



## **Intergenerational communication across cultures: young people's perceptions of conversations with family elders, non-family elders and same-age peers**

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**Abstract.** Young adults from three Western (Canada, U.S.A., and New Zealand) and three East Asian (The Philippines, South Korea and Japan) nations completed a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of interactions with family elders, non-family elders, and same-age peers. Results showed that East Asians perceived family elders to be as accommodating as same-age peers, whereas Westerners perceived family elders as more accommodating than their same-age peers. Participants in both cultural blocks indicated an obligation to be most deferential towards non-family elders, followed by family elders, followed by same-age peers. Whereas both groups perceived interactions with same-age peers more positively than with the two older groups, the Western group perceived the older age groups more positively than did East Asians. Intergenerational communication is reportedly be more problematic than intragenerational communication and, consistent with previous findings, this pattern is more evident in East Asian nations on some variables.

**Keywords:** accommodation, deference, East Asians, family elders, intergenerational communication, intragenerational communication

### **Introduction**

Changes in infant mortality, epidemiology and life expectancy since the 1960s have led to demographic shifts in the world's population. One consequence of such changes is a dramatically increasing proportion of elders in the population of almost every nation around the globe, but particularly in East Asia. Popular and academic interest in the processes and conditions of aging reflect this trend (e.g., Madey, 2000), including scholarly research in the relationships between communication and aging (e.g., Giles, 1998; Nussbaum &

Coupland, 1995). However, most communication investigations are Western-biased (see, however, Makoni, 1996; Møller & Sotshongaye, 1999) and there is very little research that specifically examines intergenerational *communication* across different cultures. As part of a research program designed to study cross-cultural similarities and differences in intergenerational communication around the Pacific Rim (e.g., Cai, Giles & Noels, 1998; Noels, Giles, Cai & Turay, 1999; Noels, Giles, Gallois & Ng, 2001), this paper reports a comparative study conducted across three Asian and three Western nations. The study reported here compares young people's perceptions of their communication with elders (non-family and family) and peers, and fits into the genre of research and theory in intergroup perceptions and relations (see Barker, Giles & Harwood, in press; Harwood, Giles & Ryan, 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

### *Intergenerational attitudes and norms*

Research findings regarding attitudes toward aging and the elderly in Asian cultures are equivocal. Some research paints a very positive picture of Asian (e.g., China, Japan) views of old age akin to our lay impressions (e.g., Nagasawa, 1980; Sher, 1984; Wong, 1979). Others present empirical data to suggest that stereotypically positive views of the elderly in East Asia may be, now at least, little more than a popular myth (see Koyano, 1989). Ikels et al. (1992) suggest that, like their Western counterparts, Asians may have rather negative stereotypes of the elderly. These stereotypes include attributions of physical decline, material insecurity, and poor intergenerational relations (e.g., elders are portrayed as "long-winded" and "nagging"). Some suggest that the elderly may be unwitting, anachronistic victims of the industrialization, urbanization and economic success of Asian cultures (the so-called Economic Dragons). This is likely the case in those cultures that have experienced exponential economic and technological boom in the last few decades where older people may have been left behind by the rush for business growth and modernization (e.g., Chow, 1983; Ikels, 1975; Tien-Hyatt, 1987; Phillips, 2000).

Nevertheless, there is also a considerable body of research that suggests that elderly individuals command a powerful and respected role in Asian cultural contexts (Ho, 1994; Levy & Langer, 1994; Martin, 1988; Palmore, 1999; Sung, 1995; Yum, 1988). Filial piety—the Confucian doctrine of "Hsiao Ching"—teaches that elderly people should be respected and that it is the offspring's responsibility—especially that of the eldest son and his chosen spouse in rural Japan (Traphagan, in press)—to care for parents and grandparents in their old age (J. Chen, 1980; P. N. Chen, 1979). Moreover, this may not be restricted to familial elders (Park & Kim, 1992; Yuan, 1990). The existence

and persistence of the ethic of filial piety has been well-documented around the Asian Pacific Rim (see Sung [2001] for a comprehensive review of elder respect in Asia), for example, in South Korea (Kim, Kim, & Hurh, 1991; Sung, 1995), China (Turkowski, 1975), Japan (Tobin, 1987; Traphagan, 2000), Taiwan (Lee, Parish, & Willis, 1994), and Hong Kong (Ikels, 1975). Nonetheless, given changes in the family structure, modernization, and westernization, and so forth, there is evidence of a perceived erosion in the strength of filial piety (e.g., Chow, 1999).

Traditionally, it has been thought that filial piety is particularly strong in Asian cultures and less so in nations with populations of predominantly Western European ancestry (Kiefer, 1992; Palmore, 1975). That said, for many cultures around the world, there is an expectation that family members will provide social and practical support to each other throughout the lifespan, varying according to need (e.g., Harris & Long, 1999). In fact, recent research across four Western (Australia, New Zealand, the USA, and Canada) and four Southeast Asian (Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and The Philippines) nations showed that *all* (and particularly female) respondents claimed some degree of filial responsibility (Gallois et al., 1999). Nonetheless, Asian and Western students differed in their judgments of exactly how this ethic was to be executed in terms of their own behavior as well as elderly people's expectations of their efforts (Ng, Loong, Liu & Weatherall, 2000). While Asian respondents claimed they would provide elderly family (and others) with more tangible instrumental assistance (e.g., financial), it was Western students who were willing to offer more forms of communicative support (i.e., by listening, being in contact).

While there is some debate about the exact social perceptions of elderly people in contemporary Asian societies—and even more so regarding collectivism and interdependency as being the predominant, and often desired value and self system in some of these, and particularly so Japan (see for example, Matsumoto, 1999; Long, 1999; Oyserman, Coon & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Uleman, Rhee, Bardoliwalla, Semin & Toyama, 2000; but see also Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002)—it is generally agreed that hierarchical relations and filial piety have influenced the perceptions of elders and intergenerational communication in East Asia.

### *Intergenerational communication in Western societies*

Research into attitudes, including traits and stereotypes, toward elders has been conducted for several decades in the West. For a very long time, research has indicated that elders are viewed very negatively (e.g., Palmore, 1990). More recently, research by Hummert (1990) has identified a number

of sub-stereotypes of elderly people typically found in the USA, some of which are negative (e.g., “Despondent,” “Severely Impaired”) but others of which are relatively positive (e.g., “Golden Ager,” “Perfect Grandparent”). Given that our communicative behaviors are, at least in part, fueled by social stereotypes (Hewstone & Giles, 1986), it is perhaps not surprising to find Western studies showing that some young people “overaccommodate” (e.g., are overly polite, warm and grammatically and/or ideationally simple) to elderly people (Edwards & Noller, 1993; Kemper, 1994). This tendency is particularly, but not only, evident when negative stereotypes are activated (Hummert, Shaner, Garstka & Henry, 1998). Overaccommodation often emerges irrespective of the elder’s functional autonomy (e.g., Caporeal & Culbertson, 1986) and is not always valued as entirely appropriate for, or by, many socially- and cognitively-active older people (Ryan & Cole, 1990).

Such talk may not necessarily be confined to that from younger to older people. Giles and Williams (1994) showed that younger people also felt patronized by their elders (e.g., the latter were characterized as non-listening, over-parenting, and disapproving). In addition, other studies have indicated that older communicators are construed as “underaccommodating” by their younger interlocutors when talking excessively about their own circumstances, and in ways that younger participants find difficult to manage communicatively (Coupland, Coupland & Giles, 1991). As a means to further exploring when such communicative patterns were believed to occur, Williams and Giles (1996) asked young undergraduates in the USA to recall and describe satisfying and dissatisfying conversations with older non-familial persons. Results showed that satisfying conversations were those where older people were reportedly accommodative to the needs of the young person (i.e., supportive, listening, and attentive to the younger person, giving compliments, and telling interesting stories); a mutual understanding was achieved, with both older and younger expressing positive emotions. In addition, older satisfying conversationalists either violated negative expectations, or age was completely discounted and thought to have no bearing on the conversation.

Reports of dissatisfying conversations included frequent characterizations of older people as being underaccommodative (i.e., inattentive, close-minded, out-of-touch, and forcing unwanted attention on young interlocutors). Communication was characterized as restricted in a number of ways, and this was often attributed to older people’s physical problems, such as deafness and failing cognitive abilities. Elders in these conversations reportedly criticized and complained about their ill-health and problematic life circumstances—sometimes in an angry, accusing fashion. At other times, they were sad and even despondent, disclosing painful personal information to the younger interactant (see also, Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood,

1988). Furthermore, older people were reported as negatively stereotyping young adults as irresponsible and/or naive. As a consequence, young people tended to describe themselves as “reluctantly accommodating” to older, dissatisfying partners. They had to restrain themselves by “biting their tongue,” felt under an obligation to show respect for age, and were defensive in response to such conversations.

Generally speaking, recent studies which have compared Asian (e.g., Hong Kong, South Korea, The Philippines) and Western (e.g., USA, Australia, New Zealand) attitudes toward older adults indicate a more positive view of elders in the *West* (Giles, Harwood, Pierson, Clément & Fox, 1998; Harwood et al., 1996). In addition, Western (i.e., Californian) young people appear to afford elders more perceived group “vitality” (in terms of status and institutional support) than do their Hong Kong counterparts (Harwood, Giles, Pierson, Clément & Fox, 1994), a finding which has been extended to a further four Western and seven South and East Asian nations (Giles et al., 2000). An empirical question then arises as to whether the intergenerational *communication climates* in these regions mirror the social representations just mentioned.

### *Perceptions of intergenerational communication around the Pacific rim*

By transforming the coded indices of intergenerational satisfaction and dissatisfaction documented by Williams and Giles (1996; see above) into scalar items, Williams and colleagues investigated dimensions of intergenerational communication across nine nations around the Pacific Rim (Williams et al., 1997). Young adult data comparing East Asian (The People’s Republic of China [PRC], Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, and The Philippines) to Western (USA, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) samples were examined, focusing upon any differences among the Asian and Western nations separately (after controlling for the amount of contact experienced with older adults). Asian students were less likely than Westerners to agree that elders were accommodating to them (i.e., supportive, attentive, encouraging) and more likely to disagree that conversations with elders were emotionally positive or satisfying, and that age did not matter. These were the general differences, but a closer look at comparisons between particular nations reveals more detailed similarities and differences.

Hong Kong and PRC students were similar in many ways as they could be characterized as the least positive about their conversations with elders (see also, Harwood et al. 2001). Hong Kong respondents tended to disagree that elders were accommodative to them and to agree that elders were non-accommodative (i.e., inattentive and negatively stereotyped young people). This perception was combined with the lowest levels of respect/obligation.

The PRC students showed a similar pattern, apart from more positive ratings of elder nonaccommodation. Like Hong Kong and Chinese respondents, South Korean and Japanese young people were relatively less positive in their ratings, but unlike their Hong Kong and Chinese peers, this evaluation was combined with higher pressure to be respectful and obliging to elders.

Australians, New Zealanders, and Filipinos were more positive than the Asian students with medium levels of respect and obligation, greater than Hong Kong and China but, less pressured perhaps, than their South Korean and Japanese counterparts. Age did not matter as much as it did for South Korean and Japanese adults. Finally, Canadian and American students were similar in that they were the most positive among this set of evaluators. The general relative positivity for these two groups was combined with moderate levels of respect/obligation.

One explanation for these findings is that there may be less social distance and more equality between the generations in Western cultures. The other side of the coin suggests more social distance and less equality between generations in Eastern cultures (see Traphagan [1998] for the discussion of age-based segregation for the Japanese case). People tend to seek association and communicate with members of their own age group, and do not show interest in socializing with people in other age groups (Traphagan, 2000). Moreover, it is speculated that rapid social transformation (or industrialization) has created the situation where people especially those in younger age brackets tend to be more “mobile” in some Asian countries. They may, thus, have been deprived of chances of intergenerational contact with older people both in their community, and, often times, hometown. As a result, large communication (e.g., linguistic) dissimilarities may be likely to emerge between young and older adults, leading to the perceptions of difficulty when communication takes place. Although this state of affairs is related to a lowered respect norm for Western elders, the alternative seems to involve high (perhaps demanded) respect which, when combined with hierarchical relationships, creates more power-distance (see Hofstede, 1980) in intergenerational communication.

Almost all the research discussed so far has considered young people’s perceptions of intergenerational communication with *non*-family elders. But non-family elders, especially strangers, may be affectively-distinct from elder family members, or those who are known-well and loved. Older strangers and acquaintances are much less likely to be individuated and more likely to be treated in terms of generalized stereotypes of the elderly than those who are very familiar. Certainly, young people in Western cultures appear to enjoy mutually-satisfying and fulfilling relationships with grandparents and other family elders (see Szinovacz, 1998). Using similar communication dimensions as the Williams and Giles (1996) study described above, Ng,

Liu, Wetherall and Loong (1997) examined young (European and Chinese) New Zealanders' reported communication experiences with family elders, non-family elders, and their young peers. This study indicated that, overall, family elderly are likely to be viewed more positively than non-family elderly. However, family elderly were not rated as positively as peers on some dimensions, and especially by women who viewed their peers most favorably. Given previous research, surprisingly few intercultural differences emerged in this study, a finding that could be partly due to the acculturation of these particular young, Chinese New Zealanders. Whether or not cultural differences would emerge in comparisons across different cultural contexts remained to be seen. Ng et al.'s research also indicated that interactions with familial elders may not be rated as positively as those with peers although, again, we might expect variations across cultures.

Therefore, the present study builds on this previous work in at least three ways. Our first aim was to determine whether the findings of Williams et al. (1997) can be verified by re-examining young people's intergenerational communication beliefs in new data from three Western (U.S.A., Canada, and New Zealand) and three Asian (South Korea, The Philippines, and Japan) settings. The previous data, however, included no *intragenerational* evaluations within the design; it could be that more communication problems are perceived in Asian than Western settings whatever the social object (be it elderly, young, immigrant, etc.) targeted. Hence, a second aim here is to compare evaluations of elderly conversants with a relevant comparison group, namely, respondents' own-aged peers. A third aim of the investigation was to determine whether all elders (i.e., family and non-family) are perceived in a similar manner. There is some initial evidence to suggest that family elders, with whom young people have more contact, more experience and stronger, more intimate interpersonal ties (see Nussbaum, Thompson & Robinson, 1989) may be perceived in a more positive fashion, and in more "interindividual" terms (see Harwood, Giles & Ryan, 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) than non-family elderly. If this is indeed the case, as was found in the Ng et al. (1997) study, then future research should distinguish between types of intergenerational interactions in family versus non-family terms. Moreover, it seems probable that the ethic of filial piety would be more pertinent to familial elders than nonfamilial elders in Asian societies. Thus, more cross-cultural comparisons of such interactions are called for than in the single societal setting provided by the Ng et al. (1997) study.

The following specific hypotheses, then, are proffered, based on the aforementioned studies.

H1: Young people will evaluate conversations with non-family elderly as less accommodative, more nonaccommodative, and less emotionally positive than conversations with their peer-young counterparts. Or to use the

parlance of intergroup theory, the informants will rate outgroup members less favorably on these dimensions than ingroup members.

H2: These distinctions will be accentuated among Asian respondents who will attribute a larger evaluative distance between themselves and non-family elderly than their Western counterparts.

H3: Young people will construe conversations with family elderly as more accommodative, less nonaccommodative, and more emotionally positive than conversations with non-family elderly.

H4: Asian respondents will construe conversations with elderly people (and especially family members) as requiring more respect and obligations than their Western counterparts.

H5: There will be more variability in evaluations between the Asian than Western subsamples (see Williams et al., 1997).

## Method

### *Participants*

Undergraduate university students ( $N = 731$ ) from large universities in Canada, U.S.A., New Zealand, Japan, South Korea and The Philippines volunteered to participate in the study. In order to restrict the sample to “young adults,” only the data from those subjects who were between the ages of 16 and 30 years were retained for analyses. Additionally, only those participants whose ethnicity was that of the ethnic majority in their country were included. For example, in New Zealand, Canada, and the U.S.A. subsamples, only those respondents with an Anglo/Western European background were included. In The Philippines, South Korea and Japan, only those participants who were Filipino, South Korean, and Japanese, respectively, were included. Demographic information for each subsample appears in Table 1. Prior to the major

*Table 1.* Summary of demographic characteristics of the sample

	Males ( $N$ )	Females ( $N$ )	Mean Age ( $SD$ )
Canada	74	78	19.80 (2.05)
New Zealand	42	50	19.88 (2.81)
U.S.A.	43	58	19.92 (1.99)
The Philippines	51	51	18.40 (1.02)
South Korea	72	64	20.18 (2.17)
Japan*	38	109	20.23 (2.91)
Total sample*	320	410	19.79 (2.33)

\*One person did not indicate his/her gender.

analyses, 18 participants (2.3%) with missing data on any the independent, dependent or covariate variables were eliminated from the sample. These individuals were evenly distributed across the six nations.

### *Materials*

The items in the questionnaire were based on those used in the Williams et al. (1997) study. The participants were asked to reflect on conversations they had with each of three target groups: (1) elderly people who are not family members or “like family to you,” (2) elderly people who are family members or “like family to you,” and (3) young people of the same age group as the participants, who are not family members or like family members to you. The order of presentation of these social targets counterbalanced with respondents being randomly assigned to the different order conditions. Adopting the back-translation method, the questionnaire was translated into Korean, Japanese, and Filipino for the appropriate national samples.

### *Perceptions of others' communicative behavior*

For each of the three categories of conversational partner, the participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the other's behavior. Separate sections for each target group began “During conversations with (members of the target group), I found, in general, they. . . .” The statements were completed with the following phrases: “closed-minded,” “out-of-touch,” “made angry complaints,” “complained about health and life,” “negatively stereotyped youth,” “told interesting stories,” “were supportive,” “gave useful advice,” “complimented me,” and “were attentive.” The participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a 7-point, Likert-type scale, anchored at one end “1—agree completely” and at the other end “7—disagree completely.” Confirmatory factor analyses, conducted separately for each nation, and then followed up with a pancultural analysis, generally supported the factor structure identified by Williams et al. (1997), such that the first five items can be described as reflecting Nonaccommodation (mean Cronbach alpha across nations and target groups = .73; see Tables 3 and 4 for indices for each nation), and the remaining items as reflecting Accommodation (mean Cronbach alpha = .80). Two modifications were made to the Williams et al. battery. First, one item was eliminated because it was not assessed at one site (“forced their attention on me”). Second, the results of the confirmatory factor analyses indicated that two items (“did not pry” and “did not act superior”) did not load on the expected factor consistently across all nations and target groups. These two items were also dropped from the analyses.

### *Self-perceptions of communication behavior*

The participants also assessed their perceptions of their own communicative behavior while interacting with the three kinds of partners. Each item began "During conversations with (members of the target group), in general, I . . ." The sentences concluded with the expressions "experienced positive emotions," "felt satisfied," "found age did not matter," "was obliged to be polite," "had to bite my tongue," and "felt defensive." The participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a 7-point, Likert-type scale, anchored at one end "1—agree completely" and at the other end "7—disagree completely." Based on the Williams et al. (1997) study, the first three items reflect what was therein labelled Age-Irrelevant Positivity (mean Cronbach alpha = .71; see Table 5 for indices for each nation and target group). In the Williams et al (1997) study, the latter three items had poor reliabilities when used as an index of the Respect/Obligation factor. The same difficulties with internal consistency were found in the present study. It was decided to treat the three items separately, recognizing that future psychometric research is necessary to improve this subscale (for example, see Cai et al. [1998] for an elaborated scale with an older adult sample).

### *Contact with members of the target groups*

Because the results of the Williams et al. (1997) study indicated that contact with the target group was related to the dependent variable, the present study incorporated a contact index as a covariate. Respondents indicated the frequency of their conversations with same-age peers, non-family elders, and family elders, on three separate scales from 1 ("never") to 7 ("very often").

## **Preliminary analyses**

To assess differences between the nations with regard to the frequency of conversations with each of the target groups, a  $6 \times 3$  ANOVA was conducted with *Nation* (Canada, U.S.A., New Zealand, The Philippines, Korea and Japan) as the between-subjects factor and *Target* group (non-family elder, family elder and same age peer) as the within-subjects factor. The highest order significant effect was *Nation* by *Target* interaction effect ( $F_{10,1418} = 12.37, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$ ; see Table 2 for means and standard deviations for the Contact indices).

Post hoc Scheffe tests (evaluated at  $p = .01$ ) evaluated the differences between the three Western nations as a group and the three Asian nations as a group. The results indicated that both groups reportedly had more interaction with same-age peers than with older family members, and more conversations

*Table 2.* Means and standard deviations for contact across six nations as a function of target group

	Target group		
	Elder non-family	Elder family	Same-age peer
<i>Western Nations</i>			
Mean	3.42	4.84	6.31
Standard Deviation	1.65	1.69	1.31
Canada			
Mean	3.55	4.80	6.45
Standard Deviation	1.78	1.65	1.18
U.S.A.			
Mean	3.20	5.04	6.39
Standard Deviation	1.51	1.74	1.34
New Zealand			
Mean	3.45	4.70	6.00
Standard Deviation	1.52	1.69	1.46
<i>South/East Asian Nations</i>			
Mean	2.85	3.90	6.06
Standard Deviation	1.61	2.05	1.29
The Philippines			
Mean	3.74	5.14	5.86
Standard Deviation	1.44	1.74	1.48
South Korea			
Mean	2.36	2.94	5.98
Standard Deviation	1.27	1.61	1.20
Japan			
Mean	2.68	3.93	6.29
Standard Deviation	1.76	2.15	1.18

Note: The theoretical range is 1 to 7, such that a high mean score indicates frequent contact.

with family elders than with non-family elders. The two cultural blocks had equivalent levels of contact with same-age peers, but Western participants had more conversations with both groups of older adults than did Asian participants. Follow-up Games-Howell analyses (evaluated at  $p = .01$ ) showed that there were no differences within the Western nations on any of the contact measures, such that all three Western nations indicated the most frequent contact with same-age peers, followed by family elders, and then non-family elders. With regards to the Asian nations, the Filipino participants indicated more contact with family and non-family elders than did the Korean or Japanese

respondents and, for the Korean respondents, there was no difference between the frequency of conversations with family and non-family elders. Thus, in line with the Williams et al. (1997) study and along some dimensions identified by Gallois et al. (1999), Western students report more contact with older people than Asian students. The groups do not differ, however, in terms of the amount of contact with same-age peers.

Prior to the major analyses, the data were screened for their appropriateness for covariance analysis. Correlations between the *Contact* indices and each of the dependent variables across the three target groups indicated that all of the 18 bivariate correlations were small but significant in the complete sample, ranging from  $r = -.01$  to  $r = .40$ , with a mean  $r = .19$ . Respondents who reported more contact with a particular group also evaluated that group highly with regards to *Accommodation* and relatively low in *Nonaccommodation*. They also reported feeling more *Age-Irrelevant Positivity* towards that group, and less inclined to “bite their tongue” and be polite with that group (with the exception of non-family elders in the case of politeness). There was no relation between feelings of defensiveness and contact for any target group. Examination of the correlations within each of the nations indicated some variation in this pattern, such that across the nations, 48 of the 108 correlations (44%) were significant. Most notably, the Filipino group and to a lesser extent the Japanese group, differed substantially from the other groups in that *Contact* was generally unrelated to “I felt obliged to be polite” and “I had to ‘bite my tongue.’”

Tests of the homogeneity of regression assumption were conducted, in which the Nation factor and the Contact covariate were used as independent variables to predict each of the dependent variables across the three target groups in a series of ANOVAs (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 1998). The results showed a significant interaction between Nation and Contact in 5 of the 18 analyses (36%), in line with the previous analysis that indicated that the strength of the relationship between contact and the dependent variables varied across nations. Because of this violation of the assumption of homogeneity of regression, it would be desirable to analyze the data using an alternative strategy, such as using Contact as another independent variable (cf. Stevens, 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1998). Given the complexity of the mixed-model design, however, this strategy was not feasible. Because Contact evidenced significant relations with many of the dependent variables as anticipated, two sets of analyses were conducted, one with Contact as a covariate and one without the covariate. The differences between the sets of analyses were modest, such that the effects were attenuated in the covariance analysis solution relative to the solution without the covariates, particularly in comparisons across the national groups. Because they are more conservative, the results of the follow-up ANCOVAs are reported below.

## Results

In what follows, we report the outcomes of the various analysis and interpret them in terms of the Hypotheses in the next section. Variations in the three subscales (Nonaccommodation, Accommodation, and Age-Irrelevant Positivity) and the three individual items (“I felt obliged to be polite,” “I had to ‘bite my tongue,’” and “I felt defensive”) were examined in a doubly multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), using a 6 (*Nation*: Canada vs. USA vs. New Zealand vs. The Philippines vs. South Korea vs. Japan) by 3 (*Target*: non-family older adults vs. older family members vs. same-age peer) design, where *Nation* was the between-subjects factor, *Target* was the within-subjects factor, and the frequency of *Contact* was the covariate (Norusis, 1985). The three *Contact* indices were not combined, but treated as a “time-varying” or “repeatedly measured” covariate (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1998; Norušis, 1985), such that the covariate used for each communication variable corresponded with the appropriate target group (e.g., the contact index for same-age peers served as the covariate for the evaluations of same-age peers, the contact index for family elders served as the covariate for evaluations of family elders, and so on). The highest order significant multivariate effect was the *Target* by *Nation* interaction effect ( $Pillais = .20$ ;  $F(60,8478) = 4.95$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

To follow up the multivariate effect, separate ANCOVAs, using *Nation* as a between-subjects factor, *Target* as a within-subjects factor, and *Contact* as a covariate, were conducted for each dependent variable. Upon finding significant effects at the univariate level, and analytic strategy similar to that described by Williams et al. (1997) was used in order to permit comparison across the two studies. First, Scheffe tests (using MacIntyre and Gardner’s [1993] Post Hoc program 1.0) compared the mean scores for the three Western nations (Canada, U.S.A., New Zealand) as a block with those for the three Asian nations (The Philippines, South Korea, and Japan) as a block (evaluated at  $p < .01$ ). Second, differences between countries within each of the Asian and Western blocks were then assessed using Games-Howell multiple comparison procedure (evaluated at  $p < .01$ ).

### *Accommodation*

As indicated in Table 3, the *Nation* by *Target* interaction effect ( $F(10, 1413) = 8.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was significant. Post hoc Scheffe comparisons for Asian and Western nations showed that both cultural groups viewed same-age peers as equally accommodating. People in Asian nations construed older family and non-family members as less accommodating than did people in Western nations. For the Western block, same-age peers and older non-family

Table 3. Means, adjusted means, standard deviations and Cronbach alpha indices of internal consistency for the six nations on Accommodation

	Nation							
	Canada (n = 148)	U.S.A. (n = 97)	New Zealand (n = 92)	Western (total) (n = 337)	The Philippines (n = 102)	South Korea (n = 136)	Japan (n = 147)	Asian (total) (n = 376)
Elder, Not Family								
Mean	4.68	4.62	4.54	4.63	4.63	3.87	4.27	4.22
Adjusted mean	4.62	4.60	4.49	4.57	4.54	3.98	4.33	4.27
Standard deviation	1.15	1.28	.97	1.14	1.03	.96	1.00	1.04
Cronbach alpha	.78	.79	.77		.75	.79	.72	
Elder, Family								
Mean	5.58	5.75	5.30	5.55	5.14	4.47	4.64	4.71
Adjusted mean	5.49	5.62	5.23	5.45	4.99	4.74	4.72	4.81
Standard deviation	1.05	1.17	1.00	1.08	1.12	.92	1.43	1.21
Cronbach alpha	.74	.80	.73		.76	.58	.79	
Same-Age Peer								
Mean	4.72	4.66	5.01	4.78	5.07	4.71	4.71	4.81
Adjusted mean	4.66	4.63	5.05	4.76	5.14	4.76	4.68	4.83
Standard deviation	1.17	1.41	1.06	1.22	1.16	.92	1.20	1.11
Cronbach alpha	.61	.68	.74		.78	.62	.69	

Note: The theoretical range is 1 to 7, such that a high mean score indicates frequent perceived accommodation from the target group.

adults were perceived as equally accommodating, and older family members were more accommodating than either of the other two groups. For the Asian block, same-age peers and older family members were perceived as equally accommodating, and older non-family members were less accommodating than either of the other two groups.

#### *Western nations*

The Games-Howell procedure showed that in Canada and the U.S.A., same-age peers and older non-family adults were perceived as equally accommodating, and older family members were more accommodating than either of the other two groups. In New Zealand, older family members were perceived as more accommodative than non-family members. Perceptions of peers fell midway between the two older groups, such that they were not perceived to be significantly different from family elders, but were somewhat more accommodative than non-family elders.

#### *Asian nations*

Games-Howell tests indicated that in Japan, there were no differences between the three target groups. In South Korea, non-family elders were perceived as less accommodative than family elders and same-age peers. In The Philippines, a pattern similar to the South Korean pattern was evident, except that family elders were not perceived to be significantly different from either of the other comparison groups. The South Korean group evidenced the least positive evaluation of non-family elders, significantly lower than that of the Filipino group.

#### *Nonaccommodation*

Examination of the ANCOVA results for *Nonaccommodation* indicated that the *Target by Nation* interaction effect was significant ( $F(10, 1413) = 3.75$ ,  $p < .001$ , see Table 4). Follow-up Scheffe test indicated that same-age peers were perceived as slightly more nonaccommodative in the West than in the East ( $p < .05$ ). There were no differences between Asia and the West for older adults. For both groups, non-family elders were perceived as more nonaccommodative than family elders, who were perceived as more nonaccommodative than same-age peers.

#### *Western nations*

The Games-Howell procedure indicated that in all of the Western nations, older non-family adults were perceived as more nonaccommodative than older

Table 4. Means, adjusted means, standard deviations and Cronbach alpha indices of internal consistency for the six nations on Nonaccommodation

	Nation							
	Canada (n = 148)	U.S.A. (n = 97)	New Zealand (n = 92)	Western (total) (n = 337)	The Philippines (n = 102)	South Korea (n = 136)	Japan (n = 147)	Asian (total) (n = 376)
Elder, Not Family								
Mean	4.41	4.55	4.17	4.39	4.25	4.42	4.17	4.28
Adjusted mean	4.44	4.57	4.19	4.41	4.29	4.37	4.14	4.26
Standard deviation	1.29	1.23	1.07	1.22	1.11	1.03	1.10	1.08
Cronbach alpha	.79	.77	.77		.76	.79	.67	
Elder, Family								
Mean	3.64	3.59	3.54	3.60	3.58	3.99	3.93	3.86
Adjusted mean	3.68	3.66	3.58	3.65	3.65	3.85	3.89	3.81
Standard deviation	1.28	1.33	1.12	1.25	1.20	.92	1.31	1.16
Cronbach alpha	.76	.87	.80		.82	.71	.88	
Same-Age Peer								
Mean	3.24	3.23	3.38	3.27	3.28	3.01	2.78	2.99
Adjusted mean	3.30	3.28	3.34	3.30	3.21	2.97	2.80	2.97
Standard deviation	1.05	1.12	1.20	1.11	1.21	.90	1.04	1.06
Cronbach alpha	.80	.88	.80		.87	.75	.86	

Note: The theoretical range is 1 to 7, such that a high mean score indicates greater perceived nonaccommodation from the target group.

family members and same-age peers, and the latter two groups were perceived as equally nonaccommodative. There were no differences between Western nations with regards to perceptions of the level of nonaccommodation of the three target groups.

#### *Asian nations*

In all East Asian countries, Games-Howell tests showed that non-family elders were perceived as more nonaccommodative than same-age peers. Older family members were perceived as more nonaccommodative than same-age peers in South Korea and Japan, but not in The Philippines. Non-family and family elders were perceived as equally nonaccommodative in Japan, but non-family elders were perceived as relatively more nonaccommodative in South Korea and The Philippines.

#### *Age-irrelevant positivity*

The results of the analysis of Age-Irrelevant Positivity yielded a significant *Target by Nation* interaction effect ( $F(10, 1413) = 5.96, p < .001$ ; see Table 5). Post hoc analyses comparing the two cultural blocks indicated that the people in both blocks tended to rate same-age peers higher than family elders, who were in turn rated higher than non-family elders. Asian and Western blocks did not differ in their evaluation of same-age peers, but the Asian nations rated both groups of elders less positively than did Western nations.

#### *Western nations*

A Games-Howell comparison of the three Western nations showed a pattern in which they felt less positive with non-family elders than family elders and same-age peers, and there was no significant difference between family elders and same-age peers. There were no differences between the nations in the ratings.

#### *Asian nations*

Games-Howell analyses of the Asian nations showed that all three national groups felt less positive with non-family elders than family elders, although this difference was not significant in the case of the Japanese. The three groups also felt less positive about interactions with family members than interactions with same-age peers, although this difference was only marginally significant in the case of The Philippines ( $p < .05$ ). All three national groups felt equally positively about same-age peers, although the South Korean respondents were significantly less positive with elders than were the Filipino and Japanese respondents.

Table 5. Means, adjusted means, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha indices of internal consistency for the six nations on Age Irrelevant Positivity

	Nation							
	Canada (n = 148)	U.S.A. (n = 97)	New Zealand (n = 92)	Western (total) (n = 337)	The Philippines (n = 102)	South Korea (n = 136)	Japan (n = 147)	Asian (total) (n = 376)
Elder, Not Family								
Mean	4.08	3.90	4.13	4.04	4.04	3.13	3.58	3.54
Adjusted mean	4.01	3.89	4.07	3.98	3.93	3.26	3.66	3.60
Standard deviation	1.25	1.50	1.07	1.28	.96	.91	1.07	1.04
Cronbach alpha	.76	.82	.76		.45	.72	.69	
Elder, Family								
Mean	4.68	4.98	4.67	4.77	4.65	3.52	3.98	3.99
Adjusted mean	4.59	4.84	4.60	4.65	4.50	3.80	4.07	4.10
Standard deviation	1.31	1.42	1.10	1.29	1.14	.95	1.30	1.22
Cronbach alpha	.76	.79	.81		.67	.68	.75	
Same-Age Peer								
Mean	5.05	5.08	5.01	5.05	4.95	5.02	4.88	4.95
Adjusted mean	4.97	5.01	5.07	5.01	5.04	5.08	4.85	4.98
Standard deviation	1.15	1.16	1.05	1.13	1.26	1.11	1.19	1.18
Cronbach alpha	.58	.65	.71		.67	.77	.75	

Note: The theoretical range is 1 to 7, such that a high mean score indicates greater self-perceptions of positivity with the target group.

*“I felt obliged to be polite”*

The results for the item “I felt obliged to be polite” indicated that the *Target by Nation* was significant ( $F(10, 1413) = 6.28, p < .001$ ; see Table 6). Follow-up analyses comparing the Asian block to the Western block indicated that in both parts of the world, people felt most obliged to be polite with non-family elderly, less so with family elderly and least so with same-age peers. Participants from the Western block had significantly higher scores with regards to family and non-family elders than did those from the Asian block.

*Western nations*

Games-Howell analyses examined differences between Western nations and indicated that there were no differences between the three nations in their assessment of the three target groups. Feelings of deference were lower with same-age peers than with non-family elders, and moderate for family elders. The differences between the three groups were significant in the case of Canada. For the U.S.A and New Zealand, the difference between family elders and non-family elders was not significant.

*Asian nations*

A second set of Games-Howell analyses examined differences across East Asian nations. Respondents from South Korea felt more deferential towards family elders than did those from either The Philippines or Japan. Participants in The Philippines and Korea felt more obligation with same-age peers than did participants from Japan. In Korea, respondents felt as obliged to be polite with family elders as with non-family elders, and significantly more obligation with these two groups than with same-age peers. In Japan, feelings of deference with non-family elders were strongest, followed by family elders, followed by same-age peers. In The Philippines, the pattern of responses was similar to that in Japan, but the differences between family elders and the other two groups were nonsignificant.

*“I had to ‘bite my tongue’”*

The results for the item “I had to ‘bite my tongue’” indicated that the *Target by Nation* was significant ( $F(10,1413) = 7.93, p < .001$ ; see Table 7). Follow-up analyses showed that people in both blocks felt most constrained with non-family elderly, less so with family elderly and least so with same-age peers. There were no differences between the two cultural blocks on any variables.

Table 6. Means, adjusted means, and standard deviations for the six nations on "I felt obliged to be polite"

	Nation							
	Canada (n = 148)	U.S.A. (n = 97)	New Zealand (n = 92)	Western (total) (n = 337)	The Philippines (n = 102)	South Korea (n = 136)	Japan (n = 147)	Asian (total) (n = 376)
Elder, Not Family								
Mean	6.18	5.96	5.98	6.06	5.56	5.98	5.62	5.73
Adjusted mean	6.20	5.97	6.00	6.08	5.60	5.93	5.59	5.71
Standard deviation	1.38	1.39	1.42	1.39	1.62	1.12	1.42	1.39
Elder, Family								
Mean	5.19	5.22	5.35	5.24	4.67	6.08	4.47	5.10
Adjusted mean	5.22	5.29	5.37	5.31	4.73	5.98	4.44	5.04
Standard deviation	1.93	2.00	1.45	1.83	1.99	1.09	1.80	1.79
Same-Age Peer								
Mean	3.36	3.67	3.90	3.60	4.32	4.29	3.07	3.84
Adjusted mean	3.43	3.73	3.86	3.64	4.25	4.24	3.10	3.81
Standard deviation	1.75	1.69	1.86	1.77	1.96	1.37	1.57	1.72

Note: The theoretical range is 1 to 7, such that a high score indicates greater endorsement of the item "I felt obliged to be polite."

Table 7. Means, adjusted means, and standard deviations for the six nations on "I had to 'bite my tongue'"

	Nation							
	Canada (n = 148)	U.S.A. (n = 97)	New Zealand (n = 92)	Western (total) (n = 337)	The Philippines (n = 102)	South Korea (n = 136)	Japan (n = 147)	Asian (total) (n = 376)
Elder, Not Family								
Mean	4.89	4.66	4.76	4.79	4.48	5.45	4.91	4.99
Adjusted mean	4.94	4.69	4.80	4.84	4.55	5.36	4.86	4.95
Standard Deviation	1.82	1.96	1.72	1.83	1.79	1.34	1.61	1.61
Elder, Family								
Mean	4.19	4.03	4.39	4.20	3.28	5.44	3.79	4.25
Adjusted mean	4.24	4.14	4.43	4.31	3.37	5.28	3.74	4.15
Standard Deviation	1.99	1.94	1.64	1.89	1.74	1.34	1.85	1.89
Same-Age Peer								
Mean	3.48	3.72	4.01	3.69	3.52	3.23	3.65	3.47
Adjusted mean	3.51	3.75	3.99	3.71	3.48	3.21	3.67	3.45
Standard Deviation	1.90	1.87	1.87	1.89	1.78	1.50	1.77	1.68

Note: The theoretical range is 1 to 7, such that a high score indicates greater endorsement of the item "I had to 'bite my tongue.'"

*Western nations*

Games-Howell analyses examined differences between Western nations and indicated that there were no differences between the three nations on any of the variables. All three nations showed a “staircase” pattern, whereby scores were highest for non-family elders, lower for family elders, and lowest for same-age peers. The only significant difference between the scores, however, was between non-family elders and same-age peers in the case of the Canadian respondents.

*Asian nations*

A second set of Games-Howell analyses examined differences across East Asian nations. Respondents from South Korea felt more deferential towards family elders than did those from either The Philippines or Japan. In The Philippines and Japan, respondents felt as obligated to be polite with family elders as with same-age peers, and significantly less obligation with these two groups than with non-family elders. In South Korea, feelings of deference with family elders were as strong as with non-family elders, and significantly stronger than with same-age peers.

*“I felt defensive”*

The results for the item “I felt defensive” yielded a significant *Target by Nation* interaction effect ( $F(10,1413) = 2.62, p = .004$ ; see Table 8). Follow-up analyses comparing the Asian block to the Western block indicated that there were no significant differences between the two blocks on any variable. In the Western block, feelings of defensiveness were lowest with family elders than with the other two groups, and there was no significant difference between the other two groups. In the Asian block, feelings of defensiveness were significantly lower with family elders than with non-family elders. Scores for defensiveness with same-age peers fell between these two groups, but were significantly different from neither.

*Western nations*

Games-Howell analyses examined differences between Western nations and indicated that there were no differences between the three nations on any of the variables, nor were there any differences in how the three target groups were evaluated.

*Asian nations*

A second set of Games-Howell analyses examined differences across Asian nations. The only significant difference was that participants in Korea felt less

Table 8. Means, adjusted means, and standard deviations for the six nations on "I felt defensive."

	Nation							
	Canada (n = 148)	U.S.A. (n = 97)	New Zealand (n = 92)	Western (total) (n = 337)	The Philippines (n = 102)	South Korea (n = 136)	Japan (n = 147)	Asian (total) (n = 376)
Elder, Not Family								
Mean	3.75	4.02	4.14	3.94	4.07	3.56	3.84	3.80
Adjusted mean	3.76	4.03	4.15	3.94	4.09	3.53	3.83	3.80
Standard Deviation	1.75	1.79	1.47	1.69	1.58	1.41	1.48	1.49
Elder, Family								
Mean	3.32	3.36	3.72	3.44	3.27	3.53	3.72	3.54
Adjusted mean	3.35	3.43	3.73	3.48	3.31	3.47	3.71	3.51
Standard Deviation	1.87	1.77	1.56	1.76	1.57	1.47	1.69	1.59
Same-Age Peer								
Mean	3.76	3.72	3.99	3.81	3.93	2.99	3.95	3.60
Adjusted mean	3.77	3.73	3.98	3.82	3.92	2.99	3.95	3.60
Standard Deviation	1.59	1.68	1.52	1.60	1.59	1.45	1.56	1.59

Note: The theoretical range is 1 to 7, such that a high score indicates greater endorsement of the item "I felt defensive."

defensive with same-age peers than did the participants in The Philippines and Japan, who did not differ from each other.

### *Summary*

With regards to Accommodation and Nonaccommodation, same-age peers were generally perceived as most accommodating (least nonaccommodative), followed by family elders, followed by non-family elders. Older people were perceived as more accommodative in the West, and moreover, the “staircase” pattern was modified in the Western nations, such that in two cases, family members were perceived the most accommodating of the target groups. With regards to feelings of positivity, a “staircase” pattern was evident in most nations, with interactions with same-age peers perceived most positively, followed by interactions with family elders, followed by non-family elders. With regards to the items referring to deference, there was the least obligation to be polite and “bite one’s tongue” with same-age peers, followed by family elders, followed by non-family elders, and this obligation for politeness with older adults was somewhat greater in the West than in Asia. There were few differences between nations in terms of how defensive they felt with others. For most of the dependent variables, there was generally less differentiation between the target groups in the West than in Asia, where there was also a greater variety of patterns of response.

### **Discussion**

The general objectives of this study are to: (1) compare perceptions of non-family elders with elder family members and same-age peers, and (2) assess differences in these perceptions across Asian and Western nations. The present results concerning evaluations of interactions with non-family elders replicate the findings of Williams and associates (1997) suggesting that intergenerational communication with non-family elders is perceived less positively in East Asian nations than in Western nations. Building on the previous research, and consistent with Hypothesis 1 which predicted that informants would rate outgroup members less favorably than ingroup members, the young adults in this study evaluated conversations with non-family elders as more nonaccommodative than conversations with same-age peers. These perceptions paralleled feelings that conversations with non-family elders were less emotionally positive and that age mattered more than in interactions with same-age peers. The finding that age matters more in intergenerational encounters and less in intragenerational encounters is consistent with the premise that age differences between interactants can make salient interactants’ age-group membership.

Consistent with Hypothesis 2 which predicted that Asian respondents would express more negative attributions to non-family older adults than Westerners, this pattern was emerged with regards to accommodation and age-irrelevant positivity. Although both cultural blocks felt similarly about their same-age peers, Asian respondents tended to see non-family elders as less accommodative, and enjoyed the interaction less than did their Western counterparts. The general trend is consistent with those of Williams et al. (1997) who found that interactions with non-family elderly were relatively negatively viewed in many East Asian nations. The comparison with same-age peers provides a standard of comparison that suggests that this cross-national difference is not due to differences in the use of rating scales (see also Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995), but may reflect the trend suggested by several studies now that intergenerational relations are somewhat more problematic for younger people in East Asian nations than in Western nations

Familial closeness can attenuate the importance of age in the evaluation of communication behavior as predicted by Hypothesis 3. The latter anticipated that young informants would rate conversations with family elderly more positively than non-family elderly. In support of this hypothesis, and in the two cultural blocks, family elders were perceived as more accommodative, and interactions were perceived more positively than those with non-family elders, although this tendency was stronger in the West. Both groups also reported that family elders were less nonaccommodative and required less deference than non-family elders. These results emphasize that a distinction must be made between those elders who are family and those who are not. Indeed, given the relatively high evaluation of older family members' accommodative behavior, particularly in the West, young people may have particularly strong social and emotional bonds with grandparents and other elderly relatives. It is not surprising, then, that these familiar others would also be perceived as more attentive, supportive, complimentary, and interesting than non-family members. These findings question those of a previous quasi-experimental study with U.S.A. and Taiwanese participant-judges. In that study Yeh, Williams and Maruyama (1998) were unable to show very much differentiation between vignette-portrayed "grandmothers" versus elder "strangers." The only exception was that Taiwanese participants judged the "grandmother" to be less intimate with her portrayed "granddaughter" than did the Americans. If this is indicative of greater power-distance (Hofstede, 1980) between elder and younger family members in some Asian as compared to Western cultures, it is echoed in the findings for some of the Asian cultures studied here.

Hypothesis 4, that Asian respondents would construe conversations with elderly people (and especially family members) as requiring more respect and obligations than Westerners, was not supported. The general comparison of

the East and West showed little difference between the two cultural blocks in how the target groups were evaluated, and indeed on one item, respondents in the West scored somewhat higher. Moreover, although respondents indicated they felt more obligated to be polite, and the need to “bite their tongue” with family elders than with same-age peers, both groups felt even greater respect-obligation with *non*-family elders. Thus, both groups of young adults feel that it is necessary to be deferential to older adults. It is possible that this sentiment is particularly strong with non-family members because of a concurrent norm to be polite to strangers. It is important to note that closer examination of the individual nations indicated that South Korea is an exception to this pattern: older family members and older non-family members required equal levels of deference.

In line with the speculations of Williams et al. (1997), who found similar cross-cultural patterns regarding communication beliefs as found here, it is possible that the ethic of filial piety means that young people in Asian cultures (and to a certain extent in the West) feel obliged to be respectful to elders—regardless of whether that respect is earned, and regardless of young peoples’ own feelings. In other words, if the ethic concerns itself with *older* people’s needs and desires without attending to the needs and desires of younger people, it is not unreasonable to think that this situation would be an effortful, and perhaps dissatisfying, experience for younger people and would actually create more intergenerational distance. It is also possible that the ethic of filial piety makes salient age-group identities and, thereby, triggers intergroup processes (see Harwood et al., 1995; Tajfel & Taylor, 1986). Inadvertently, the ethic may contribute to negative outgroup stereotyping and hence, poorer, not better, relations between groups as well as less rather than more contact; here, conscious effort may well be necessitated, arguably, to act appropriately to older people in accordance with the norms.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that there would be more variability in respondents’ perceptions in East Asia than in the West and, indeed, this hypothesis was supported. In particular, the South Koreans and the Filipinos were very distinct from each other. The South Korean respondents felt that non-family elders were low in accommodation, high in nonaccommodation, and evaluated these interactions particularly low. Moreover, they tended to downgrade interactions with family members relative to interactions with same-age peers (see Yeh et al., 1998). Filipino respondents, on the other hand, were more positive about their interactions with others, in many ways resembling the pattern of responses of the Western nations; a finding explicable in terms of long-standing European and American social, cultural, and religious influences in The Philippines (however, see Church [1987] for similarities to other Asian cultures). Moreover, they felt quite positively about their interactions with

elder family members, rating these interactions as equally accommodative as those with same-age peers. As with same-age peers, they rated interactions with elder family members as involving low levels of defensive respect. This distinction between South Korea and The Philippines underlines the observation that any East/West distinction may mask differences between cultures that are presumed (for some) to belong to the same category. Likewise, an East/West distinction hides some of the similarities between some Asian and Western cultures. As pointed out above, The Philippines often showed patterns that were similar to those of Canada and the United States rather than South Korea. Also, in some instances, the New Zealanders did not distinguish between family and non-family elders, which suggests some similarities to the South Korean tendencies, although less extreme (e.g., “age did not matter”). This finding may be a result of increased Western contact with The Philippines relative to South Korea, and to the relative isolation of New Zealand from North America. Thus, although the Asian culture of South Korea is in marked contrast with the Western and, arguably, more individualistic cultures of Canada and the U.S.A., there are also distinct differences between South Korea and The Philippines, and between the three Western nations.

The research reported here is important for a number of reasons. First, it has helped to extend understanding of intergenerational communication from a Western perspective to one that is more international and cross-culturally valid. Second, by comparing intergenerational communication with intra-generational communication, it has helped to better clarify what aspects of communication may be more or less positive within a clearer frame of reference. Third, it has indicated that intergenerational communication may indeed be more enjoyable with family members than with non-family members, and hence greater attention should be directed to this distinction in future communication-oriented research. Clearly, more research is necessary. For instance, we need to look at other cultures that emphasize the ethic of filial piety and determine if they display as negative patterns as did the South Koreans. Further, it is important to investigate across cultures the communicative aspect of the norm of elder respect (e.g., Ingersoll-Dayton & Saengtienchai, 1999; Sung, 2001), especially its impact on intergenerational interaction, since a number of studies (including this one) suggest filial piety can be a factor that can exacerbate the relationship between younger and older generations. Besides examining non-student young (e.g., rural) samples (see Traphagan, *in press*), it will also be important to compare older peoples’ perceptions of intergenerational conversations across cultures in order to determine if older people experience reactions similar to those of younger people. Given that there may indeed be a generation gap that is reflected in dissatisfactory intergenerational

communication, another issue to consider is whether there are any implications of this gap for mental health, social and physical well-being in different cultures (e.g., Ingersoll-Dayton, Saengtienchai, Kespichayawattana & Aunguroch, 2001). As the population ages in many nations, and as the world becomes smaller, there will be more occasions for interaction across generations and across cultures. Attention to cultural and generational issues in communication would thus seem more than worthwhile.

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