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"You stupid, lazy kid": perceptions of verbal aggressiveness in older adults

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“YOU STUPID, LAZY KID”: PERCEPTIONS OF
VERBAL AGGRESSIVENESS IN OLDER ADULTS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by
Jon M. Croghan
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ABSTRACT

Young adults' stereotypes of older adults has been well-documented in communication literature, however, there has been a lack of research on the impact of message strategy on intergenerational interactions. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship among three factors that previous research suggests should influence the activation of stereotypes toward a target: age, relational level, and message strategy. This study examines the role that message strategy, in this case, verbal aggressiveness, plays in activating young adults' (n = 186) negative stereotypes of older adults. The young adults' self-reported levels of trait verbal aggressiveness was positively correlated with negative stereotype activation. Verbally aggressive messages, also, consistently activated more negative stereotypes than did the corresponding neutral message strategy. Although all three factors (age, relational level, and message strategy) accounted for differences in stereotype activation, message strategy had the largest effect on negative stereotype activation. Implications of the findings on intergenerational interactions are discussed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why Study Aging and Perceptions of Older Adults at All?

At the close of the twentieth century, Ken Dychtwald, the author of *Age Power: How The 21st Century Will Be Ruled by The New Old* (1999), described the greying of American society as a “gerontocracy” with four important outcomes that have present day consequences: 1) Americans as a whole will live longer than any preceding generation, 2) the older adult population will replace young adults at the nexus of socio-economic power, 3) Americans will have to change their attitudes about becoming older adults, and 4) Americans will have to decide how “to behave as elders [which] will, in all likelihood, become the most important challenge we will face in our lives” (p. 1). While there is no guarantee that positive attitudinal changes will occur, the United States Census Bureau and the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics support Dychtwald’s premise that older adults are and will create significant demographic pressures to do so. In the United States, the older population is projected to exceed 70 million people by 2030 when it will account for 20 percent of the American population. In 2000, the older adult population in the United States represented over 13% of the total population. While the oldest old (85+) population represented only 2 percent of the population in 2000, this age group was the fastest growing segment of the American population (*Older Americans 2000: Key Indicators of Well-Being*, 2000).

This age shift is not confined to the United States or other industrialized or post-industrialized nations, but appears to be a global phenomenon. Projections from the Census Bureau and National Institute on Aging suggest that most nations will experience

a dramatic increase in their older adult populations in the near future. The majority of the recent increases in the older adult population worldwide have occurred in developing countries, with those 65 and older accounting for as much as one-third of the global population by year 2150 (*World's older population growing by an unprecedented 800,000 a month*, 2001). The increased longevity of the population will have ramifications that effect numerous institutions, including governments, hospitals, colleges and universities, and social support services.

With the explosion of the older adult population, there has been a corresponding increase in both the economic and American socio-political power of seniors. According to the *Federal Reserve Bulletin* (2000), the average net worth in constant 1998 dollars of the young-old (65-74) was (approximately \$465,500) second only to the 55-64 year-old (approximately \$530,200) age group. The net worth of the oldest-old (75+) was approximately the same as their middle-aged counterparts (approximately \$310,200). The young-old (65-74) held the most nonfinancial assets by percentage of any age group (approximately 98.5 %). The majority of these assets were in property (primary residential, other residential, and non-residential property). The political scene is undergoing a similar greying transformation. Most industrialized nations now have lobbying groups, such as AARP (the American Association of Retired Persons) in the United States and Grey Power in Australia, that function as advocacy groups lobbying for political initiatives for older adults. Older adults have been the most active participants in the democratic process as evidenced from Presidential voting percentages in the United States (*Voter Involvement Index—Age Breakdowns*, Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy, 2001). In the 2000 Presidential election, older adults were

more likely to pay close attention, think, follow, and talk about the United States Presidential campaign than their younger-aged peers. The only criterion in which they did not exceed the scores of younger age groups was on recall of the preceding day's news stories. The political clout of the elderly and the need to court their collective vote have made entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare into sacred cows that need more and more of the national budget to remain solvent. In a Senate Hearing on the business and financial practices of the AARP, Senator McCain recounts a quote from journalist Hank Cox in 1991, "The American Association of Retired Persons may be the only lobby in Washington with enough clout to bulldoze a massive benefit program through Congress..." (*Business and Financial Practices of AARP*, 1995). As more adults live longer and these older adults continue to play important roles in both American economic and political life, a strong case can be made for the need to systematically study the strategies and perceptions of intergenerational communication.

Theoretical Approaches to Aging Stereotypes

Despite the importance of older adults in the aforementioned arenas of American culture, until a decade ago there was a dearth of research by communication scholars on aging and intergenerational communication. The communication literature since has uncovered disparate results for the cognitive and communicative abilities of older adults ranging from a period of wisdom and reflection to its negative complement epitomized by severe decrement and senility (Coleman, 1995; Glendenning, 1995; Kemper & Lyons, 1994; Rook, 1995). One aspect of aging that has received systematic treatment in the social scientific literature concerns stereotypes associated with age. In one of the most comprehensive examinations, Ashmore and Del Boca (1981) found three different

theoretical conceptualizations of stereotypes: sociocultural, psychodynamic, and cognitive (1981).

The sociocultural perspective contends that the functions of stereotypes primarily “serve utilitarian and value expressive functions” (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981, p. 24). From this perspective, stereotypes are important for maintaining social distinctions and perpetuating existing prejudices. Hummert, Shaner, and Garstka (1995) argue that the sociocultural perspective assumes a relatively constant stereotype of a group that exists across the culture as a whole, which utilizes this stereotype to continue its discriminatory cultural practices. The research using the sociocultural perspective to gauge perceptions of older adults found that individuals were more likely to have incorrect and negative views of the older population than incorrect and positive views (Klenmack, Roff & Durand, 1980; Palmore, 1982). This research also found that individuals do have beliefs that are both incorrect and positive not just incorrect and negative, which limits the utility of this perspective with regard to age.

Though Ashmore and Del Boca (1981) differentiate two distinct types of psychodynamic stereotypes—psychoanalytic reductionism and psychosocial theories—both fulfill an existing personality need of the individual. Psychodynamic stereotypes are still negatively conceived, but instead of being constructed culturally, as in the sociocultural perspective, they are constructed to fulfill the needs of specific individuals. Several studies have attempted to delineate the personality factors that elicit negative biases toward older adults using the psychodynamic perspective (Katz, 1990; Klenmack & Roff, 1983). Besides aggressiveness, psychodynamic stereotype research has not discovered any personality factors that explain both positive and negative views of the

respondents about age cohorts. Both sociocultural and psychodynamic perspectives contend that stereotypes are negative and thus have deleterious consequences for the group to which it is assigned as well as any potential communicative interaction.

The cognitive perspective assumes that stereotypes are not inherently negative, but rather a form of information processing linked to an individual's perceptual schemas that organize new information into preexisting categorical structures. "Cognitive limitations make humans susceptible to systematic biases in processing information about people and events, and these biases contribute significantly to the formation and maintenance of stereotypes regarding social groups" (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981, p. 29). The research using the cognitive stereotype perspective has found that individuals have complex categories made up of specific traits that they use to process social information (Heckhausen, Dixon & Baltes, 1989; Hummert 1990; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner & Strahm, 1994; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner & Strahm, 1995; Hummert, Shaner & Garstka, 1995; Hummert, Shaner, Garstka & Henry, 1998). While this perspective, according to the research, more accurately reflects social-psychological processes because it allows for differing perceptions of individuals based upon category (e.g., age, race, ethnicity) as well as differing constructions of similar stereotypes based upon specific traits, the cognitive stereotype is still limited to either a positive or a negative conception of older adults. Because the process of aging can be a positive or a negative transition or both, a cycle that includes both positive and negative elements, a different approach was necessary to facilitate a multifaceted analysis of the diverse stereotypes that can be activated within the same individual toward older adults.

The development of multiple stereotypes resolved the problems associated with

the sociocultural, psychodynamic, and cognitive stereotypes differentiated by Ashmore and Del Boca (1981). This theoretical conception of multiple stereotypes could account for both differences in trait organization and overall attitude toward members of certain age groups. Hummert, Shaner, and Garstka (1995) contend that “with multiple stereotypes, we now have a theoretical account for observed attitudes toward older adults; that is, attitudes vary toward older individuals as a function of their perceived characteristics, not as a function of their status alone” (p. 121). The research using the multiple stereotypes perspective has identified several factors that influence the activation within an individual of positive or negative stereotypes with regard to an older adult target: biological sex, perceived age, acquaintance level, and context. These factors, while offering insight into innate factors that affect our perceptual schemas, do not assess the impact of the individual’s communicative behaviors on stereotype activation. While numerous studies have examined the effects of patronizing speech on communication satisfaction (Coupland & Coupland, 1995; Giles, Fox, Harwood & Williams, 1994; Harwood, 2000; Hummert, 1994; Ryan, Kwong See, Meneer & Trovato, 1992; Williams & Giles, 1996), the relationship between the situational factors that facilitate the activation of either positive or negative stereotypes and the type of communicative message, other than patronizing speech, has not been studied. This study will attempt to address this oversight.

Purpose of Study

The current study will examine the effect of a verbally aggressive message on stereotype activation. Verbal aggressiveness refers to an “attack on the self-concept of another person, instead of, or in addition to, the person’s position on a topic of

communication” (Infante & Wigley, 1986, p. 61). Verbal aggressiveness was a logical choice because of the previous psychodynamic research on an individual’s aggressiveness as a trigger for stereotype activation as well as the frequent media portrayal of older adults as eccentric, irritable, nagging, grouchy, verbose, and communicatively inept (Braithwaite, 1986; Robinson & Skill, 1995; Harwood & Anderson, 2002). While communication scholars have studied verbal aggressiveness extensively, this will be the first study to examine its effect on perceptual schemas specific to the cohort of older adults. The current study attempts to shed some light on Dychtwald’s contention that the behaviors of older adults, in this case aggressive communicative behaviors, have far-reaching consequences, and in particular, impacts the ensuing communicative intergenerational encounter either positively or negatively.

Organization of Thesis

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the topic and a statement of the purpose of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the communication literature on the Social Identity Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, Stereotype Activation Model, and verbal aggressiveness and the implications of these concepts on communicative behavior and adaptation in intergenerational communication. This review of literature is followed by the rationale and specific hypotheses. Chapter 3 is a description of methods and procedures used to study the relationship of age-related stereotype activation and verbally aggressive messages. This description includes information about the pilot and the current study, the instruments that were employed, the scoring of the various scales, and the statistical tests used to analyze the data. Chapter 4 reports the results of the data

analyses for the current study. Finally, Chapter 5 is a discussion of the results including limitations and implications for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the relevant communication literature on the Social Identity Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, Stereotype Activation Model, and verbal aggressiveness and considers the implications of these concepts on communicative behavior and adaptation in intergenerational communication. This review of literature is followed by the rationale and specific hypotheses.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a social-psychological theory that is concerned with the differentiation of individuals based upon social category or group membership. Henri Tajfel, one of the initial proponents of SIT, defined social identity as "...that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his (sic) knowledge of his (sic) membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (1978, p. 63). SIT examines the complex relationship between individual identity and the self-esteem that individuals obtain from membership in a group or social category and the comparisons that we make between specific ingroups and outgroups. Though it is often asserted that each person is unique, akin to snowflakes, in practice individuals are often prone to classify another person based upon social categories. After assessing the other person's group membership(s), an individual assigns her/him either to an ingroup (the other belongs to the same group as the person assessing him/her) or to an outgroup (the other belongs to a different group from the person assessing her/him). The process of a reflexive self that can "...take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways, in relation to

other social categories or classifications...is called self categorization in social identity theory” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 221). Self-categorization based upon demographic characteristics (e.g. age, race, ethnicity, and gender) and their related objective physical traits (hair, skin color, body type) is probably the most easily discernible category upon which to base group membership as ingroup or outgroup (Harwood, Giles & Ryan, 1995). Because an individual can belong to an almost limitless number and combination of social groups (left-handed, right-handed, and ambidextrous individuals; likes chocolate, likes vanilla, likes rocky road; *ad absurdum*), group memberships become salient based upon contextual information. For example, an individual at an NAACP meeting would probably distinguish race as the most important social category. At an AARP meeting, race would probably not be as important a social classification as would age.

Even early studies in intergroup dynamics discovered that arbitrary and trivial group memberships could manifest distinct ingroup biases. Tajfel, Billig, Bundy and Flament (1971) found that after being assigned to arbitrary groups, individuals still rewarded their ingroup members more frequently than they did outgroup members. Therefore, all intergroup interactions are inherently evaluative. Dovidio and Gaertner (1993) contend that “...at least in terms of social cognition, category-based responses inherently involve an evaluative, or affective component” (p. 189). The assignment of individuals to either ingroup or outgroup status activates “differential evaluations” (p.189). For example, Harwood (1999) found a significant relationship between age identity and media viewing preferences. Young adults prefer watching fictional television characters that they perceived to be same age peers. The evaluative component

of SIT requires a comparison between relevant groups. Groups can be privileged: high status groups or low status groups. Thus, intergroup encounters are essentially competitive even if conceptualized more subtly (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The establishment of a group hierarchy based upon social categorization of demographic classifications such as age, raises the question “What can an individual do in response to membership in a lower status group?” According to Boen and Vanbeselaere (2001), there are two strategies for changing low-status membership: individual mobility (i.e., try to gain acceptance on an individual basis into the high status group) and social competition (i.e., collective action to change status of the whole group). However, the most viable strategy in a situation is based upon several criteria: the permeability of group memberships, the stability of group hierarchies, and the legitimacy of the group’s status. Permeability refers to accessibility of individuals to group memberships. If group boundaries are permeable, there are few barriers between groups. Demographic social categories are not usually permeable (Giles & Johnson, 1981). Therefore, though it is possible to dye your hair to appear more youthful, other age-related signs (wrinkles, hearing loss, and so forth) will probably cause an older adult to be classified as an outgroup member by members of the young and middle-aged age cohorts. Age, while a demographic characteristic in the present (a 23-year-old is a member of the young adult ingroup), is a complex demographic phenomenon and poses unique research challenges in SIT because, unlike race or biological sex, individuals change group memberships involuntarily. With regard to Boen and Vanbeselaere’s (2001) three criteria, age is permeable within the context of time. The 23-year-old in 50 years is now an older adult. In 3 years (depending upon which researcher is

operationalizing age), the 23-year-old is now a middle-aged adult. At age 26 or 73, the individual's race and biological sex (unless she/he has opted for radical medical treatments) has remained the same. The result of this permeability on corresponding behavior is that "we feel a greater sense of threat from outgroup members when group boundaries are unclear and may go extra lengths to shore up those boundaries by emphasizing difference" (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001, p. 11). The next criteria articulated by Boen and Vanbeselaere (2001) is stability, which refers to the hierarchical relationship between groups across time. Demographic social categories including age are relatively stable. Finally, legitimacy refers to the fairness of the hierarchy. Groups based on social categories often deny the legitimacy of their lower status. Research by Scheeper, Branscombe, Spears, and Doosje (2002) found that individuals within lower status groups that attempt to legitimize their group's low status, as opposed to challenging its legitimacy, are perceived of as deviants. The lack of viable options for low status group members based upon easily discernible demographic classification can result in efforts by individuals to reclassify themselves as a high status sub-group within a low status group. Boen and Vanbeselaere (2001) found this strategy being employed in their study.

The creation of a more complex hierarchy allows individuals within lower status groups to improve the likelihood that he/she will belong to a more privileged group than other ingroup members. When examining age categories, communication scholars have found that older adults have more categories for older adults than do younger adults (Hummert, 1994; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner, & Strahm, 1994; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner & Strahm, 1995; Hummert, Shaner, & Garstka, 1995). An older adult might

classify him/herself as physically challenged, but still consider his/her status as higher than an age peer with Dementia of the Alzheimer's Type.

While it may seem that intergroup exchanges are predominantly expressions of the current sociocultural stereotypes, Dovidio and Gaertner (1993) suggest stereotype activation with regard to ingroup and outgroup membership is mitigated by "independent experiences and affective reactions" (p. 189). Thus interactions between individuals that are approached communicatively as intergroup exchanges can still be positive encounters. For example, a young adult that has had little or negative interactions with older adults might treat a frail older adult in the same fashion as a young adult who has had positive interactions with older individuals. Because intergroup interactions are mitigated by prior experiences and affective reactions, it is probable that an individual would experience predominantly positive stereotypes toward a beloved grandparent (Pecchioni & Croghan, 2002).

Social Identity Theory illuminates the process whereby individuals classify people in intergroup encounters and how these assignments facilitate modifications in the communicative endeavor. Miller (1977) contends that communication "... can profit from the *source* characteristics in message selection, but that such scrutiny should be grounded with the study of the relevance of *situational* contexts" (italics in original, p. 50). For Miller, the situational factors (ingroup - outgroup membership) are vital to understanding the verbal and nonverbal communication in an interaction. The possible communicative consequences of intergroup encounters, especially intergenerational communicative events, are examined in Communication Accommodation Theory.

Communication Accommodation Theory

In a summary article, Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (1991) contend that Communication Accommodation Theory allows for the examination of “(1) social consequences (attitudinal, attributional, behavioral, and communicative), (2) ideological and macro-societal factors, (3) intergroup variables and processes, (4) discursive practices in naturalistic settings, and (5) individual life span and group-language shifts” (p. 4). Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is an extension of Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) in which the primary communication contribution was its focus on “motivation of the speaker [as] the main determinant of the language and communication codes chosen by speakers” (Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargille & Ota, 1995, p. 115). CAT, therefore, is an extension of SAT that examines the “discursive dimensions of social interaction” (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991, p. 7). CAT is particularly useful because it considers the communication implications and the strategies that individuals use to express either individual or group preference.

According to Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991) there are three main approximation strategies that can be adopted by interlocutors in a communicative event: convergence, divergence, and maintenance. The use of different strategies affects the satisfaction of the participants in the communicative endeavor. The first strategy is convergence. “‘Convergence’ has been defined as a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other’s communicative behaviors in terms of a wide range of linguistic-prosodic-nonverbal features including speech rate, pausal phenomena, and utterance length...” (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, p. 7). Convergent strategies include such diverse elements as smiling, posture, appropriate self-disclosure, and inflection. If an individual adopts a

convergent strategy, the individual is trying to make their speech conform to the other person's speech. Convergence is essentially a cooperative strategy. In contrast, divergence is the process of intensifying differences in speech or nonverbal behavior to either distance oneself from the person or the group membership she/he represents. This strategy can represent a display of power and/or ingroup or outgroup affiliation signaling preferred status. The final strategy available is maintenance. When an individual uses a maintenance strategy, he/she makes no modifications across contexts. So an individual would neither converge nor diverge with different communicative partners, but rather maintain her/his pre-existing speech patterns. This strategy can also be used to signify intergroup relationships or individual personality constructs like "Noble Selves" (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991). In normal conversation, however (unless the communicative exchange is highly scripted), there is rarely a uniformly convergent or divergent strategy of employment by the interlocutors. To explain this phenomena, Giles, Mulac, Bradac, and Johnson (1987) expanded CAT from a unimodal to a multimodal conception of the convergent-divergent shifts in dyadic communication. This helps explain the complexities of approximation strategy changes within a communicative endeavor, thereby illustrating the communicative consequences on the actual interaction within an interpersonal communicative event. For example, an interruption can result in one of the interlocutors shifting his/her approximation strategy from convergence initially to divergence after the interruption.

While the operationalizing of speech differences based upon approximation strategies—convergence, divergence, and maintenance—is useful for analyzing differences in naturalistic settings, these conceptions prove less valuable when examining

the communicative content and motivation. To examine an individual's motivations and topic choice in a communicative endeavor, Coupland, Coupland, Giles, and Henwood (1988) modified previous CAT conceptions to consider the consequences of communicative behaviors in intergenerational communication. This modification increased the emphasis placed on motivation prior to the outset of the communicative interaction and the consequences for the receiver of the messages being sent. The term "attuning" is used to differentiate non-speech characteristics like motivation and topic choice. Williams and Giles (1996) articulate the difference between the two as such,

Convergence and divergence refer to strategies whereby we approximate the speech characteristics of another, whereas attuning has been used to refer to a range of communication management strategies along dimensions of discourse management (e.g., topic), interpretability (e.g., clarity), and interpersonal control (e.g., positive and negative face) (italics in original, p. 224).

Coupland, et al. (1988) proposed three new nonapproximation strategies for articulating distinctiveness rather than similarity: discourse management, interpretability, and interpersonal control. Discourse management is concerned with how the topic and discourse are negotiated between the conversational partners. There are three important components of discourse management: field, tenor, and mode.

Field refers to "...ideational or referential content of talk" (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001, p. 12-3). In other words, is the topic relevant to the conversational partner? A young adult talking about World War II would be focusing the conversational content on a field that would allow the older adult (in all likelihood) to be actively involved. Discourse management with regard to field in this case could appear counterattuning because if the past is the topic of conversation, these reminiscences are not usually a shared topic between members of different age cohorts. Pecchioni and

Croghan (2002) found that field was more open with older adults (grandparents) that were well liked. The quality of the intergenerational interaction might complement range in field strategies. In other words, as positive valence toward a grandparent increases, the range of acceptable topics that can be discussed also increases.

Tenor refers to "...concerns [for] the management of interpersonal positions, roles, and positive and negative faces" (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001, p. 13). The young adult might refrain from commentary about the role of women in the workforce during and after World War II to avoid possible conflict. In an intergenerational communicative encounter between a grandparent and a grandchild, one might limit discussions to safe topics that will limit the possibility of conflict. In this case, a grandparent might discuss positive interpersonal references instead of a discussion concerning the young adult's sexuality.

Finally, mode "...refers to the procedural and textual dimensions or both that structure talk" (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001, p. 13). The young adult may not know much about World War II and ask a lot of questions. This mode or strategy would be one of inquiry or interrogation.

Interpretability is concerned with assessment of the clarity of the other person's communicative competence (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). Interpretability is of particular relevance to the message strategy used with regard to a specific individual. Patronizing speech (instances where older adults are treated more like small children than autonomous individuals because of actual or believed impairments) are overaccommodating based upon interpretability. A memory lapse in an older adult might trigger a corresponding increase in volume and a decrease in vocabulary and grammar

complexity because it activates a stereotype that the older individual might have presbycusis or Dementia of the Alzheimer's Type.

Finally, interpersonal control is concerned with how individuals negotiate the interpersonal encounter (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). Interpersonal control plays an important role in intergenerational communication. Interpersonal control addresses the question, "Are both participants allowed access to input?" and thus, is concerned with power in the interpersonal relationship. In general, Giles, Fox, Harwood, and Williams (1994) found that "...older people are also heard to sound frail and are considered overly self-disclosive and controlling in intergenerational encounters" (p. 132), therefore discourse management and interpersonal control are types of overaccommodation on the dimension of power (Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargille, and Ota, 1995).

CAT is particularly useful in interpreting communicative behaviors in intergenerational communication. The identified approximation strategies frame the intergenerational communication as a set of strategies that either allows the participants to converge or attune (usually having a positive impact on subsequent encounters) or diverge or counterattune (usually having a negative impact on subsequent encounters). Harwood (2000) describes the CAT process, "While our own behaviors may *reflect* our orientation toward our partner (broadly convergent or divergent), our orientation is likely to be *determined* by their behaviors, not our own" (italics in original, p. 759).

Stereotype Activation Model

While CAT is useful for illuminating the ways in which individuals use approximation or attuning strategies to accentuate ingroup, outgroup, or intergroup differences/ communication or to exhibit personal affiliation at the interindividual level,

the Stereotype Activation Model (SAM) is concerned specifically with stereotypes associated with age. In the introduction, the development of a multiple stereotype theory was elaborated. An abbreviated review of literature follows. Ashmore and Del Boca (1981) found three different theoretical conceptualizations of stereotypes: sociocultural, psychodynamic, and cognitive. The sociocultural perspective contends that stereotypes are used primarily for maintaining social distinctions and perpetuating existing prejudices. Sociocultural stereotypes are hegemonic and discriminatory. The psychodynamic stereotypes are still negative, but instead of being constructed culturally, they fulfill the personality needs of specific individuals. The psychodynamic stereotype is essentially egocentric. Both sociocultural and psychodynamic perspectives contend that all stereotypes are negative. The cognitive perspective assumes that stereotypes are not inherently negative, but rather a form of information processing linked to an individual's perceptual schemas that organize new information into preexisting categorical structures. The research using the cognitive stereotype perspective has found that individuals have complex categories made up of specific traits that they use to process social information. While this perspective more accurately reflects social-psychological processes, it is still too reductive because, even though it allows for differing perceptions of individuals based upon category (e.g., age, race, ethnicity) as well as differing constructions of similar stereotypes based upon specific traits, the cognitive stereotype is still limited to either a positive or a negative conception of older adults not both positive and negative. Because the process of aging can be a positive or a negative transition or both, a cycle that includes both positive and negative elements, the development of a model of multiple stereotypes corrects the reductivism of the cognitive

stereotype approach (Heckhausen, Dixon & Baltes, 1989; Hummert 1990; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner & Strahm, 1994; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner & Strahm, 1995; Hummert, Shaner & Garstka, 1995; Hummert, Shaner, Garstka & Henry, 1998). The multiple stereotype theory suggests that individuals can have both positive and negative stereotypes of older adults. If this is the case, what mechanisms cause stereotype activation? Hummert (1994) discusses several factors that affect the valence and activation of stereotypes: characteristics of the perceiver, characteristics of the target, and contextual factors.

Characteristics of the Perceiver

A number of characteristics of the perceiver, including age, cognitive complexity, and the quality of previous interactions, have been shown to influence the activation of stereotypes available to the perceiver. The age of the perceiver is an important element in stereotype activation. Research has found that as the age of the perceiver increases, there is a corresponding increase in the identification of some positive traits associated with age (Brewer & Liu, 1984; Hummert 1999; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner & Strahm, 1994). Hummert, Garstka, Shaner, and Strahm (1994) found that older adults not only identified more positive traits, but also had more superordinate categories for older adults than their younger counterparts. Older adults had more stereotypes for older adults than their younger age peers. Research by Giles, Fortman, Honeycutt, and Ota (2003) suggest young adults report of self and peer evaluations on vitality were more favorable than evaluations of typical 65-year-old or 85-year-old in both American and Japanese students.

Another characteristic of the perceiver that affects stereotype activation is cognitive complexity. Cognitive complexity measures an individual's ability to differentiate, abstract and integrate, social constructs about another person (Crockett, 1965; O'Keefe & Sypher, 1981). Individuals high in cognitive complexity are more prone to use affective messages than instrumental messages (O'Keefe & Sypher, 1981; Samter, 2002; Weger & Polcar, 2002). Individuals with a greater hierarchical structure would have a larger set of schemas from which to find the most appropriate one. Hummert (1994) concludes "...individuals with high cognitive complexity should be less likely to activate negative stereotypes than should those of lower cognitive complexity" (p. 173).

The final characteristic of the perceiver that is salient to stereotype activation concerns the perceiver's historical background. The quality of previous contact affects which type of stereotype will be activated. Research by Fox and Giles (1993) reports that the quality of contact (not frequency) is important in stereotype activation. Individuals who have had a high quality of contact with older adults in the past had more positive attitudes than did individuals who have had lower or no quality past interactions with older individuals. Pecchioni and Croghan (2002) support the contention that a high quality of interaction corresponded to an increase in positive stereotype activation. Previous research suggests that the frequency of contact alone has little impact on stereotype activation.

Characteristics of the Target

The physical appearance of the target, in addition to the characteristics of the perceiver, also influences the activation of stereotypes available to the perceiver. One characteristic of the target that affects trait perceptions relates to physical appearance.

Traits in SAM focus on physical characteristics, such as fragile, happy, healthy, and slow-moving, and have generally ignored communicative behaviors. Though physical cues are not an exact referent to old age, they are easily identifiable. Some 30-year-old individuals look 50, while some 50-year-old individuals look 30. Likewise, it is common for older adults to look significantly older or younger based upon environmental conditions and lifestyle choices. Research by Hummert, Garstka, and Shaner (1997) found that physical cues, such as wrinkles, could activate negative stereotypes. Pictures that were perceived by the participants as belonging to the group of the oldest-old (80 and over) had the most negative stereotypes. Therefore, the older an individual looks, the more negative the traits that will be identified. Hummert (1999) concludes that “it is not the facial features per se (sic) that are prototypic of positive and negative stereotypes, as implied by Brewer and colleagues..., but those facial features that are linked to perceptions of age” (p. 180). These results suggest that perceptions of an individual’s appearance play a significant role in age-related negative stereotypes. Hummert (1999) concludes that though physical characteristics can activate stereotypes, trait information used in conjunction with photographs elicits both numerically more as well as more diverse stereotypes.

Contextual Factors

The final factor, in addition to the characteristics of the perceiver and the target, which influences the activation of stereotypes available to the perceiver, is the physical context of communicative event. One contextual factor that impacts stereotype activation is age-relevant situations. Coupland, Coupland, Giles, and Henwood (1988) contend that situations that accentuate age distinctions are more likely to cause negative stereotyping.

For example, an older adult in a nursing home (frail) is likely to activate negative stereotypes, while an older adult on a cruise should be more likely to have a corresponding positive stereotype. The Stereotype Activation Model constructed by Hummert (1994) attempts to explain the effect of contextual cues on age-specific stereotypes. The underlying premise is that contextual cues along with the composite of an individual's experiences will play an important role as to whether the older adult stereotype activated will be positive or negative.

The factors affecting stereotype activation according to Hummert, Shaner, and Garstka (1995) are additive. Therefore, an individual who is cognitively complex and has had a high quality of contact who meets an older adult in a nursing home may still have predominantly positive stereotypes activated and thereby exhibit more convergent communicative behaviors. While a person with low cognitive complexity, meeting a frail older adult in a nursing home will almost assuredly have a negative stereotype activated that would cause her/his communication strategy to be diverging and counterattuning. The Stereotype Activation Model (SAM) in conjunction with the Communication Accommodation Theory allows for a fuller examination of communication strategies in relation to positive or negative stereotype activation. The SAM is also valuable because of the flexibility of its stereotype framework, which consists of traits that fit most members of an age group, allows for the examination of other communicative traits that fall within the larger stereotype superordinate category. One trait that has been researched extensively in communication and falls logically into one superordinate category of SAM (namely shrew/curmudgeon) is verbal aggressiveness. An examination of verbal aggressiveness in the Stereotype Activation Model might facilitate a more

thorough understanding of both the role of this trait in stereotype activation, but also the role and importance of aggressive communication and communication overall in stereotype activation. Fox (1999) concurs, “With psychological and contextual variables accounted for, it is crucial that future research focus on the actual communication that is occurring...” (p. 413). Therefore, it is important to turn to a review of literature on aggressive communication.

Aggressive Communication

The communication research associated with aggressive communication has been summarized in two recent journal articles (Blickle, Habasch & Senff, 1998; Infante & Rancer, 1996). This review of literature on aggressive communication will consider the research on assertive communication and argumentativeness, hostility and verbal aggressiveness, aggressive communication as trait and state, aggressive communication and gender, aggressive communication and perception, and conclude with aggressive communication and relational satisfaction. Communication is defined as aggressive “if it applies force ...symbolically in order, minimally, to dominate and perhaps damage, or maximally, to defeat and perhaps destroy the locus of attack” (Infante, 1987, p. 156). The model of aggressive communication developed by Infante (1987) consists of four communication traits--argumentativeness, assertiveness, verbal aggressiveness, and hostility--that interact with contextual or environmental elements in message creation. These communication traits interact with contextual factors that either serve to inhibit (e.g., the possibility of incarceration) or foster (e.g., alcohol usage) their eventual expression. Infante and Wigley (1986) base their research on a three dimensional model developed by Costa and McCrae (1980) consisting of neuroticism, extraversion, and

openness. Hostility and verbal aggressiveness are subsets of neuroticism, while assertiveness and argumentativeness are subsets of the extraversion dimension. According to Roland (2002), neuroticism is concerned with individual actions that “...construct, perceive, and feel reality as problematic, threatening, difficult, and to feel negative emotions...” while extraversion is concerned with the “...quantity and intensity of relationships with one’s environment...and refers to seek contacts with the environment...” (p. 8). Hostility and verbal aggressiveness are expressions of negative emotions and therefore a subset of neuroticism. Assertiveness and argumentativeness are attempts to interact through interpersonal communication with the environment. Recent research by McCroskey, Heisel, and Richmond (2001) corroborate Infante and Wigley’s findings that argumentativeness and assertiveness are positive constructs, while verbal aggressiveness and hostility are their conceptual antitheses.

Assertive Communication and Argumentativeness

Aggressive communication is constructive if it “produce[s] satisfaction and enhance[s] an interpersonal relationship” (Infante & Wigley, 1986, p. 62). Most research on argumentativeness has found that it has a positive affect on relationships (Anderson & Martin 1999; Payne & Sabourin, 1990). Argumentativeness and assertive communication are the constructive components of aggressive communication conceptualized by Infante and Wigley (1986). Assertiveness is the more universal of the two constructive communication traits and encapsulates the more specific trait of argumentativeness. Assertiveness includes characteristics such as “personal ascendance, dominance, forcefulness and the use of assertive behavior to achieve personal goals” (Infante, 1987, p. 158). Assertive communication is the constructive trait that allows

people to actualize individual or interpersonal goals *and* which does not impede others from doing likewise.

Argumentativeness, the more specific aggressive communication trait, is defined as “ the predisposition of an individual to recognize controversial issues and to advocate or refute positions on them” (Infante & Rancer 1982, p. 74). This definition limits argumentativeness to a transactional process of communication between parties on an issue or issues. Argumentativeness, as conceived by Infante and Rancer (1982), consists of two complementary impulses: desire to approach arguments and desire to avoid arguments. A high argumentative would score high on approaching arguments and low on avoiding arguments. Individuals who score moderately high on both dimensions represent a position of either conflict feelings (the respondent has a high score on both approaching arguments and a high score on avoiding arguments) or apathetic (the respondent has a low score on both approaching arguments and on avoiding arguments) depending upon the importance of the issue under consideration (Infante & Rancer, 1982).

Hostility and Verbal Aggressiveness

Hostility is the more global destructive communication trait and includes messages that communicate irritability, negativity, resentment, and suspicion (Costa & McCrae, 1980; Costa & McCrae, 1999). While hostility has obvious communicative consequences, verbal aggressiveness has received more attention in communication literature.

Infante and Wigley (1986) conceptualize verbal aggressiveness as an “attack on the self-concept of another person, instead of, or in addition to, the person’s position on a

topic of communication” (p. 61). Infante and Rancer (1986) delineated ten distinct types of verbally aggressive messages: character attacks, competence attacks, physical appearance attacks, background attacks, maledictions, teasing, ridicule, threats, profanity, and nonverbal emblems. These ten types can be used by themselves or in conjunction with other types of verbally aggressive messages to attack an individual’s self-concept. Whereas argumentativeness is the communication trait that measures an individual’s desire to argue over controversial issues, verbal aggressiveness is the communication trait that measures an individual’s use of messages that transcends discourse about an issue and extends the attack to the other interlocutor(s).

Infante (1989) contends that verbal aggressiveness occurs because of an individual’s inability, or lack of communication skills, to devise an argument that deals with the issue under contention, rather than attacking the person with whom one is in conflict. This inability or communication deficit has been labeled the argumentative skills deficiency. This communicative deficiency forces individuals to launch attacks on the interlocutor’s self-concept because they lack the skills to continue an issue-specific discussion. As this aggressive communication interaction continues, the communicator increases his/her verbal aggression, lacking a more positive alternative, which increases the likelihood that the encounter will end in physical violence. Toch (1969) found anecdotal evidence that inmates in Illinois jails were more likely to resort to violence because they lacked skills to resolve disputes in any other manner. Honeycutt (2003) reviews verbal aggressiveness literature and its relationship to physical aggression and concluded that “persuasive arguing did not predict physical coercion (-.08) and functions of imagined interactions (IIs) were negatively associated with physical coercion (-.20) as

well as characteristics of IIs being negatively associated with physical coercion (-.30)” (p. 81). While all verbally aggressive encounters will not end in physically violent confrontation, it is a possible intermediate step.

Aggressive Communication as Trait and State

Aggressive communication has been viewed from a personality trait perspective. Personality traits are predilections towards certain types of communication that stays reasonably consistent across time and situation. Infante (1987) found that communication traits, more specifically argumentativeness and verbal aggression, are important because they have significant explanatory capabilities with regard to both communicative behaviors and perceptions.

Allik and McCrae (2002) argue that “... decades of life experience appear to have little systematic impact on basic personality traits” (p. 303). While this attitude seems to suggest that personality traits are almost immutable, Infante and Wigley (1986) contend that argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness have a situational component. Communicative behavior then is a product of both the personality trait and the situation and as such fits in with Hummert’s Stereotype Activation Model. Studies in both argumentativeness (Infante & Rancer, 1982) and in verbal aggression (Infante, Chandler, Sabourin, Rudd & Shannon, 1990) have found support for the idea that there is an interaction between trait and situational variables. The operational definitions of argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness and the ensuing research on gender, perception, and relational satisfaction make their relationship to Communication Accommodation Theory more salient.

Aggressive Communication and Gender

Numerous studies have measured the effect of biological sex on trait argumentativeness (Infante & Rancer, 1982) and verbal aggressiveness (Infante & Wigley, 1986; Nicotera & Rancer, 1994). Males are higher in both of these aggressive forms of communication (Infante & Rancer, 1982; Infante & Wigley 1986; Kinney, Smith & Donzella, 2001; Nicotera & Rancer, 1994) The Nicotera and Rancer study (1994) lends some important insight into stereotypes of aggressive traits across sexes. These researchers found that males were higher on both aggressive traits, but they also found that both sexes tended to have difficulty distinguishing high argumentativeness from verbal aggression in the opposite sex. Thus a female would perceive of a “generalized” male as an outgroup member and have difficulty differentiating between high trait argumentativeness (a constructive trait) and high trait verbal aggression (a destructive trait). According to this study, a trend exists in both sexes to perceive that generalized males are both more argumentative and verbally aggressive than their female counterparts. This study suggests that both sexes perceive more verbal aggression in members of the opposite sex than in their own across situations. Anderson and Guerrero (1998) suggest that emotional states are subject to a similar problem, specifically with perceptions of anger. The authors contend that females have a difficult time differentiating anger in males. Kinney, Smith, and Donzella (2001) found that both biological sex and psychological gender are related to verbal aggression. Males and high masculines were more likely to be verbally aggressive.

Aggressive Communication and Perception.

A number of characteristics of the receiver, including biological sex, group membership, type of verbally aggressive message, message equivocality, and the quality of previous interactions, have been shown to influence the activation of stereotypes available to the perceiver. Numerous studies have found a correlation between the biological sex of the respondent and verbal aggressiveness. But Nicotera and Rancer (1994) found that perceptions of aggressive communication differed dramatically with regard to the opposite sex. The participants in this study had difficulty accurately assessing aggressive communication from members of the opposite sex. Responses that were worded argumentatively were perceived as being more verbally aggressive in the opposite sex.

Another factor impacting the receiver's perception of aggressive communication involves the origin of the message. Prior research suggests that verbally aggressive messages are perceived very differently depending upon whether they came from an ingroup member or an outgroup member (Wiener, 1995; Williams & Giles, 1996). Wiener (1995) argues that "...favorable actions by the in-group members are attributed to internal factors (e.g., their dispositions), whereas unfavorable conduct is ascribed to the situation. The reverse pattern of descriptions characterizes the behavior of the outgroup—that is, negative behaviors are attributed to the dispositions" (p. 213). This attribution of negative behaviors of ingroup members to situational factors and the attribution of the negative behaviors of outgroup members to personality predisposition has several communicative consequences on the perception of verbally aggressive messages. Verbally aggressive messages from ingroup members would arise from

contextual considerations, and thus be underreported; while verbally aggressive messages from outgroup members would arise from constitutive considerations, and as such be overreported. Williams and Giles (1996) in their study on accommodation strategies in intergenerational communication, which only studied the young adult perspective about older adult communication, found that 61% of the young respondents who reported receiving verbally aggressive messages from older adults reported feelings of anger in response. Along this line of research, a study conducted from the perspective of the receiver found that more argumentative individuals' perceptions of the level of verbal aggression in a message depended upon the sender of the message (Infante, Wall, Leap, & Danielson, 1984).

Infante, Riddle, Horwarth, and Tumlin (1992) found differences in perceptions based upon the level of verbal aggressiveness of the individual concerning various verbally aggressive strategies. People who scored high on verbal aggressiveness perceived their messages to be less hurtful to others than did individuals low in verbal aggressiveness. Though not counterintuitive, this idea would imply that these verbally aggressive messages are constructed as argumentative messages. Kinney (1994) suggests there are three general categories of verbally aggressive messages: group membership, personal failings, and relational failings attacks. These studies suggest that those high in trait verbal aggressiveness use strategies to mitigate the culpability of the painful consequences of their utterances by minimizing the impact of her/his verbally aggressive message. The results of this study suggest that individuals can misconstrue the aggressive nature of their message.

Edwards, Bello, Brandau-Brown, and Hollems (2001) found that individuals high in verbal aggressiveness perceive ambiguous messages more negatively than their less verbally aggressive peers. The authors found that “the results reveal that after controlling for sex, both loneliness and verbal aggressiveness account for a significant portion of the variance in the negative interpretation [of the ambiguous message]” (p. 146). The sender’s verbal aggressiveness also plays an important role perceptually. Leets and Giles (1997) found in a study on ethnic messages that contrary to conventional wisdom, ambiguous messages were more likely to be considered verbally aggressive than more explicit messages. Respondents perceived extreme remarks overtly addressed at their ethnicity as less hurtful than non-ethnic observers did, while the less hurtful remarks indirectly denigrating their ethnicity were perceived more negatively by the ethnic group members than by non-ethnic observers.

Aggressive Communication and Relational Satisfaction.

A number of studies have examined aggressive communication (predominantly argumentativeness) and its effects on relational satisfaction (Anderson & Martin 1999; Martin & Anderson, 1997; Payne & Sabourin, 1990; Rancer, Baukus, & Amato, 1986). Little research has explored other relational levels with the exception of immediate family satisfaction (Feldman & Ridley, 2000; Sabourin, Infante & Rudd, 1993). At the acquaintance relational level, Martin and Anderson (1997) studied argumentativeness on roommate satisfaction. They tested each roommate for their level of argumentativeness. The participants then evaluated the overall satisfaction of their relationship with their roommate. They found no correlation between roommate satisfaction and argumentativeness. Nonetheless there is a dearth of communication literature that

addresses the effect of aggressive communication on relationship formation. The underlying assumption is that argumentativeness is good and verbal aggressiveness is bad for relational development.

A study by Teven, Martin, and Neupauer (1998) investigated the relationship between siblings' relational satisfaction and perceptions of the verbally aggressive messages received. The results from this study showed that verbal aggression has a deleterious effect on interpersonal relationships in sibling relationships. The more verbally aggressive the message was perceived as being, the less satisfied they were with the sibling relationship.

While there has been no empirical research specifically examining the relationship of verbal aggressiveness to negative stereotype activation, at the anecdotal level, most individuals have had an older relative or acquaintance whose behavior was verbally aggressive. In common parlance, individuals exhibiting these behaviors would be called: grumpy, mean, crotchety, and so on.

In conclusion, this literature review has examined Social Identity Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, Stereotype Activation Model, and verbal aggressiveness. The complex process of decoding messages starts with an assignment of the sender into a group to which the receiver either belongs (ingroup) or does not belong (outgroup). This assignment has communicative consequences because it sets the expectation level for the communicative encounter. These expectations are triggered by contextual, physical, and contact cues and the perceived personality traits of the sender (e.g., verbal aggressiveness) that cause stereotype activation. This study specifically tests and extends the Stereotype Activation Model by examining perceiver characteristics

of verbal aggressiveness and the effects of previous experience with elders as regards to age, relational level, and message strategy.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Based on SIT, CAT, SAM, and research into aggressive communication, five hypotheses are proposed in relation to perceptions of verbal aggression in older adults. The hypotheses are divided into 3 distinct sections: affect of the characteristics and the experiences of the perceiver on stereotype activation (Hypotheses 1 and 2), affect of the message strategy on stereotype activation (Hypotheses 3, 4a and 4b), and affect of the interaction between age and relational level, compared to message strategy (Hypothesis 5).

The verbal aggression research indicates that individuals high in verbal aggressiveness perceive ambiguous messages more negatively than their counterparts low in aggressiveness. The research on self-awareness and expressions of verbal aggression also supports the hypothesis that individuals high in verbal aggressiveness will perceive verbal aggression more negatively and therefore activate more negative stereotypes than individuals low in verbal aggressiveness (Edwards, Bello, Brandau-Brown, & Hollems, 2001; Kinney, 1994; Kinney, Smith, Donzella, 2001).

- Hypothesis 1: High trait verbal aggressiveness will be positively correlated with negative stereotype activation.

The stereotype activation research on the quality of contact on stereotype activation suggests that individuals with more positive interactions will have more positive stereotypes and fewer negative stereotypes available for activation. This research found that frequency was not a predictor of stereotype activation while quality was

significantly related to stereotype activation (Fox & Giles, 1993; Pecchioni & Croghan, 2002).

- Hypothesis 2: Positive quality interactions with older adults will be positively correlated with positive stereotype and negatively correlated with negative stereotype activation, regardless of relational level or message strategy.

CAT research on motivation with regard to nonapproximation strategies of tenor in discourse management and control is relevant to an examination of message strategy with regard to a specific individual. Verbal aggressiveness according to this research would be divergent and counterattuned and more likely to activate negative stereotypes. The research on attributions which found that individuals receiving verbally aggressive messages from outgroup members tended to account for this type of message production as a negative personality disposition would also suggest that verbally aggressive messages would activate more negative stereotypes (Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Harwood, 2000; Wiener, 1995; Williams & Giles, 1996; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001).

- Hypothesis 3: Respondents will have more negative stereotypes activated when the message is verbally aggressive.

Not only does the CAT research on nonapproximation strategies contend that negative stereotypes will be activated, but so does the research on relational satisfaction. Verbally aggressive messages even in familial relationships are deleterious to the relationship. Therefore, verbally aggressive messages will have greater impact on the activation of negative stereotypes than will relational level (Feldman & Ridley, 2000; Sabourin, Infante & Rudd, 1993; Teven, Martin, and Neupauer, 2001).

- Hypothesis 4a: Verbally aggressive messages will be more strongly associated with the activation of negative stereotypes than will relational level (know well or don't know).

The attributions of individuals receiving verbally aggressive messages from outgroup members to personality dispositions would also suggest that verbally aggressive messages would activate more negative stereotypes than age (Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Harwood, 2000; Wiener, 1995; Williams & Giles, 1996; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). The SAM research concerning the importance of traits in stereotype activation provides theoretical support for this hypothesis (Heckhausen, Dixon & Baltes, 1989; Hummert 1990; Hummert, 1994; Hummert, 1999; Hummert, Garstka, Shaner & Strahm, 1994; Hummert, Shaner & Garstka, 1995; Hummert, Shaner, Garstka & Henry, 1998).

- Hypothesis 4b: Verbally aggressive messages will be more strongly associated with negative stereotype activation than will outgroup age (older adult).

The stereotype activation research found that stereotype activation is additive. Therefore, the combined factors of relational level and age should activate more negative stereotypes than the communication strategy hypothesis (Hummert, 1994; Hummert 1999; Hummert, Shaner & Garstka, 1995).

- Hypothesis 5: Relational level and age (combined) will have a greater effect on negative stereotype activation than will communication strategy (level of verbal aggressiveness).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The general purpose of this section is to describe the instruments, sample, and statistical analyses used to test the hypotheses proposed in the previous chapter. This chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section discusses the pilot study including: demographic information about the sample, instrumentation, and statistical tests used to analyze the data. The second section will examine: the demographic information about the current project's sample, the instrumentation, and the statistical tests used to analyze the hypotheses.

Pilot Study

Sample

Questionnaires from 118 participants were collected in a snowball sample completed for an upper level Communication Studies course at Louisiana State University. Two (1.7%) participants were excluded from the statistical analyses because they exceeded 25 years of age and did not qualify as a young adult as operationally defined in this study. Forty-five (38.8%) of the respondents of the pilot study were male while the remaining 71 (61.2%) were female. The average age of the participants was 21.5 years of age ($sd = 1.92$). The ethnic composition of the participants was 81% European American, 8.6% African American (which is lower than the 11% campus-wide), 1.7% Native American (tribal membership not included), 1.7% reported as "other" (both listed several ethnicities from the ethnicities included in the questionnaire), and seven (6%) students did not respond to the question. One hundred eleven (95.7%)

students were United States citizens, while 102 (87.9%) students claimed Louisiana state residency.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire for the pilot study (Appendix A) consisted of four major parts. The first section was comprised of demographic questions about the research participants' sex, age, enrollment status, country of origin, ethnicity, academic major, and state of residence as well as several Likert-scaled items that assessed: the frequency of contact with age peers and older adults across two relational levels (know well, do not know well), and the frequency with which different media are used to communicate with age peers and older adults across relational levels.

The second section of the pilot study assessed the participant's trait argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness. The participants completed the 20-item Argumentativeness Scale and the 20-item Verbal Aggressiveness Scale. Infante and Rancer's (1982) Argumentativeness Scale consists of 20 items. Ten items measure the respondent's motivation to approach situations conducive to arguing (reliability coefficient of .91) and 10 items measure his/her motivation to avoid situations where an argument might arise (reliability coefficient of .86). In this study, reliability (using Cronbach's alpha) for the desire to approach arguments was .79. Reliability for the desire to avoid arguments was .77. While the reliabilities in the pilot study exceeded .7, they were much lower than the initial estimates in Infante and Rancer (1982). This finding might partially reflect the more heterogeneous nature of the sample with regard to ethnicity. The participants' trait argumentativeness (ARGgt) score is computed by

subtracting the 10 questions measuring avoiding arguments from the 10 questions measuring approaching arguments.

Infante and Wigley's (1986) Verbal Aggressiveness Scale also consists of 20 items. The respondent's trait verbal aggressiveness score is computed by recoding the negatively worded items and then summing the respondent's scores on the 5-point Likert scale. Infante and Wigley found a reliability coefficient of .81 on the 20-item Verbal Aggressiveness questionnaire. In this study, reliability (using Cronbach's alpha) was .88 for verbal aggressiveness. At this point it is important to note that argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness are two distinct personality constructs that are not correlated ($r = .04$) (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Thus it should be possible for an individual to be highly argumentative and highly verbally aggressive. In this pilot study, however, verbal aggressiveness and argumentativeness were positively correlated ($r = .36, p < .001$). The order was randomized so that some participants responded to the Argumentativeness Scale first and others responded to the Verbal Aggressiveness Scale first to eliminate any systematic bias.

The third section consisted of two additional Verbal Aggressiveness Scales that had been modified to assess the participant's perception of both generalized same age peers and generalized older adults levels of verbal aggression. The participants completed the 20-item Verbal Aggressiveness Scale that had been modified to reflect both the acquaintance level and age of the speaker in the section 4 vignettes. All participants had one modified Verbal Aggressiveness Scale measuring his/her perception of a "typical" same age peer (that they either know well or do not know well; Cronbach's alpha levels of .83 and .88 respectively), and one modified Verbal Aggressiveness Scale

measuring his/her perception of a “typical” older adult (that they either know well or do not know well; Cronbach’s alpha levels of .90 and .86 respectively). Likewise, all participants had one modified Verbal Aggressiveness Scale measuring his/her perception of a person that they know well (that was either young or old), and one modified Verbal Aggressiveness Scale measuring his/her perception of a person they do not know well (that was either young or old).

The final section of the questionnaire asked the participants to imagine themselves in a scenario where five independent variables (age, sex, context, acquaintance level, and message strategy) that research suggests affect stereotype activation were randomized. The randomization of these 5 independent variables required the construction of 16 separate combinations. After the vignette, the participants were asked to rank perceived traits of the individual using Hummert’s Stereotype Scale (1995). The Hummert Stereotype scale (1995) has 8 superordinate categories (3 positive and 5 negative): *Perfect Grandparent*, *John Wayne Conservative*, *Golden Ager*, *Severely Impaired*, *Shrew/ Curmudgeon*, *Despondent*, *Vulnerable*, and *Recluse*. The total number of traits making up these superordinate categories is 97.

Because of the interest in verbal aggressiveness in stereotype activation, a manipulation check was completed prior to the pilot study, which assessed which superordinate stereotype category should subsume the trait verbal aggressiveness. The subjects for this manipulation check were 26 students in an upper level communication studies class at Louisiana State University. The students completed a trait sorting task using Hummert’s 1990 Stereotype Scale. The 71 traits were sorted into the 8 stereotypes categories (3 positive, 5 negative): *Perfect Grandparent*, *John Wayne Conservative*,

Liberal Matriarch/Patriarch, Severely Impaired, Shrew/Curmudgeon, Despondent, Vulnerable, and Recluse. Twenty-three (88.5%) of the students placed verbal aggressiveness in the *Shrew/Curmudgeon* category along with traits like ill-tempered, miserly, bitter, complaining, and humorless. Two (7.5%) of the students placed verbal aggressiveness in the *John Wayne Conservative* category, a positive stereotype made up of traits like tough, conservative, and mellow. One (3.8%) student included verbal aggressiveness in the category *Perfect Grandparent* with traits like intelligent, wise, and courageous. For the pilot study a trait labeled verbally abusive was added to the other 97 traits to account for the verbally aggressive message.

A second manipulation check concluded prior to the pilot study examined the messages used in the vignettes to assess the respondents' ability to correctly identify verbally aggressive and non-verbally aggressive messages. The subjects for this manipulation check were 41 students in an introductory level communication studies course at Louisiana State University. Two vignettes were constructed for verbally aggressive messages and two for non-verbally aggressive messages. Thirty-nine (95.1%) of the participants correctly recognized and labeled both verbally aggressive messages and both non-verbally aggressive messages. One (2.4%) student recognized both verbally aggressive messages, but labeled one of the non-verbally aggressive messages "Excuse me. Can I get around you?" as a verbally aggressive message. One (2.4%) student labeled all four messages incorrectly. A chi square test found this relationship significant at the .01 level. This manipulation check was used to verify that the verbally aggressive messages were perceived as verbally aggressive ("Get out of the way! Can't you see I am trying to get around you?" and "Shut up! Can't you see it's after visiting

hours?”), and the non-verbally aggressive messages were perceived of as non-verbally aggressive (“Excuse me, please. Can I get around you?” and “Could you keep it down? It’s past visiting hours”) in each vignette.

In the pilot study, the reliabilities for the Hummert Stereotype Scale (1995) for the superordinate categories: *Perfect Grandparent*, *John Wayne Conservative*, *Golden Ager*, *Severely Impaired*, *Shrew/Curmudgeon*, *Despondent*, *Vulnerable*, and *Recluse*, were .93, .79, .92, .86, .90, .83, .78, and .33 respectively. These alpha results reflect dropping the trait “feeble” from *Severely Impaired* and the trait “understanding” from *Perfect Grandparent* for all subsequent statistical analyses. The low alpha reliability level of *Recluse* resulted in dropping the entire category from subsequent analysis.

A MANOVA was run on the five independent variables (age, sex, context, relational level, and message strategy) that theoretically influenced stereotype activation on 7 of the 8 Stereotypes from the Hummert Stereotype Scale (1995): *Perfect Grandparent*, *John Wayne Conservative*, *Golden Ager*, *Severely Impaired*, *Shrew/Curmudgeon*, *Despondent*, and *Vulnerable*. The results of the MANOVA (Table 1) show that age, verbal aggressiveness, and relational level were the three most important factors in stereotype activation from the respondents in the pilot study. A MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate effect for age, relational level, and message strategy ($F(7,77) = 3.81, p = .001, \text{Wilks' lambda} = .743$; $F(7,77) = 3.39, p = .003, \text{Wilks' lambda} = .76$; $F(7,77) = 6.04, p < .001, \text{Wilks' lambda} = .65$) respectively. A Bartlett test of sphericity for this MANOVA was significant and revealed that the multivariate analysis was appropriate to use, Bartlett sphericity test (27) = 356.75, $p < .001$. For this reason, biological sex and context have been dropped from the current

TABLE 1

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Context, Sex, Age, Relational Level, and Message Strategy on seven superordinate categories of Hummert's (1995) Stereotype Activation Model (*Perfect Grandparent, Golden Ager, John Wayne Conservative, Despondent, Severely Impaired, Shrew/Curmudgeon, and Vulnerable*).

Multivariate Tests						
Independent Variable	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta ²	power	Wilks' lambda
Age	7/77	3.81	.001	.26	.97	.74
Relational Level	7/77	3.39	.003	.24	.95	.76
Message Strategy	7/77	6.04	.000	.35	1.00	.65
Biological Sex	7/77	1.78	.10	.14	.68	.86
Content	7/77	1.18	.33	.01	.47	.90

Content					
Dependent Variable	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta ²	power
<i>Perfect Grandparent</i>	1	1.80	.18	.02	.26
<i>Golden Ager</i>	1	.002	.96	.000	.05
<i>John Wayne Conservative</i>	1	2.55	.11	.03	.35
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	.40	.53	.005	.10
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	.08	.78	.001	.06
<i>Despondent</i>	1	.03	.86	.000	.05
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	.56	.46	.007	.12

TABLE 1 (continued)

Sex					
Dependent Variable	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta ²	power
<i>Perfect Grandparent</i>	1	1.98	.16	.02	.29
<i>Golden Ager</i>	1	.24	.63	.003	.08
<i>John Wayne Conservative</i>	1	.43	.51	.005	.10
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	7.50	.008	.08	.77
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	1.44	.23	.02	.22
<i>Despondent</i>	1	.58	.45	.007	.12
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	1.45	.23	.02	.22

Relational Level					
Dependent Variable	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta ²	power
<i>Perfect Grandparent</i>	1	24.21	.000	.23	.99
<i>Golden Ager</i>	1	10.22	.002	.11	.89
<i>John Wayne Conservative</i>	1	8.12	.006	.09	.80
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	3.36	.07	.04	.44
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	.40	.53	.005	.10
<i>Despondent</i>	1	1.04	.31	.01	.17
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	.74	.39	.01	.13

TABLE 1 (continued)

Age					
Dependent Variable	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta ²	power
<i>Perfect Grandparent</i>	1	1.20	.28	.01	.19
<i>Golden Ager</i>	1	.11	.75	.001	.06
<i>John Wayne Conservative</i>	1	13.84	.000	.14	.96
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	.000	.99	.000	.05
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	.40	.53	.005	.10
<i>Despondent</i>	1	2.49	.12	.03	.35
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	2.78	.10	.03	.38

Message Strategy					
Dependent Variable	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta ²	power
<i>Perfect Grandparent</i>	1	14.59	.000	.15	.97
<i>Golden Ager</i>	1	1.15	.29	.01	.19
<i>John Wayne Conservative</i>	1	.02	.90	.000	.05
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	34.60	.000	.29	1.000
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	7.95	.006	.09	.80
<i>Despondent</i>	1	8.05	.006	.09	.80
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	21.76	.000	.21	.99

study. The pilot study examined several other variables that were excluded from the proposed study. Argumentativeness though correlated to verbal aggressiveness in the pilot study has been truncated from the final study because none of the messages in the scenarios were worded argumentatively. Questions concerning frequency and media choice were also removed from the current instrument because they were not significant in the pilot study. Finally, the third section of the pilot study in which the participants completed the 20-item Verbal Aggressiveness Scale that had modified to reflect both the relational level and age of the speaker in the section 4 vignettes was excluded from the final study to reduce the possibility of respondent fatigue.

Current Study

Sample

The questionnaire was distributed to 217 students at Louisiana State University in introductory level communication studies courses. Of the 217 questionnaires distributed, 186 questionnaires were kept for analysis. Thirty-one questionnaires were deleted from the study based upon age, lack of differentiation of traits, and incomplete responses. Ten (4.6%, $m=34.1$ years of age) participants were excluded from the statistical analyses because they exceeded 25 years of age and did not qualify as a young adult as operationally defined in this study. Twenty (9.7%; 11 males, 9 females) participants were excluded because their completed questionnaires lacked any significant differentiation of traits on Hummert's (1995) Stereotype Activation Scale. Questionnaires completed by respondents who ranked 60 or more items with the same number were deleted from the study. One (.005%) participant was deleted from the study for not completing the majority of Hummert's (1995) Stereotype Activation Scale.

Eighty-five (45.7%) of the respondents were male while 98 (52.7%) were female, and 3 (1.6%) did not respond. The average age of the participants was 20.1 years of age (sd = 1.47). The ethnic composition of the participants was 76.3% European American, 9.7% African American (which is slightly lower than the 11% campus-wide), 1.6 % Asian American, .5 Latino/a, 1.1% Native American (tribal membership not included), 3.3% responded as “other” (listing several ethnicities from the ethnicities included in the questionnaire), and 14 (7.5%) students did not respond to the question. One hundred and seventy-seven (95.2%) students were United States citizens, while 167 (89.8%) students claimed Louisiana state residency.

Instrumentation

The three independent variables tested in the current study are age of the sender, relational level, and message strategy. The questionnaire consists of three major parts (Appendix B). The first section is comprised of demographic questions about the research participants that assess: age, sex, ethnicity, and the quality and type of contact with age peers and older adults.

The second section of the current study assesses the participant’s trait verbal aggressiveness. The Verbal Aggressiveness Scale consists of 20 items. The respondents’ trait verbal aggressiveness score is computed by recoding the negatively worded items and then summing the respondent’s scores on the 5-point Likert scale. The details of this instrument are reported in the second section of pilot study. For the current study the Verbal Aggressiveness Scale had an overall reliability across subjects of .85.

The final section of the questionnaire asks the participants to imagine themselves in a scenario where three independent variables (age, relational level, and message

strategy) were randomized. The randomization of these three variables required the construction of eight separate vignette combinations. After the vignette, the participants were asked to rank perceived traits of the individual using Hummert's Stereotype Activation Scale (1995) plus the additional trait measuring verbal aggressiveness termed verbally abusive for the purposes of this study. The Hummert Activation Scale (1995) had a reliability of .91 for all traits. For the current study, the Hummert Stereotype Activation Scale had acceptable or higher reliability levels on 7 of its 8 superordinate categories. For *Perfect Grandparent*, the reliability was .94. *Golden-Ager*, *Severely Impaired*, *Shrew/ Curmudgeon*, *Despondent*, *Vulnerable* had Cronbach alpha reliabilities of .91, .87, .94, .86, and .85 respectively. The reliability of John Wayne Conservative was initially .70 after deleting the items, tough and emotional, the reliability improved to .75. The reliability of Recluse was a .53. Deleting items would not significantly improve the Cronbach alpha so all five items and this superordinate category were deleted from further analysis.

Statistical Tests

Hypothesis 1 was tested using correlations. Hypothesis 2 was tested using correlations. Hypothesis 3 was tested using independent samples t-tests. Hypotheses 4a and 4b were tested using MANOVAs with an alpha set at .01 for the superordinate categories to adjust for the number of variables. Finally, Hypothesis 5 was tested using a MANOVA comparing the effect size of message strategy to the effect size of relational level and age combined.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses of data from the current study. The results of the statistical procedures will be presented in the following manner. First, the correlations assessing characteristics and experiences of the perceiver (Hypotheses 1 and 2) will be reported. In the next section, the t-tests and MANOVA used to gauge the affect of message strategy (Hypotheses 3, 4a and 4b) will be presented. Finally, the MANOVA examining the additive effects of relational level and age compared to message strategy (Hypothesis 5) will be summarized.

Characteristics and Experiences of the Perceiver

The first hypothesis contends that there should be a positive correlation between high trait verbal aggressiveness and negative stereotype activation when the message strategy in the vignette was not verbally aggressive. The hypothesis was supported. The correlation between high verbal aggression and negative stereotype activation when presented with a not verbally aggressive message is .28 ($p = .006$). The correlation (Table 2) for each negative superordinate category (without a Bonferroni-Sidak adjustment) is .24 ($p = .02$) for *Severely Impaired*, .27 ($p = .007$) for *Shrew/ Curmudgeon*, .21 ($p = .03$) for *Despondent*, and .186 ($p = .05$) for *Vulnerable*.

The second hypothesis asserts that positive quality interactions with older adults will be positively correlated with positive stereotype activation and negatively correlated with negative stereotype activation, regardless of relational level or message strategy. The hypothesis was not supported. There was a negative, but insignificant, correlation (Table 3) between positive interactions and positive stereotypes. The negative

TABLE 2

Correlation Coefficients for High Trait Verbal Aggressiveness and Negative Stereotype Activation

	V. A. Level	Neg Stereotype Activation
V. A. Level	1.00	.26 p = .009
Neg Stereotypes		1.00

N= 186

* computed with one-tailed probability

Correlation Coefficients for High Trait Verbal Aggressiveness and Negative Superordinate Categories

	V. A. Level	<i>Despondent</i>	<i>Shrew</i>	<i>Vulnerable</i>	<i>Sev. Impaired</i>
V. A. Level	1.00	.23 p = .02	.23 p = .02	.23 p = .02	.34 p = .001
<i>Despondent</i>		1.00	.84 p < .001	.85 p < .001	.85 p < .001
<i>Shrew</i>			1.00	.81 p = .02	.78 p < .001
<i>Vulnerable</i>				1.00	.86 p < .001
<i>Sev. Impaired</i>					1.00

N= 186

* computed with one-tailed significance

TABLE 3

Correlation Coefficients for Quality Interactions with Older Adults and Positive and Negative Stereotype Activation

	Valence	Neg Stereotype	Pos Stereotype
Valence	1.00	-.11	-.04
		p = .14	p = .34
Neg Stereotypes		1.00	-.46
			p < .001
Pos Stereotypes			1.00

N= 186

*computed with one-tailed probability

Correlation Coefficients for Quality Interactions with Older Adults and Negative Superordinate Categories

	Valence	<i>Despondent</i>	<i>Shrew</i>	<i>Vulnerable</i>	<i>Sev. Impaired</i>
Valence	1.00	-.05	-.13	-.14	-.09
		p = .31	p = .09	p = .09	p = .20
<i>Despondent</i>		1.00	.84	.81	.81
			p < .001	p < .001	p < .001
<i>Shrew</i>			1.00	.81	.77
				p < .001	p < .001
<i>Vulnerable</i>				1.00	.82
					p < .001
<i>Sev. Impaired</i>					1.00

N=186

* computed with one-tailed significance

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Correlation Coefficients for Quality Interactions with Older Adults and Positive Superordinate Categories

	Valence	<i>P. Grandparent</i>	<i>Golden Ager</i>	<i>JW Conservative</i>
Valence	1.00	.01 p = .45	-.044 p = .34	-.10 p = .16
<i>P. Grandparent</i>		1.00	.82 p < .001	.61 p < .001
<i>Golden Ager</i>			1.00	.56 p < .001
<i>JW Conservative</i>				1.00

N = 186

* computed with one-tailed significance

correlations between positive interactions and each positive superordinate category except *Perfect Grandparent*. There were negative correlations between positive interactions and negative stereotypes none of them at a significant level.

Affect of Message Strategy

Hypothesis 3 considers the association between a verbally aggressive message and the activation of negative stereotypes. Analysis was limited to those respondents who had the vignette in which a verbally aggressive message appeared. This hypothesis was supported. Respondents receiving a verbally aggressive message had more negative stereotypes activated ($t = -13.93, p < .001$), and fewer positive stereotypes ($t = 9.41, p < .001$) (Table 4). The hypothesis was also supported for the seven superordinate categories; for *Perfect Grandparent* ($t = 13.18, p < .001$), *John Wayne Conservative* ($t = 3.34, p = .001$), *Golden-Ager* ($t = 7.81, p < .001$), *Severely Impaired* ($t = -10.9, p < .001$), *Shrew/ Curmudgeon* ($t = -15.05, p < .001$), *Despondent* ($t = -11.62, p < .001$), *Vulnerable* ($t = -11.47, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 4a assumes a stronger relationship between message strategy and negative stereotype activation than relational level and negative stereotype activation. This hypothesis was supported. A MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate effect for both relational level and message strategy ($F(4,179) = 4.30, p = .002$, Wilks' lambda = .912; $F(4,179) = 61.56, p < .001$, Wilks' lambda = .42) respectively (Table 5). A Bartlett test of sphericity for this MANOVA was significant and revealed that the multivariate analysis was appropriate to use, Bartlett sphericity test (9) = 438.12, $p < .001$. There was, also, a difference between relational level and message strategy on 2 of the 4 negative superordinate categories. For *Severely Impaired* the message strategy

versus relational level on negative stereotype activation was $F = 123.90, p < .001$; $F = 8.21, p = .005$, respectively, for *Shrew/Curmudgeon* the message strategy versus relational level was $F = 241.77, p < .001$; $F = 14.78, p < .001$, respectively, for *Despondent* the message strategy versus relational level was $F = 143.00, p < .001$; $F = 14.49, p < .001$, respectively, and for *Vulnerable* the message strategy versus relational level on negative stereotype activation was $F = 136.49, p < .001$; $F = 10.32, p = .002$, respectively. Also, the effect size of message strategy ($\eta^2 = .58$), on negative stereotypes was much larger than relational level ($\eta^2 = .09$). According to Cohen (1988), these η^2 levels indicate that message strategy had a large effect on negative stereotype while relational level only had a moderate effect on negative stereotype activation.

Hypothesis 4b assumes a stronger relationship between message strategy and negative stereotype activation than age and negative stereotype activation. This hypothesis was supported. A MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate effect for both age and message strategy ($F(4,179) = 15.23, p < .001, \text{Wilks' lambda} = .75$; $F(4,179) = 58.86, p < .001, \text{Wilks' lambda} = .43$), respectively (Table 6). The Bartlett test of sphericity was $(9) = 459.22, p < .001$. There was, however, a difference between message strategy and age on 1 of the 4 negative superordinate categories. For *Severely Impaired* the message strategy versus age on negative stereotype activation was $F = 146.05, p < .001$; $F = 45.07, p < .001$, respectively, for *Shrew/ Curmudgeon* the message strategy versus age was $F = 227.50, p < .001$; $F = 2.03, p = .16$, respectively, for *Despondent* the message strategy versus age was $F = 146.30, p < .001$; $F = 17.81, p < .001$, respectively, and for *Vulnerable* the message strategy versus age on negative

stereotype activation was $F = 146.11, p < .001$; $F = 23.25, p < .001$, respectively. Also, the effect size of message strategy ($\eta^2 = .57$), on negative stereotypes was much larger than age ($\eta^2 = .25$). According to Cohen (1988), these η^2 levels indicate that both message strategy and age had a large statistical effect on negative stereotype activation, but message strategy still had a much larger effect size than age accounting for approximately 57% of the variance in negative stereotype activation.

Additive Effects of Relational Level and Age Versus Message Strategy

Hypothesis 5 contends that the effect size of relational level and age on negative stereotype activation will be greater than the effect size of message strategy. This hypothesis was not supported. A MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate effect for message strategy ($F(4,175) = 65.85, p < .001, \text{Wilks' lambda} = .40$), while age and relational level was not significant ($F(4,175) = .79, p = .53, \text{Wilks' lambda} = .98$). The Bartlett sphericity test was $(9) = 401.73, p < .001$. The effect size of message strategy ($\eta^2 = .60$), on negative stereotypes was much larger than relational level and age ($\eta^2 = .02$) (Table 7). According to Cohen (1988), these η^2 levels indicate that message strategy had a large effect on negative stereotype while relational level and age had a small effect on negative stereotype activation.

TABLE 4

Verbally Aggressive Message Differences on Negative Stereotype Activation

	Verbally Aggressive Message		Non-Verbally Aggressive Message		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>		
Neg Stereotype (Overall)	3.19	.53	2.12	.52	-13.93 ^a	.000
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	3.65	.57	2.32	.64	-15.05	.000
<i>Despondent</i>	3.31	.65	2.21	.63	-11.62	.000
<i>Vulnerable</i>	2.92	.59	1.97	.52	-11.47	.000
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	2.89	.55	1.97	.59	-10.90	.000

^aBecause Levene's *F* was statistically significant ($p < .05$), the "equal variances not assumed" *t* was used for Overall Negative Stereotype.

TABLE 5

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Relational Level and Message Strategy on Negative Stereotype Activation

Multivariate Tests						
Independent Variable	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta ²	power	Wilks' lambda
Relational Level	4/179	4.30	.002	.09	.93	.91
Message Strategy	4/179	61.56	.000	.58	1.00	.42
Relational Level						
Dependent Variable	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta ²	power	
Neg Stereotype (Overall)	1	17.22	.000	.09	.94	
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	14.75	.000	.08	.97	
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	10.32	.002	.05	.89	
<i>Despondent</i>	1	14.49	.000	.07	.97	
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	8.21	.005	.04	.81	
Message Strategy						
Dependent Variable	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta ²	power	
Neg Stereotype (Overall)	1	241.90	.000	.06	1.00	
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	241.77	.000	.58	1.00	
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	136.49	.000	.43	1.00	
<i>Despondent</i>	1	143.00	.000	.44	1.00	
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	123.90	.000	.40	1.00	

TABLE 6

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Age and Message Strategy on Negative Stereotype Activation

Multivariate Tests						
Independent Variable	df	F	p	eta ²	power	Wilks' lambda
Age	4/179	15.23	.000	.25	1.00	.75
Message Strategy	4/179	61.56	.000	.58	1.00	.42

Age					
Dependent Variable	df	F	p	eta ²	power
Neg Stereotype (Overall)	1	23.50	.000	.12	.99
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	2.03	.16	.01	.29
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	23.25	.000	.11	1.00
<i>Despondent</i>	1	17.81	.000	.09	.99
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	45.07	.000	.20	1.00

Message Strategy					
Dependent Variable	df	F	p	eta ²	power
Neg Stereotype (Overall)	1	241.90	.000	.06	1.00
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	227.50	.000	.56	1.00
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	146.11	.000	.45	1.00
<i>Despondent</i>	1	146.30	.000	.45	1.00
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	146.05	.000	.45	1.00

TABLE 7

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Effect Size of Message Strategy Compared to the Effect Size of Relational Level and Age on Negative Stereotype Activation

Multivariate Tests						
Independent Variable	df	F	p	eta ²	power	Wilks' lambda
Relational Level * Age	4/175	.79	.53	.02	.25	.98
Message Strategy	4/175	65.85	.000	.60	1.00	.40

Message Strategy					
Dependent Variable	df	F	p	eta ²	power
Neg Stereotype (Overall)	1	241.90	.000	.06	1.00
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	249.05	.000	.58	1.00
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	157.14	.000	.47	1.00
<i>Despondent</i>	1	159.18	.000	.47	1.00
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	161.21	.000	.48	1.00

Relational Level * Age					
Dependent Variable	df	F	p	eta ²	power
Neg Stereotype (Overall)	1	2.59	.11	.01	.16
<i>Shrew/Curmudgeon</i>	1	1.34	.25	.01	.30
<i>Vulnerable</i>	1	2.08	.15	.01	.13
<i>Despondent</i>	1	3.02	.08	.02	.41
<i>Severely Impaired</i>	1	1.44	.23	.01	.22

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Little previous research has examined the role of aggressive communication and age-related stereotype activation. The primary focus of this investigation was to examine the effects relational level, age of sender, and message strategy had on stereotype activation. The results of this investigation provide some valuable insights into the role of perceptions of aggressive communication and stereotype activation. The purpose of this chapter is to 1) explore the implications of the present findings, 2) identify the limitations of this study, and 3) propose future research possibilities in the areas of aggressive communication and stereotype activation.

Research Implications

This section on research implications will be divided into two parts. The first part will explore the findings concerning characteristics and experiences of the perceiver. The second part will examine the relationships among message strategy, relational level, and age on perceptions.

Characteristics and Experiences of the Perceiver

The verbal aggressiveness research indicates that individuals high in verbal aggressiveness perceive ambiguous messages more negatively than their counterparts low in verbal aggression. The research on self-awareness and expressions of verbal aggression also supports the hypothesis that individuals high in verbal aggressiveness will perceive verbal aggression more negatively and therefore activate more negative stereotypes than individuals low in verbal aggressiveness (Edwards, Bello, Brandau-Brown, & Hollems, 2001; Kinney, 1994; Kinney, Smith, Donzella, 2001). The results of

this investigation support the importance of trait verbal aggressiveness in perpetuating negative stereotype activation, especially that the perceiver's trait verbal aggressiveness in the message sender is an important component of negative stereotypes regardless of either age or relational level. Even though, all intergroup interactions inherently use "differential evaluations" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1993. p. 189), the results from the correlation testing this hypothesis, however, suggest that trait verbal aggressiveness adversely affects all group dynamics including ingroup dynamics.

The next factor of the perceiver that was hypothesized to be important was the quality of previous experiences on stereotype activation. Previous research on the quality of contact on stereotype activation found that individuals with more positive interactions had more positive stereotypes activated and fewer negative stereotypes (Fox & Giles, 1993; Pecchioni & Croghan, 2002). The results of this investigation did not support the previous research. The perceiver's quality of previous experience with older adults did not correlate with either positive or negative stereotype activation. The quality of previous experience was negatively, although not significantly correlated, with both negative stereotypes and positive stereotypes. In an attempt to understand this result better, several additional correlations were run because the results did not agree with previous research. The correlations of all the superordinate categories and quality of previous interactions overall found that only one positive superordinate category, *Perfect Grandparent*, was even positively associated with more positive previous interactions. When the category of quality of previous interaction with older adults was broken down into its two components of quality of interaction with older adults with whom the respondent was well-acquainted and the quality of interactions with older adults with

whom the respondent was not well acquainted, the only correlation that approached significance ($r = -.138$, $p = .08$) was the negative association between the quality of previous interactions with well-known older adults and negative stereotypes. The association between positive valence in previous interaction with well-known older adults and positive stereotypes was also negative. The low r values and the high p values makes it impossible to discern the reasons that people with more positive interactions with older adults that are well known to them will have fewer negative stereotypes and fewer positive stereotypes activated, as well as, the reasons that valence toward older adult strangers, in contrast, is negatively associated with negative stereotypes, but potentially positively associated with positive stereotypes.

This conundrum has several possible explanations. First, less variability may be acceptable in interpersonal interactions (older adults that are well-known) than in intergroup (older adults that are not known) interactions with regard to message strategy. So even though a person has had previous positive interactions with older adults, an older adult with whom they are not familiar using a verbally aggressive message strategy will still activate predominantly negative stereotypes. Second, there might be a social desirability bias in the self-reports of this sample. Finally, the role of positive interactions with older adults may be complicated by both the relational level and the message strategy in the vignette.

The aforementioned findings underscore the importance of both communication traits on stereotype activation and the difficulties in examining the confluence of variables that are involved in intergenerational encounters. Individuals with high trait verbal aggressiveness were more likely to have negative stereotypes activated than were

individuals low in verbal aggressiveness. The lack of support for the second hypothesis suggests that the interplay of variables in intergenerational communication is complex and interdependent.

Relationships among Message Strategy, Relational Level, and Age on Perceptions

The remaining hypotheses are interested in the relationships among message strategy, relational level, and age in the vignettes and their impact on stereotype activation. According to previous research, verbally aggressive messages are divergent and counterattuned and should activate more negative stereotypes and less positive stereotypes (Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Harwood, 2000; Wiener, 1995; Williams & Giles, 1996; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). The results supported the hypothesized relationship. Verbally aggressive messages were perceived more negatively and less positively than the neutral message. The implication for intergenerational communication is that message does count. Aggressive communication, especially verbally aggressive messages, plays an integral role in stereotype activation and as Harwood (2000) notes, “While our own behaviors may *reflect* our orientation toward our partner (broadly convergent or divergent), our orientation is likely to be *determined* by their behaviors, not our own” (italics in original, p. 759). The role of hostile communicative behavior is deleterious to an individual’s orientation and conceptions of her/his communicative partner.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b tried to distinguish which independent variable (message strategy, relational level, or age) had the strongest relationship with negative stereotype activation. Previous research on verbally aggressive messages found it deleterious even to family relationships (Feldman & Ridley, 2000; Sabourin, Infante & Rudd, 1993:

Teven, Martin, and Neupauer, 2001). Therefore, verbally aggressive messages should have a greater impact on the activation of negative stereotypes than will relational level in hypothesis 4a. While age is an outgroup characteristic for the current sample, the attributions of individuals receiving verbally aggressive messages from outgroup members to personality dispositions would suggest that verbally aggressive messages would activate more negative stereotypes than age (Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Harwood, 2000; Wiener, 1995; Williams & Giles, 1996; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). Therefore, verbally aggressive messages should have a greater impact on the activation of negative stereotypes than will age in hypothesis 4b. Both of these hypotheses were partially supported. For Hypothesis 4a, both message strategy and relational level were statistically significant at the $p < .001$. Message strategy and relational level were equally statistically significant hence the partial support. When message strategy and relational level were examined using the negative superordinate categories, message strategy was statistically significant at the $p < .001$ for all 4 superordinate categories while relational level was statistically significant for only 2 at the $p < .001$ level. Message strategy also had a larger effect size than relational level. Message strategy had a large effect size, while relational level had only a moderate effect size. The implications of these finding again suggest that communicative behaviors play an important role in stereotype activation. Differences in message strategy accounted for approximately 58 % of the variance in negative stereotype activation.

For Hypothesis 4b, both message strategy and age were statistically significant at the $p < .001$. Message strategy and age were equally statistically significant hence the partial support. When message strategy and age were examined using the negative

superordinate categories, message strategy was statistically significant at the $p < .001$ for all 4 superordinate categories while age was statistically significant for only 3 at the $p < .001$ level. Message strategy also had a larger effect size than relational level. While message strategy and age had a large effect size, differences in message strategy accounted for approximately 58 % of the variance in negative stereotype activation. The implication of both of these findings is that communicative behaviors play a pivotal role even more than either relational level or age.

Previous research found that stereotype activation is additive (Hummert, 1994; Hummert 1999; Hummert, Shaner & Garstka, 1995). Hypothesis 5 examined the relationship between the combined factors of relational level and age versus message strategy on negative stereotype activation. The hypothesis that relational level and age would have a larger effect size than message strategy was not supported. The results found that message strategy was a much better indicator of negative stereotype activation than both relational level and age.

The findings from the research on message strategy, relational level, and age have several implications. First, message strategy, relational level and age are all important in stereotype activation. Second, the results suggest that even though relational level and age are important in stereotype activation, the message strategy is even more important. The age and relational level of the older adult in a dyadic encounter are outside his/her control, but the communication strategy is not and this choice may be the most important in the interaction. While most previous research casts a pall over the prospect of both aging and intergenerational communication, these findings suggest that older individuals do have some control over perceptions about older adults and their communicative

abilities. The type of message strategies that older adults choose to employ can exacerbate or ameliorate the activation of negative stereotypes in intergenerational encounters. The knowledge of the relationship between hostile communication might be useful in fostering more satisfying communication between younger and older adults in communicative interactions. Finally, the consequences of negative communicative behaviors may result in accommodative practices by the interlocutor that problematize future interactions and self-perceptions.

Limitations

This study examines the characteristics and experiences of the perceiver and the relationships among message strategy, relational level, and age on perceptions. The design did not assess content or biological sex which previous research suggests affect stereotype activation. The interactions among these variables might modify the relative strength of message strategy on stereotype activation.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of sufficient minority respondents to examine the cultural differences in stereotype activation. Anecdotal evidence exists that at least for African Americans (playing the dozens) that verbally aggressive messages are perceived and conveyed differently when the partners in dyadic communication are well known. Understanding the cultural intricacies might allow for better intercultural intergenerational communication.

The design of this study might also be more useful if it delimited young adults as the primary focus and considered the relationship among young, middle-aged, and older adults' perceptions of verbally aggressive messages. The experiences of middle-aged and

older adults might manifest the relationships found here quite differently. This study does little to advance a life-span perspective about message strategies.

The analyses of superordinate categories was complicated by the poor reliability of *Recluse* that was truncated from all analysis, though the Stereotype Activation Model was very reliable as a whole. *Recluse* was also excluded from the pilot study because of poor reliability. The reason for this phenomenon is unclear. The nature of the design also problematized the model because it was formulated specifically for older adults that are not well known. Only 25% of the questionnaires had this exact formulation. The relationship of relational level and stereotype activation is significant because “This procedure may not have tapped into these generalized stereotypes because the traits in each are not consistently observed in grandparents or carry different significance when viewed within the context of a long-standing relationship” (Pecchioni & Croghan, 2002, p. 727). Only through redesigning the questionnaire and removing age and/or relational level could this figure be improved to measure primarily the perceptions of older adults using different message strategies.

Future Studies

Verbal Aggressiveness does increase the activation of negative stereotypes. The relationship of verbal aggressiveness to other variables that activate stereotypes should be undertaken. The role of verbal aggressiveness in different contexts would add valuable insights into the relative effect of both on stereotypes.

Though variable analytic research can be limiting, it might be useful to examine other communication behaviors and see how they modify stereotype activation. Most research suggests that argumentativeness has positive relational consequences. Would

argumentativeness then activate more positive stereotypes? A greater understanding of interaction and communicative behaviors and stereotype activation would be valuable both theoretically and as a real guide to the consequences of message choice.

In this study, the participants seemed to have difficulty understanding the relational meaning of a verbally aggressive message from a same-age peer that they knew well. Several individuals responded that they felt very close to same-age peers that they knew well using verbal aggressiveness. A few participants responded that they did not feel close to an individual that responded with the not verbally aggressive message. Future research might examine the role of verbal aggressiveness and relational strategy among young adults in today's society.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PILOT STUDY

The first part of this survey asks you to provide some information about yourself. The second part asks you to respond to several instruments and scenarios. Some questions are similar to previous questions. This is necessary for statistical reasons. All responses are voluntary, confidential, and anonymous.

Part 1

Please complete the following questions about you personally as accurately as possible.

Demographics:

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age: _____
3. Enrollment Status: Senior Junior
Sophomore Freshman
Other (specify)_____

(Please use L.S.U.'s classification. If the University classifies you as a junior because you are 3 hours short of being a senior, please circle junior)

4. Country of Origin: United States Other (specify)_____
5. If your country of origin is the United States, please specify your ethnicity (circle as many as apply):
African American Asian American
European American/ White Latino/a
Middle Eastern American Native American
Pacific Islander Other (specify)_____
6. Academic major: _____
7. If a U. S. Citizen, state of residence: _____

For questions 8-11, circle the number that most accurately reflects the frequency of your interactions with young adults (people 18-25) and older adults (people over 65). Use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost No Interaction	Infrequent Interaction	Occasional Interaction	Frequent Interaction	Regular Interaction

8. Frequency of contact with young adults you know well (excluding the classroom setting).

1 2 3 4 5

9. Frequency of contact with young adults you do not know well (excluding the classroom setting).

1 2 3 4 5

10. Frequency of contact with older adults you know well (excluding the classroom setting).

1 2 3 4 5

11. Frequency of contact with older adults you do not know well (excluding the classroom setting).

1 2 3 4 5

For questions 12-15, circle the number that most accurately reflects the valence of your interactions with young adults (people 18-25) and older adults (people over 65). Use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Almost Always
Enjoyable	Enjoyable	Enjoyable	Enjoyable	Enjoyable

12. Extent to which you enjoy interactions with the young adults you know well

1 2 3 4 5

13. Extent to which you enjoy interactions with young adults you do not know well

1 2 3 4 5

14. Extent to which you enjoy interactions with the older adults you know well

1 2 3 4 5

15. Extent to which you enjoy interactions with older adults you do not know well

1 2 3 4 5

For questions 16-19, place the number that corresponds to the frequency with which you use a particular form of communication when communicating with young adults and older adults. Use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never Use	Infrequent Use	Occasional Use	Frequent Use	Regular Use

16. When communicating with young adults I know well, I use

- ___ face-to-face communication
- ___ the phone
- ___ letters or cards
- ___ e-mail

17. When communicating with young adults I do not know well, I use

- ___ face-to-face communication
- ___ the phone
- ___ letters or cards
- ___ e-mail

18. When communicating with older adults I know well, I use

- ___ face-to-face communication
- ___ the phone
- ___ letters or cards
- ___ e-mail

19. When communicating with older adults I do not know well, I use

- ___ face-to-face communication
- ___ the phone
- ___ letters or cards
- ___ e-mail

Part 2

Directions: This part of the survey is concerned with how you argue about controversial issues. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally when you try to influence other people. Use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True

- ___ 1. While in an argument, I worry that the person I am arguing with will form a negative impression of me.
- ___ 2. Arguing over controversial issues improves my intelligence.
- ___ 3. I enjoy avoiding arguments.
- ___ 4. I am energetic and enthusiastic when I argue.
- ___ 5. Once I finish an argument, I promise myself that I will not get into another.
- ___ 6. Arguing with a person creates more problems than it solves.
- ___ 7. I have a pleasant good feeling when I win a point in an argument.
- ___ 8. When I finish arguing with someone, I feel nervous and upset.
- ___ 9. I enjoy a good argument over a controversial issue.
- ___ 10. I get an unpleasant feeling when I realize I am about to get into an argument.
- ___ 11. I enjoy defending my point of view on an issue.
- ___ 12. I am happy when I keep an argument from happening.
- ___ 13. I do not like to miss the opportunity to argue a controversial issue.
- ___ 14. I prefer being with people who rarely disagree with me.
- ___ 15. I consider an argument an exciting intellectual challenge.
- ___ 16. I find myself unable to think of effective points in an argument
- ___ 17. I feel refreshed and satisfied after an argument on a controversial issue.
- ___ 18. I have the ability to do well. in an argument.
- ___ 19. I try to avoid getting into arguments.
- ___ 20. I feel excitement when I expect that a conversation that I am in is leading to an argument.

This part of the survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally when you attempt to influence other persons. Use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True

- ____ 1. I am extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals' intelligence when I attack their ideas.
- ____ 2. When individuals are very stubborn, I use insults to soften the stubbornness.
- ____ 3. I try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when I try to influence them.
- ____ 4. When people refuse to do a task I know is important, without good reason, I tell them they are unreasonable.
- ____ 5. When others do things I regard as stupid, I try to be very gentle with them.
- ____ 6. If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character.
- ____ 7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, I insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
- ____ 8. I try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.
- ____ 9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance, I lose my temper and say rather strong things to them.
- ____ 10. When people criticize my shortcomings, I take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.
- ____ 11. When individuals insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.
- ____ 12. When I dislike individuals greatly, I try not to show it in what I say or how I say it.
- ____ 13. I like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.
- ____ 14. When I attack persons' ideas, I try not to damage their self-concepts.
- ____ 15. When I try to influence people, I make a great effort not to offend them.
- ____ 16. When people do things which are mean or cruel, I attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.
- ____ 17. I refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
- ____ 18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, I yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.
- ____ 19. When I am not able to refute others' positions, I try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.
- ____ 20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, I try very hard to change the subject.

This part of the survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for typical young adults (people 18-25) you know well when they attempt to influence other persons. Use the following :

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True

- ___1. They are extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals' intelligence when they attack their ideas.
- ___2. When individuals are very stubborn, these young adults use insults to soften the stubbornness.
- ___3. They try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when they to influence them.
- ___4. When people refuse to do a task they know is important, without good reason, they tell them they are unreasonable.
- ___5. When others do things they regard as stupid, they try to be extremely gentle with them.
- ___6. If individuals they are trying to influence really deserve it, they attack their character.
- ___7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, they insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
- ___8. They try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.
- ___9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance, they lose their temper and say rather strong things to them.
- ___10. When people criticize their shortcomings, these young adults take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.
- ___11. When individuals insult them, these young adults get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.
- ___12. When they dislike individuals greatly, they try not to show it in what they say or how they say it.
- ___13. These young adults like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.
- ___14. When they attack persons' ideas, they try not to damage their self-concepts.
- ___15. When they try to influence people, they try not to offend them.
- ___16. When people do things which are mean or cruel, these young adults will attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.
- ___17. They refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
- ___18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, these young adults will yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.
- ___19. When they are not able to refute others' positions, they try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.
- ___20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, these young adults try very hard to change the subject.

This part of the survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for typical young adults (people 18-25) you do not know well when they try to influence other persons. Use the following :

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True

- ___1. They are extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals' intelligence when they attack their ideas.
- ___2. When individuals are very stubborn, these young adults use insults to soften the stubbornness.
- ___3. They try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when they try to influence them.
- ___4. When people refuse to do a task they know is important, without good reason, they tell them they are unreasonable.
- ___5. When others do things they regard as stupid, they try to be extremely gentle with them.
- ___6. If individuals they are trying to influence really deserve it, they attack their character.
- ___7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, they insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
- ___8. They try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.
- ___9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance, they lose their temper and say rather strong things to them.
- ___10. When people criticize their shortcomings, these young adults take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.
- ___11. When individuals insult them, these young adults get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.
- ___12. When they dislike individuals greatly, they try not to show it in what they say or how they say it.
- ___13. These young adults like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.
- ___14. When they attack persons' ideas, they try not to damage their self-concepts.
- ___15. When they try to influence people, they try not to offend them.
- ___16. When people do things which are mean or cruel, these young adults will attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.
- ___17. They refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
- ___18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, these young adults will yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.
- ___19. When they are not able to refute others' positions, they try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.
- ___20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, these young adults try very hard to change the subject.

This part of the survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for typical older adults (people 65+) you know well when they attempt to influence other persons. Use the following:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True

- ___1. They are extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals' intelligence when they attack their ideas.
- ___2. When individuals are very stubborn, these older adults use insults to soften the stubbornness.
- ___3. They try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when they to influence them.
- ___4. When people refuse to do a task they know is important, without good reason, they tell them they are unreasonable.
- ___5. When others do things they regard as stupid, they try to be extremely gentle with them.
- ___6. If individuals they are trying to influence really deserve it, they attack their character.
- ___7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, they insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
- ___8. They try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.
- ___9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance, they lose their temper and say rather strong things to them.
- ___10. When people criticize their shortcomings, these older adults take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.
- ___11. When individuals insult them, these older adults get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.
- ___12. When they dislike individuals greatly, they try not to show it in what they say or how they say it.
- ___13. These older adults like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.
- ___14. When they attack persons' ideas, they try not to damage their self-concepts.
- ___15. When they try to influence people, they try not to offend them.
- ___16. When people do things which are mean or cruel, these older adults will attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.
- ___17. They refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
- ___18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, these older adults will yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.
- ___19. When they are not able to refute others' positions, they try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.
- ___20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, these older adults try very hard to change the subject.

This part of the survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for typical older adults (people 65+) you do not know well when they attempt to influence other persons. Use the following:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True

- ____1. They are extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals' intelligence when they attack their ideas.
- ____2. When individuals are very stubborn, these older adults use insults to soften the stubbornness.
- ____3. They try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when they to influence them.
- ____4. When people refuse to do a task they know is important, without good reason, they tell them they are unreasonable.
- ____5. When others do things they regard as stupid, they try to be extremely gentle with them.
- ____6. If individuals they are trying to influence really deserve it, they attack their character.
- ____7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, they insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
- ____8. They try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.
- ____9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance, they lose their temper and say rather strong things to them.
- ____10. When people criticize their shortcomings, these older adults take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.
- ____11. When individuals insult them, these older adults get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.
- ____12. When they dislike individuals greatly, they try not to show it in what they say or how they say it.
- ____13. These older adults like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.
- ____14. When they attack persons' ideas, they try not to damage their self-concepts.
- ____15. When they try to influence people, they try not to offend them.
- ____16. When people do things which are mean or cruel, these older adults will attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.
- ____17. They refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
- ____18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, these older adults will yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.
- ____19. When they are not able to refute others' positions, they try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.
- ____20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, these older adults try very hard to change the subject.

Directions: Keeping in mind the communicative response of the young adult you know well from the scenario, rank how you would perceive various traits of this individual using the following scale:

You are at a hospital visiting when a young woman you know well says, “Could you keep it down a little, please? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think she is:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> nosy
<input type="checkbox"/> snobbish
<input type="checkbox"/> inflexible
<input type="checkbox"/> successful
<input type="checkbox"/> stubborn
<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> forgetful
<input type="checkbox"/> fun-loving
<input type="checkbox"/> future-oriented
<input type="checkbox"/> slow-thinking
<input type="checkbox"/> sexless
<input type="checkbox"/> sick
<input type="checkbox"/> complaining
<input type="checkbox"/> afraid
<input type="checkbox"/> incompetent
<input type="checkbox"/> dependent
<input type="checkbox"/> rambling
<input type="checkbox"/> intelligent
<input type="checkbox"/> wealthy
<input type="checkbox"/> old-fashioned | <input type="checkbox"/> skilled
<input type="checkbox"/> independent
<input type="checkbox"/> selfish
<input type="checkbox"/> political
<input type="checkbox"/> productive
<input type="checkbox"/> greedy
<input type="checkbox"/> jealous
<input type="checkbox"/> trustworthy
<input type="checkbox"/> sexual
<input type="checkbox"/> determined
<input type="checkbox"/> wise
<input type="checkbox"/> sad
<input type="checkbox"/> volunteer
<input type="checkbox"/> active
<input type="checkbox"/> wary
<input type="checkbox"/> witty
<input type="checkbox"/> sociable
<input type="checkbox"/> bitter
<input type="checkbox"/> timid
<input type="checkbox"/> tired |
|---|---|

Circle below how close you feel to this individual (on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is not close at all and 5 is very close)?

- 1 2 3 4 5

Circle the term below that best describes your relationship to the young adult you imagined in the scenario?

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Friend | Co-worker | Sibling |
| Parent | Cousin | Significant Other |
| Aunt/Uncle | Grandparent | Acquaintance |

Scenario 2

You are at a hospital visiting when a young man you know well says, “Could you keep it down a little, please? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 3

You are at a hospital visiting when an older woman you know well says, “Could you keep it down a little, please? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 4

You are at a hospital visiting when an older man you know well says, “Could you keep it down a little, please? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 5

You are at a hospital visiting when a young woman you do not know well says, “Could you keep it down a little, please? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 6

You are at a hospital visiting when a young man you do not know well says, “Could you keep it down a little, please? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 7

You are at a hospital visiting when an older woman you do not know well says, “Could you keep it down a little, please? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 8

You are at a hospital visiting when an older man you do not know well says, “Could you keep it down a little, please? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 9

You are at a hospital visiting when a young woman you know well says, “Shut up! Can’t you read? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 10

You are at a hospital visiting when a young man you know well says, “Shut up! Can’t you read? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 11

You are at a hospital visiting when an older woman you know well says, “Shut up! Can’t you read? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 12

You are at a hospital visiting when an older man you know well says, “Shut up! Can’t you read? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 13

You are at a hospital visiting when a young woman you do not know well says, “Shut up! Can’t you read? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 14

You are at a hospital visiting when a young man you do not know well says, “Shut up! Can’t you read? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 15

You are at a hospital visiting when an older woman you do not know well says, “Shut up! Can’t you read? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 16

You are at a hospital visiting when an older man you do not know well says, “Shut up! Can’t you read? It’s past visiting hours.” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 17

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when a young woman you know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 18

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when a young man you know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 19

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when an older woman you know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 20

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when an older man you know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 21

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when a young woman you do not know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 22

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when a young man you do not know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 23

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when an older woman you do not know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 24

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when an older man you do not know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 25

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when a young woman you know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 26

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when a young man you know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 27

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when an older woman you know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 28

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when an older man you know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 29

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when a young woman you do not know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 30

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when a young man you do not know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think he is:

Scenario 31

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when an older woman you do not know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think she is:

Scenario 32

You are on vacation at a crowded tourist attraction when an older man you do not know well while attempting to get around you remarks, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think he is:

For questions 8-11, circle the number that most accurately reflects the valence of your interactions with young adults (people 18-25) and older adults (people over 65). Use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never Enjoyable	Rarely Enjoyable	Occasionally Enjoyable	Often Enjoyable	Almost Always Enjoyable

8. Extent to which you enjoy interactions with young adults you know well.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Extent to which you enjoy interactions with young adults you do not know well.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Extent to which you enjoy interactions with older adults you know well.

1 2 3 4 5

11. Extent to which you enjoy interactions with older adults you do not know well.

1 2 3 4 5

Part 2

This part of the survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally when you attempt to influence other persons. Use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True

- ____ 1. I am extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals' intelligence when I attack their ideas.
- ____ 2. When individuals are very stubborn, I use insults to soften the stubbornness.
- ____ 3. I try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when I try to influence them.
- ____ 4. When people refuse to do a task I know is important, without good reason, I tell them they are unreasonable.
- ____ 5. When others do things I regard as stupid, I try to be extremely gentle with them.
- ____ 6. If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character.
- ____ 7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, I insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
- ____ 8. I try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.
- ____ 9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance, I lose my temper and say rather strong things to them.
- ____ 10. When people criticize my shortcomings, I take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.
- ____ 11. When individuals insult me, I get pleasure out of really telling them off.
- ____ 12. When I dislike individuals greatly, I try not to show it in what I say or how I say it.
- ____ 13. I like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.
- ____ 14. When I attack persons' ideas, I try not to damage their self-concepts.
- ____ 15. When I try to influence people, I make a great effort not to offend them.
- ____ 16. When people do things which are mean or cruel, I attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.
- ____ 17. I refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
- ____ 18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, I yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.
- ____ 19. When I am not able to refute others' positions, I try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.
- ____ 20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, I try very hard to change the subject.

Directions: Keeping in mind the communicative response of the young adult (18-25) you know well from the scenario, rank how you would perceive various traits of this individual using the following scale:

You are at a crowded grocery store when a young person you know well remarks while attempting to get around you with a cart, "Excuse me. Can I get around you?" You tend to think she/he is:

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> nosy
<input type="checkbox"/> snobbish
<input type="checkbox"/> inflexible
<input type="checkbox"/> successful
<input type="checkbox"/> stubborn
<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> forgetful
<input type="checkbox"/> fun-loving
<input type="checkbox"/> future-oriented
<input type="checkbox"/> slow-thinking
<input type="checkbox"/> sexless
<input type="checkbox"/> sick
<input type="checkbox"/> complaining
<input type="checkbox"/> afraid
<input type="checkbox"/> incompetent
<input type="checkbox"/> dependent
<input type="checkbox"/> rambling
<input type="checkbox"/> intelligent
<input type="checkbox"/> wealthy
<input type="checkbox"/> old-fashioned | <input type="checkbox"/> skilled
<input type="checkbox"/> independent
<input type="checkbox"/> selfish
<input type="checkbox"/> political
<input type="checkbox"/> productive
<input type="checkbox"/> greedy
<input type="checkbox"/> jealous
<input type="checkbox"/> trustworthy
<input type="checkbox"/> sexual
<input type="checkbox"/> determined
<input type="checkbox"/> wise
<input type="checkbox"/> sad
<input type="checkbox"/> volunteer
<input type="checkbox"/> active
<input type="checkbox"/> wary
<input type="checkbox"/> witty
<input type="checkbox"/> sociable
<input type="checkbox"/> bitter
<input type="checkbox"/> timid
<input type="checkbox"/> tired |
|---|---|

Circle below how close you feel to this individual (on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is not close at all and 5 is very close)?

1 2 3 4 5

Scenario 2

You are at a crowded grocery store when a young person you do not know well remarks while attempting to get around you with a cart, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think she/he is:

Scenario 3

You are at a crowded grocery store when an older person you know well remarks while attempting to get around you with a cart, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think she/he is:

Scenario 4

You are at a crowded grocery store when an older person you do not know well remarks while attempting to get around you with a cart, “Excuse me. Can I get around you?” You tend to think she/he is:

Scenario 5

You are at a crowded grocery store when a young person you know well remarks while attempting to get around you with a cart, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think she/he is:

Scenario 6

You are at a crowded grocery store when a young person you do not know well remarks while attempting to get around you with a cart, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think she/he is:

Scenario 7

You are at a crowded grocery store when an older person you know well remarks while attempting to get around you with a cart, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think she/he is:

Scenario 8

You are at a crowded grocery store when an older person you do not know well remarks while attempting to get around you with a cart, “Get out of the way! Can’t you see that I want to get around you?” You tend to think she/he is:

VITA

Jon Michael Croghan was born in Columbia City, Indiana, on December 31, 1965, the son of Robert T. and Catherine M. Croghan. He graduated from Columbia City Joint High School, Columbia City, Indiana, in 1984. In 1982, he was awarded the Dr. Sydney Farber Award for Outstanding Cancer Research by a High School Student from Roswell Park Memorial Institute in Buffalo, New York. In 1993, he was awarded the Bachelor of Science degree from Indiana University at South Bend in English Education. As a graduate student at Louisiana State University, he has taught for three years as well as serving for one year as an editorial assistant for Dr. King on the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. He has been published in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and the *Journal of Communication*. He is now a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Communication Studies at Louisiana State University.