowledge and our communication experiences in a given society. This paper will begin by reviewing existing literatures in two areas. First, attention will be given to research on intergenerational communication schemas, grounded in research on stereotypes and schemas. Second, research on intergenerational communication in East Asian countries will be discussed. These discussions lead to our research interest in that what common cognitive patterns might be shared by Taiwanese young people, and how the Chinese cultural norm of filial piety influences Taiwanese young people's intergenerational communication.

Intergenerational Communication Research in the West: Stereotypes and Schemas

Our social experiences with people and events are categorized into cognitive structures. One such structure, the stereotype, is a schema concerning people and activated by contextual factors (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Hamilton, 1981; Hamilton & Trolier, 1986; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner, & Strahm, 1994). Fiske and Taylor (1991) stated, a schema is "a cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including attributes and the relations among those attributes" (p. 98). Schemas provide information for us to manage situations and constantly affect our judgments and memories for our experiences.

The relationships between our schemas and intergenerational communication are evident. Harwood and Williams (1998) used stereotype traits identified in Hummert et al.'s (1994) study to examine such relationships from young people's perspectives. The results showed that different sets of stereotypical traits were associated with different evaluations of intergenerational communication (e.g., levels of speech attunement, complaining, emotions, communication satisfaction). Other studies using stereotype traits to prompt responses also demonstrated considerable impact on communication expectations and/or impression formation (Hummert,

1994; Ryan, 1992). As useful and powerful as they can be, stereotypes are trait-based person perception schemas which provide limited information about context-based communication. The current study intended adopted a communication schema perspetive (Harwood et al., 2000) which invokes a broader cognitive representation of a communication event.

The communication schema approach emerged from two perspectives. First, Cantor, Mischel, and Schwartz (1982a, 1982b) suggest that people's social knowledge involves associations between types of people and *situations*. Second, Carlston (1994) proposed Associated Systems Theory to describe how social knowledge is structured as cognitive representations that are composed of a variety of categorical information, such as traits, behavioral and affective responses. Carlston suggests that utilization of these cognitive representations is enhanced by the interrelatedness of these various elements. In short, communication schemas are not simply a person's trait-based perceptions of an interlocutor, but also his/her holistic perceptions of interacting with that person.

Harwood (1998) investigated young people's communication expectations and evaluations of intergenerational communication with an older adult. One of two sets of stereotype traits (perfect grandparent or despondent) was provided to the participants who then were asked to describe a conversation with Jennifer. Those open-ended descriptions generated six intergenerational communication schemas (*helping*, *learning*, *gerontophobic*, *gerontophilic*, *pity* and *polite*) representing different sets of expectations about conversations with Jennifer. When analyzing the relationships between the typologies that emerged and the two stereotype traits, the *helping* and *pity* ICSs were exclusively associated with Jennifer described with despondent traits. Harwood's findings offered initial empirical evidence that communication schemas existed, and these schemas demonstrated coherent patterns across these ICSs.

Building upon Harwood's (1998) findings, Harwood et al. (2000) sought to explore young people's intergenerational communication schemas (ICSs) and understand their hierarchical structure. They identified eight ICSs grouped at three hierarchical levels: level 1 (2 clusters) – *positive*, *negative*, level 2 (5 clusters) – *positive and close*, *positive and respectful*, *negative and sympathy*, *negative and no connection*, *negative and hostile*, and level 3 (8 clusters) – *overwhelmingly positive*, *positive and help*, *positive and respectful*, *neutral*, *negative and sympathy*, *negative and no connection*, *no connection but help*, and *negative and hostile*. These ICSs illustrated the complexity of cognitive representations of intergenerational communication in the US. The current study was extends Harwood et al.'s (2000) research to East Asia.

Intergenerational Communication Research in the East

It has been suggested that one should begin with the teachings of Confucianism in order to understand the discourses concerning aging in East Asian cultures (Chang, 1997). Confucianism clearly dictates an individual's roles and proper behaviors in relation to others with filial piety (*Xiao*) as its core value. The basic tenet of filial piety guides people's attitudes towards parents and older adults in general (Gao, 1996; Noels, Giles, Gallois, & Ng, 2001). The influence of this cultural value has been well documented in China (Levy & Langer, 1994), Japan (Tobin, 1987), and Taiwan (Lee, Parish, & Willis, 1994). Ho (1994) claimed that intergenerational relationships in Chinese culture are actually defined by filial piety: "the attributes of intergenerational relationships governed by filial piety are structural, enduring and invariant across situations within Chinese culture" (p. 350). In addition to obeying and honoring one's family elders, one needs to provide material and emotional support, continue the family line, and perform ceremonies of ancestral worship (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Ng, Loong, Liu, & Weatherall, 2000). The concept of filial piety can be understood as a cultural value wrapped in

collectivism, guaranteed by hierarchy, and enacted through defined role relationships with the goal of preserving desired social harmony.

The recent studies in stereotypes of old age and intergenerational communication in the East Asian countries, as discussed below, suggested that the norm of filial piety still holds its ground and is enacted in people's stereotypes of and attitudes towards older adults. However, at the same time, it is undergoing challenges and young people expressed certain level of dissatisfaction and struggled with traditional behavioral norms.

Gallois et al.'s (1996) study on the impact of filial piety indicated that young Asian participants scored higher on items suggesting practical support (e.g., taking care of aging parents and providing financial support) and lower on those suggesting communicative support (e.g., listen patiently, retain contact) than their Western counterparts. To the extent that filial piety obligation from young to old is manifested in interaction, we might expect a greater emphasis on status marking (e.g., older people emphasizing power differentials between generations, expecting status-related terms of address) and less emphasis on intimacy and bonding (Yeh, Williams, & Maruyama, 1998; Yu & Gu, 1990).

Studies that have examined age-related perceptions in East Asia reflect the influence of cultural values and beliefs. The endorsement of filial piety was supported by Zhang and Hummert's (2001) interview accounts. Young interviewees "expressed their willingness to respect older persons regardless of context and personal satisfaction, identifying *Xiao* as the ethical norm to follow" (p. 222). At the same time, young people were especially bored of older adults' unpleasant, intrusive, and critical "*Laodao*, meaning endless repeating" (p. 215) and desired more equality when interacting with older adults, while older interviewees expressed a necessity to maintain the generational hierarchy. The essential elements of obligation/politeness

and hierarchy prescribed by filial piety, therefore, may create tensions for intergenerational communication and at times, may erupt into open intergenerational conflicts. As Zhang & Hummert (2001) put it "tensions and harmonies coexist in a *Yin* and *Yang*" fashion, reflecting a mixed picture in Chinese intergenerational communication (p. 221).

Other research also has suggested that the influence of *Xiao* may be declining. For instance, Harwood et al. (1996) examined the traits younger people associated with young, middle-aged and older adults in six countries around the Pacific Rim. The results showed that evaluations of the trait "generous" increased with age in the US and Australian samples while they decreased with age in Hong Kong and PRC, a finding replicated in older adults' perceptions (Harwood et al., 2001). It was suggested that rapid economic growth and modernization might have shaken the core value system (e.g., filial piety) in these East Asian countries.

Zhang, Hummert and Garstka (2002) argued that using Western-generated list of traits to investigate cross-cultural differences/similarities might mask the picture of aging in East Asian countries. They examined stereotype traits of older adults generated by Chinese young, middle-aged and older participant (PRC) and compared with earlier research reported by U.S. and Chinese New Zealand participants (Hummert, et al., 1994; Ng et al., 1999). Results indicated that the majority of the traits are overlapped with those generated in the West, however, traits unique to Chinese age stereotypes were also uncovered, both positive and negative (e.g., experienced, face-conscious, *Laodao*, male-favoritism, meddlesome). Their findings provided evidence in recognizing the nature of perceptions of aging as both culturally grounded and universally shared. In a similar vein, we argue that some of the intergenerational communication schemas held by Taiwanese young people might be influenced and reflective of the Chinese cultural norms and some might be similar to those found in the West.

Taiwan is a country rooted in Confucianism and yet advancing itself to be economically competitive. With its economic growth, Taiwanese society has also experienced "culture shocks," with some traditional cultural values (e.g., filial piety) remaining intact and some becoming westernized (e.g., autonomy) (Yang, 1996). Studies (e.g., Giles, Liang, Noels, & McCann, 2001; Yeh et al., 1998) concluded that Taiwanese young people were more negative about older people, felt more deferential and obligated in interactions than their Euro-American counterparts, and tended to avoid interactions with older adults. Taiwanese young people, therefore, may endorse the ethic of filial piety or respect for old age, but do not actively engage with old people.

The primary goal of the current study was to examine Taiwanese young people's cognitive schemas of intergenerational communication. To borrow from Cantor et al., we wanted to examine how "perceptions and behavior are created 'in the head' and biased toward preexisting

expectancies" (1982b, p. 62). Hence the first goal was to describe Taiwanese young people's schemas for intergenerational communication. Once these schemas were uncovered, the second goal was to compare the Taiwanese ICSs to those from Harwood et al.'s (2000) study in the US. This comparison allows us to see connections between cultural norms and social knowledge concerning intergenerational communication.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Forty-one college students from two regions of Taiwan were interviewed (28 females, 13 males, *M* age = 20.36, *SD* = 2.98) and received monetary compensation in exchange for their participation. The interview protocol was based on Harwood et al.'s (2000) study which was originally adapted from Cantor et al.'s (1982b) coding scheme for analyzing person-in-situation prototypes, and from Carlston's (1994) Associated Systems Theory. The interview protocol was translated into Chinese and back translated by a bilingual Taiwanese graduate student. Two pilot interviews were performed to correct problems related to the interview questions and procedures.

One-on-one interviews were conducted by the first author. Participants were first instructed to imagine and describe a "typical" conversation with an older person (65 or above). After the description was provided, additional probes solicited more detailed descriptions of the conversation (e.g., "What might you feel like at the end of the conversation?" "In this conversation, what does the older person look like?"). Participants were free to elaborate on whichever elements of the conversation they felt were salient. Following the description of a "typical" conversation, participants were instructed to imagine and describe one to three additional conversations with an older person. These additional descriptions were solicited using prompts from the following categories: Family/non-family, senile/healthy, socially inept and

bitter/wise and kind, positive/negative experience, ideal/worst conversation, and strangers on the bus or in the subway. The interviewer selected which type of older adult and/or situation to prompt for after listening to participants' previous description(s) with the goal of achieving a contrast with previous descriptions. For instance, if the target older person in the "typical" conversation seemed to be a family member, the participant was then asked to imagine a conversation with a non-family member. The number of intergenerational conversation descriptions (*ICD*s) obtained per interview ranged from 1-4 depending on the length of the descriptions provided (*Mean* = 2.57, total *N* of ICDs = 106).

The retrieval of our schemas depends upon their accessibility to individuals and their cultural pervasiveness. It is likely that we obtain generic knowledge structures for the situation (Carlston & Smith, 1996) as well as descriptions of specific situations that are seen as representative of the general situation being asked about. We treat those two forms as functionally equivalent for our purposes and did not attempt to differentiate "real" from "imagined" in participants' responses (Wyer & Carlston, 1994).

The first two authors read each ICD and generated coding dimensions independently based on the salient emotional and communicative characteristics that occurred across multiple respondents' ICDs. These two individuals discussed their coding dimensions to reach consensus on the key dimensions. Eleven dimensions emerged (see Table 1). Each ICD was coded along these dimensions using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = absent, 2 = low, 3 = moderate 4 = strong). The first two authors and another bilingual coder practiced two rounds of coding on ten ICDs to check understanding of definitions and exhaustiveness of the coding categories. The first two authors then coded all ICDs, including an overlap of 30 ICDs (31.25%) which were randomly selected to check reliability (reported in Table 1).

Results

The ICDs' ratings along the eleven categories were submitted to hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's method. Examination of the agglomeration schedule and dendrogram revealed that a five-cluster solution was appropriate. Each cluster is interpreted as an intergenerational communication schema (ICS). Mean scores for each of the ICSs on the eleven coding dimensions were examined and analyzed using ANOVA to assist in interpretation (see Table 2: ANOVA results are omitted because tests of significance are not relevant and would consume large amounts of space). The ANOVA and cluster analysis indicated that the five ICSs could be subsumed under three broader categories (positive conversations, mixed feelings, and negative conversations). Each schema is described below within the three broader categories. The number of ICDs in each is provided in parentheses.

Positive Conversations (N = 40)

This cluster reflected conversations in which both young and older people were generally satisfied with the conversation experiences. Young people were willing to participate in the conversation and felt that their conversations were helpful for older adults (e.g., spending time with older adults, being good company). The perceived level of intimidation by the older adults was low. Within this broad description, two clusters emerged.

Mutually satisfying conversation (n = 13). As can be seen in Excerpts 1 and 2, this ICS was characterized by young people showing interest in conversing with older adults and believing that these conversations made older adults feel better or happier (e.g., "I enjoyed the conversation very much" "He would be happy that I wanted to know about his past experiences"). The older people were perceived to appreciate the young people's company or effort. Interview accounts revealed that young people respected older adults' experiences and would apply those

experiences to their current or future situations (e.g., "the experiences would be helpful for me in the future"). Young people did not indicate the need to adapt their conversation style to show respect (e.g., "I could share a lot of my personal feelings and thoughts with her"). Older adults were perceived as outgoing or active. The notion of generation gap was mentioned less frequently than in other schemas. Young people wanted to engage in the conversation (e.g., "I would go visit her once a week"). To some extent, these two excerpts suggested a rewarding conversation schema, and the age difference was treated positively.

Excerpt 1

"I enjoyed the conversation very much. I could learn how to talk to older people and also learn a lot about his experiences. These experiences would be helpful for me in the future. He would be happy that I wanted to know about his past experiences because not many people would ask about things like that" (ICD 51).

Excerpt 2

"After we talked, I felt that this older lady understood me, and I could share a lot of my personal feelings and thoughts with her…She was a very optimistic kind of person and had positive attitudes toward life. I wanted to make her feel happier too. If she did not mind, I would go visit her once a week, and I wanted my mom to know her too" (ICD 102).

   Helping conversation (n = 27). Similar to the first ICS, this one contained references to young people's intention to make older adults happy (see Excerpts 3 and 4: e.g., "you knew what to say to make her happy"). Unlike the first ICS, this cluster had remarks more clearly indicating that young people felt sympathetic towards older people which often became important sources for young people's communication satisfaction (e.g., "I was happy too because I could spend some

time with her"). The conversation tended to be one-way, in terms of the young person asking questions about the older person's life, and then letting the older person talk. Young people expressed an interest in learning about older people's lives and/or past. Being very polite and respectful with older adults and adapting topic choices to the interlocutor were expressed in these interview accounts (e.g., "we talked about the same topic every time which was fine with me"). The perceived generation gap was large (e.g., the idea that "older people live in the past," was mentioned in some cases). Older adults were perceived as being mildly *laodao* (endless repeating, see Table 2 for its definition) or demanding. Although the need to be respectful was noted, young people did not feel particularly intimidated by older people.

Excerpt 3

"You talked to this older person, and within a few minutes, you knew what type of person she was. Then, you knew what to say to make her happy. The conversation would be more enjoyable and have more things to discuss in this way" (ICD 76).

Excerpt 4

"She liked to have her family visit her, like her daughter who she didn't see very often, her daughter-in-law…I could tell that she was very happy to see us. I was happy too because I could spend some time with her even though we always talked about the same topics every time which was fine with me" (ICD 98).

Mixed Feelings Conversation (*N* = 18)

This group contained only one cluster and it revealed an ambivalent feeling about older adults and the interactions. Young people strongly felt that they were doing something nice by conversing with older adults and that older adults loved their company. Learning from older adults' past experiences was another positive aspect about the conversations (e.g., "there was so

much we can learn from older adults, their life experiences"). At the same time, the positive feelings were coupled with the need for young people to be polite or respectful. The intimidation level was greater here than in the two clusters above. Older people were perceived more as being demanding, or meddling, however, the level of older people being *laodao* was very low (e.g., "he might point his finger at me"). Older people were described as having a tendency to complain or disclose unpleasant life experiences in the conversation. Overall, the accounts suggested a satisfying conversation for the older person, but a less positive experience for the young (e.g., "I wouldn't want to prolong the conversation"). Two illustrative excerpts are included here.

Excerpt 5

"I think that there was so much we can learn from older adults, their life experiences, there were many things you could discuss with them…I think he would be happier when I talked to him. But, he wouldn't agree with me on certain things, like my ways of thinking about things, young people today, their life styles. I would be more patient with older adults because of their age. But I wouldn't want to prolong the conversation" (ICD 79).

Excerpt 6

"I let him complain about his life so that he could release some stress he had at home, but I did not like that either because he might point his finger to me and blame me for something I did not do. But, I guess he did not mean to do that. It was the environment and his life experiences that made him become this way. I was happy to be able to share some of his feelings after all" (ICD 16).

Negative Conversation (*N* = 38)

Two clusters were included in this category. The common characteristics shared by these two clusters were that young people did not feel their conversations had a positive influence on their

interlocutor such as making them happy or less lonely. Young people were not very interested in engaging in, nor were they satisfied with the conversations.

Small talk conversation (*n* = 18). A prominent characteristic of this cluster was that young people treated the conversation as a daily occurrence and made minimum effort in terms of their time or attention to the conversation. There was no intention to prolong the conversation, and an indifferent attitude towards or distance from the conversation was expressed (e.g., "most of the time, I wouldn't really hear what he said to me"). The small talk orientation was also illustrated in cases where young people noted that they would not have much lasting memory of the conversation (e.g., "I would forget what this conversation was about right after we finished"). Polite and accommodative comments were commonly found across these ICDs (e.g., "I was coping with the situation in order to be respectful"). The level of communication satisfaction was moderate to low. Older adults, on the other hand, were perceived as enjoying the conversation. Very few descriptions were about older adults, and this might be due to lack of interest in the conversations. Two illustrative excerpts are included below:

Excerpt 7

"Most of the time, I wouldn't really hear what he said to me. To me, talking with this kind of older adult did not mean much to me. I mean, his experiences might be very important and useful, but I felt like I did not listen to them with my heart. I would forget what this conversation was about right after we finished it. I did not reflect on it or think about it. He asked me questions, I answered. But, most of the time, I was a listener instead of trying to find things to talk with him. I think he was happy to see me and I felt happy to see him too but I did not like to be in a situation where I did not know what to say, so the conversation became awkward" (ICD 95).

Excerpt 8

"When I talked to him, I would be in a bit of a bad mood, but I still think that he wanted

to be cared for. He needed me to talk to him; he would like me to talk to him. But, his

responses would put me in a bad mood. Basically, I was coping with the situation in order

to be respectful; therefore, I kept a smiling face all the time. I didn't want to tell him what

I thought. I would say what he wanted me to say so he would be happy. I would think to

myself, 'please let this conversation be over. I don't want to pretend anymore' (ICD2).

Mutually unpleasant conversation ($n = 20$). A common experience reported in this schema

was a feeling of frustration with the older interlocutor (e.g., "he was unhappy with whatever I

did. Nothing was right"). Young people avoided or showed little interest in maintaining such

conversations, nor did they foresee that conversations had any positive outcome for older adults.

Conversations were restrained as a result of young people's fear of upsetting older adults, or

because the older adults were already angry for something young people did. The level of

intimidation was greater than the level of being respectful or polite in this cluster (e.g., "I was

intimidated by his seriousness, so the conversation stopped without really finishing it"). Older

adults were described as stubborn, meddling, and also *laodao*; they had a tendency to correct

young people's behavior and extended negative comments to young people in general (e.g., "he

picked on everything I did, *laodao*, *laodao*, and *laodao*"). Therefore, young people believed that

old people were unhappy too about the conversation. Two illustrative excerpts are included here.

Excerpt 9

"He was unhappy with whatever I did. Nothing was right. He used his standards for me.

He adopted a *laodao* technique when talking to me. He picked on every aspect of me;

from my clothing style and hair style, to me as a person, the way I talk, *laodao*, and

laodao. I really wanted to say bad things back at him, but there was an age difference here. I had to keep smiling and pretended to be respectful. If he was one of my peers, I would have yelled back at him right away" (ICD 71).

Excerpt 10

"This kind of older adult is usually very lonely, very old. I didn't understand what he said, and he didn't understand what I said either. Because he spoke so softly that I couldn't hear him very well. I dared not to ask him to repeat again because there was a distance between us. I was intimidated by his seriousness, so the conversation stopped without really finishing it. I turned around to do other things which he did not even notice at all and just kept saying something in his mouth. It was really a very bad feeling" (ICD 21).

Discussion

The *helping* schema was the most common among the five ICSs. Young people tended to help older people by spending time with them, showing proper respect, or showing interest in older persons' lives in the conversations. This ICS views old age as linked to loneliness, and intergenerational communication as a chance to elevate older persons' spirits and to reconnect older adults to society. This powerless image of older adults was also echoed by Chiu (2000), who conducted in-depth interviews with 498 Taiwanese residents in four age groups (12-19, 20-40, 41-64, and 65 and above). The interview results found that the most frequently mentioned image of old age by the 20-40 age group was – pitiful (including abandoned by others, bored, sad, no goals for life, neglected, and lonely). The helping tendency, on one hand, brought satisfaction to younger people but, on the other hand, implied a power imbalance between young and old with young people having more power than older adults.

Second, older adults' experience was a unifying force of but also a limiting factor for intergenerational communication. Older people's wisdom is universally recognized across cultures, and this holds true in these Taiwanese ICSs whether it to be in a negative or positive schema. Numerous interview accounts revealed that young adults, to a great extent, were motivated by an attitude of "learning from older people's experience" when engaging in intergenerational conversation. This intergroup element was not perceived as a barrier but a connection to establish common ground for young and old people. Young respondents indicated that they would not accept criticism from their peers, but would accept the same criticism from their elders, because older people "have eaten more salt than young people have eaten rice after all" (i.e., have had more experience in life).

On the other hand, older adults' experience also limited or stopped young people from trying to engage in conversations for the experience may not be applicable to their current situations. In addition to cohort experiences between generations that naturally create some distance between young and old, dramatic changes in Taiwanese society may enlarge that gap. Traditional values such as thrift, education and job stability are not well-received by today's Taiwanese young people. As a result, they may dismiss older adults' opinions and suggestions even while appearing respectful and attentive (McGee & Barker, 1982; Sharps, Price-Sharps, & Hanson, 1998). Chiu's (2000) interviewees in the 12-19 and 20-40 age groups also expressed these two-sided impressions of old age.

Young people's rejection of older people's advice may be due to the way in which advice is offered – through *laodao*, a common communicative feature associated with Chinese older people. "*Laodao* is the repetitious advice and questions of older adults" (Zhang & Hummert, 2001, p. 224). Zhang and Hummert (2001) suggested that *laodao* may overlap with "nagging" or

"over-parenting" in the West literatures (Giles & Williams, 1994, Williams & Giles, 1996), but is not identical. When advice is communicated to young people in a "*laodao*" way, they tend to feel being criticized and imposed upon with unwanted advice, and associate traits such as "outdated," "stubborn," "conservative" and "living in the past" with older adults.

In the current study, *laodao* was more associated the *mutually unpleasant* and *helping*, but not with the *small talk* and *mixed feelings* schemas. The reason *laodao* was seen more in the *helping* schema might emerge from an association that lonely older people tend to repeatedly offer advice to prove their self worth, to reassure their age status or to prevent young people from making the same mistakes they made and for which they are suffering the consequences (A Chinese saying states, "not listening to older adults, immediate failures").

Cultural Variability in Intergenerational Communication Schemas

Taiwanese ICSs and US ICSs from Harwood et al. (2000) can be compared in three ways. First, the current study appears to demonstrate a smaller repertoire of ICSs and fewer levels of abstraction in Taiwan (two levels and five ICSs in Taiwan; three levels and eight ICSs in the US). While this might be due to subjects' knowledge, purposes, or cognitive complexity (Wiggins, 1979), we suspect that a cultural explanation is most relevant. As discussed earlier, the norm of filial piety grants older people authority and much higher power over younger people. Direct confrontation or challenges are considered disrespectful. When interaction styles are firmly established such as these, variation tends to be smaller. Although stereotype traits of aging still can be as diverse as those identified in the West (Zhang, et al., 2002), communication schemas which involve not only traits of older people, but also other components (e.g., emotions, behavior) require evaluations of appropriate behavior and interaction styles which in turn may reduce the available repertoire.

Second, the range between the most positive and most negative schemas was smaller in Taiwan than the US. This may be due to a slight difference in the method. Harwood et al.'s (2000) study used summaries of intergenerational communication descriptions (ICDs) in the coding portion of the study whereas the current study used complete transcripts. Summaries of ICDs may filter out some important information and create an exaggerated sense of a consistently positive or negative description. Using complete ICDs allowed us to see the ways in which interviewees described intergenerational communication in a natural flow. The increased information in such descriptions might result in less extreme evaluations (Linville, 1982). The reduced range in Taiwan might also be due to greater self-monitoring among the Taiwanese respondents (Snyder, 1974). Taiwanese young interviewees frequently referred back to defined norms of intergenerational interactions in their accounts (e.g., "When I talk with older persons, I would be more serious and use honorific terms, we should pay respect to older adults after all": ICD 4). Such self-monitoring may be more common in collectivistic cultures due to a greater obligation to follow social norms and attend to the social hierarchy. Interestingly, there are no schemas with *respect* as the central characteristic in Taiwan, while one such schema did emerge in the US data. We suspect that the *respect* norm is so ubiquitous in Taiwan that it pervades all schemas.

Third, the Taiwanese and US schemas can be compared in terms of their specific content. Both cultures demonstrate a helping orientation in intergenerational interactions. However, while the Taiwan study found one helping schema, there were three different types of helping ICSs (*positive and helping*, *sympathy and helping*, and *no connection and helping* schemas) in Harwood et al.'s (2000) study. The *helping* schema in the Taiwan study had a similar outlook as the *sympathy and helping* schema in the US study. Comments such as "older people are lonely" (ICD 75), "their children do not take good care of them; their daughter-in-laws are not filial enough" (ICD 82) were commonly expressed in these accounts. In particular, sympathetic feelings were mostly from a concern that older people's children did not fulfill filial responsibilities. Interviewees expressed that they would avoid topics involving older people's

children especially the stereotypical negative relationships between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law in Taiwan. Another similarity in the two cultures was the *small talk* schema in Taiwan and the *no connection* schema in the US. Both schemas showed that young people did not engage in or care for the conversations, or feel any emotional connection with older persons. Older adults were described as cold or talkative and they were not considerate in terms of whether young interlocutors enjoyed the conversations.

A key limitation of this study is the subject population. The study advertisement was posted and announced in liberal arts and science schools where fewer male students enrollment – only one third of the interviewees were males. It is possible that the interview accounts obtained reflect female more than male perspectives on interacting with older people.

This project revealed the ICSs held by Taiwanese young people. Rather than a resentful feeling because of the politeness and obligations imposed on young people (Williams et al., 1997), results of this project find Zhang and Hummert's (2001) discussion on tension and harmonies in intergenerational communication a better delineation of the current situation in Taiwan. Today's Taiwanese young people do not accept an absolute form of filial piety and have varying ideas of how older people should live their lives. But, they endorse the basic principle of filial piety and apply it out of a sympathetic feeling that older people are not well cared for by their families (e.g., no direct confrontation, tolerate *laodao*, be patient with older people). The comparisons with the US ICSs showed that Taiwanese young people held fewer types of ICSs, and less extreme (both positive and negative) in range. We suggest that filial piety accounts for such variation. These findings informed us about the content of Taiwanese ICSs and offered insights into the cultural dimensions of communication schemas. Future studies should continue to examine the extent to which these ICSs predict actual intergenerational communication

behavior. Communication schemas should predict behavior better than trait-based stereotypes, because they are both more comprehensive and more specific to the communication context. Additional research should test this contention (Hummert, Shaner, Garstka, & Henry, 1998).

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Table 1. Brief definitions of coding categories and intercoder reliability

Coding Category	Definition	Krippendorff's α / % agreement
Making old happy	The young person believes that his/her conversation makes the older person feel better	1.00 / 100
Superior	The young person perceives the older person acting like a superior (demanding, bossy)	.83 / 93
Laodao	A communicative feature associated with Chinese older adults. It is a "repetitive advice and questions of older people" (Zhang & Hummert, 2001, p. 224). It may take forms such as criticism, imposed advice or endless nagging which may be well-intended and/or an expression of love and caring.	.84 / 97
Old's satisfaction	The young person perceives the old person enjoying the intergenerational conversation	.92 / 90
Young's openness	The young person perceives he/she can be open in sharing personal information, family life, and/or job-related stories with the older person	.67 / 77
Young's satisfaction	The young person feels satisfied with the conversation	.93 / 87
Young disengaged	The young person feels disengaged from the conversation	.85 / 90
Young intimidated	Young person feels restrained or intimidated in the conversation (filial piety)	.96 / 97
Young being polite	Young person is polite or respectful in the conversation (filial piety)	.61 / 80
Generation gap	The young person's perceived generational differences	.66 / 87

Coding		Krippendorff's α /
Category	Definition	% agreement
	between the young and old person	
Old being bitter	The young person's perceived the older person to be bitter in the conversation	.67 / 80

Table 2. Means of each intergenerational communication schema for the eleven coding dimensions

Coding categories	Schemas				
	Mutually satisfying	Helping	Mixed feelings	Small talk	Mutually unpleasant
Making old happy	**3.36**	**3.54**	**3.80**	*1.71*	2.00
Superior	2.07	2.25	2.27	*1.53*	**3.73**
Laodao	2.21	2.86	*1.20*	*1.59*	2.87
Old's satisfaction	**3.93**	**3.75**	**3.80**	**3.29**	*2.50*
Young's openness	2.57	2.36	2.47	2.59	1.59
Young's satisfaction	**3.14**	**3.50**	**3.47**	2.65	*2.05*
Young disengaged	2.14	2.29	2.47	**3.18**	**3.64**
Young intimidated	2.29	2.39	**3.20**	2.53	**3.09**
Young being polite	*1.29*	**3.50**	**3.93**	2.94	2.78
Generation gap	*1.71*	**3.79**	2.40	*1.53*	**3.27**
Old being bitter	2.71	*1.82*	**3.53**	*1.24*	**3.55**

Note: For each schema, the means above 3 (1-4 point scale) are in bold, and the means below 2 are in italics. Higher scores indicate greater presence of the emotion/behavior (e.g., more emphasis on making the older person happy.