A Cross-Cultural Study of Intergenerational Communication in Workplace

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The University of Southern Mississippi

A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF
INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN WORKPLACE

by

Yan Guan

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
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This study investigates intergenerational relationships in organizational settings and uses Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to examine the influence of age, power, culture, and self-construal on young workers’ perceptions of intergenerational communication. According to CAT, communication is stereotypical due to outgroup bias, people favor their own age or power group more than other age or power groups. CAT research showed that young Asians’ perceptions of intergenerational communication may be more negative than their Western counterparts. Self-construal was studied to understand the nature of culture’s influence. Research and theory supported nine hypotheses and three research questions.

A study using self-report measure was conducted to answer the hypotheses and research questions. Participants were 205 Americans and 280 Chinese who completed a questionnaire that included the Modified Self-Construal Scale and the Global Perception of Intergenerational communication (GPIC) scale. Instruction directed participants to report their perceptions of communication with peers and supervisors.

MANOVA and regression analyses were performed. The results showed that young workers perceived no significant differences in communication between elderly peers and young peers. Young Chinese workers generally used more respectful yet avoidant
communication with their peers than young American workers. Young workers perceived a higher level of nonaccommodation from elderly managers than from elderly peers and used more respectful yet avoidant communication with elderly managers than with their elderly peers. Young workers’ self-construal affects communication perceptions of intergenerational communication in the workplace and explained more of the variance in perception of accommodative and avoidant communication more than did culture.

The results suggested four primary conclusions: 1) power is the primary influence on communication perceptions in workplaces; 2) there are cultural differences in self-construal; 3) culture influences communication perceptions across age groups; and 4) the self-construal concept and scales are problematic. These findings advance our understanding of young workers’ perceptions of communication in organizational settings across Chinese and American cultures.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the population of elderly people has been increasing radically. Two issues have contributed to the demographic change: the huge population of baby boomers and the increase in life expectancy. Therefore, scholars have been involved in research on intergenerational relationships. Most researchers have focused on intergenerational relationships in family settings (e.g., Banker & Gaertner, 1998; Bandura, 1977; Cappella, 1981; Hamilton, 1991; Harwood, Soliz, & Lin, 2006; Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986; Snow, 1986). Some researchers have investigated health communication in intergenerational relationships (e.g., Bethea & Balazs, 1997; Bourhis, Roth, & MacQueen, 1988; Fields, 1991; Ireland, 1996; Watson & Gallois, 1999). Only a few researchers have attempted to understand intergenerational relationships in organizational settings (McCann & Giles, 2006, 2007).

However, scholars should pay more attention to intergenerational relationships in organizational settings because the population of elder workers is increasing dramatically. There is a trend for postponing retirement among baby boomers in various countries due to economic and social factors. McGinn and Ehrenfeld (2008) found “compared with prior generations, many boomers intend to work longer anyway” (http://www.newsweek.com/id/128540). Levitz (2008) interviewed a number of baby boomers in the United States and pointed out that “as the falling real-estate and stock markets erode their savings, many aging Americans are delaying retirement, electing labor over leisure in uncertain times” (http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB120699498978778055.html?mod=blog). American Association of Retired Persons
(AARP) (2008) reported that the employed population increased 4.3 million from 2005 to 2007. Among the increased population, 2.3 million are older workers who are aged 55 years or above. Furthermore, more than 70% of older employees worked full-time in 2007. In other countries, older employees have been increasing as well. For example, China, owning the largest labor force in the world, has to face the same problem. In 1979, the Chinese government introduced the one-child policy, which is a population control policy designed to solve social and environmental problems of China. Although a recent survey from the Pew Research Center (2008) suggested that over 75% of the Chinese support the policy, the policy creates the "Four-Two-One" problem: An adult child provides support to two parents and four grandparents. The “Four-Two-One” problem reduces the population of young workers and might drive the elder Chinese to delay their retirement plans because the responsibility of taking care of six older people is a really heavy burden, especially for young people in China (http://english.sina.com/china/1/2007/0315/106515.html).

How to establish a harmonious relationship between young and older employees has become particularly important for today’s world. Therefore, this study will investigate the intergenerational relationships in organizational settings in the two countries, the United States and China, based on Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), which is the most important theory in intergenerational communication.

A large portion of intergenerational communication research has used CAT as its main analytical approach (Giles et al., 1991; Williams & Giles, 1996). CAT, developed by Howard Giles and his associates, provides a broad framework for understanding, predicting, and explaining how people generate, maintain, or reduce social distance in
communication processes. "This constant movement toward and away from others by changing one's communication behaviors" is called accommodation (Giles & Ogay, 2006, p. 294).

CAT is a theory that can be used in intergroup, interpersonal, intergenerational, and intercultural communication. CAT explains how, why, where, and when people communicate with each other by using converging or diverging strategies. It addresses fundamental issues of interpersonal communication. Furthermore, the communication behaviors that can be explained and predicted by CAT always occur in communication between two different groups. In addition, people from two cultures or generations can be considered as from two groups; therefore, CAT can be applied to intercultural and intergenerational communication. Thus, "overall, CAT is a multifunctional theory that conceptualizes communication in both subjective and objective terms. It focuses on intergroup, intergenerational, and interpersonal features and, as we shall see, can integrate dimensions of cultural variability" (Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, & Ota, 1995, p. 127). Braithwaite and Baxter (2008) considered that CAT is one of the top ten theories that have been employed in interpersonal communication research. Because CAT is such an influential theory of communication, this study will employ CAT as a foundation to understand intergenerational relationships in organizational settings.

This study will be conducted in both the United States and China so that cultural influence on intergenerational communication can be examined. Furthermore, self-construals will be examined to better understand the nature or influence of cultures. Markus and Kitayama (2003) defined self-construal as "patterns of past behavior, as well as patterns for one's current and future behavior, and described two broad modes of
being—an independent self-construal and an interdependent self-construal” (p.280). People from different cultures have divergent understandings of others and social contexts because they may hold different construals of the self. Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggested that independent self-construal, which is typical of a western culture, usually tries to “be unique” and “express self,” separating from social context (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1995). A person with an interdependent self-construal is “motivated to find a way to fit in with relevant others, to fulfill and create obligation, and in general to become part of various interpersonal relationships” (p.227). An interdependent self-construal, which is often found in a non-Western culture, is fitting in a proper place and trying to please related others in order to maintain the balance among others, society, and self (Markus & Kitayama, 1995). An independent self-construal may be similar to the concept “small self,” compared to the “greater self” in many East cultures. The “small self” has to meet the request of the “great self,” which includes family and society.

This study, guided by CAT, will further our understanding of people’s intra- and intergenerational communication experiences in organizational settings. In addition, this study will examine how self-construals influence intergenerational communications in both Chinese and American cultures. I next discuss the foundations and development of CAT, and then explore its utility for understanding intergenerational communication research in different contexts and across cultures. Finally, the concept and research on self-construals will be reviewed.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

CAT provides a theoretical foundation for understanding, investigating, and explaining how people generate, maintain, or reduce social distance in communication processes. Furthermore, CAT has been one of dominant theories in intergenerational and intercultural communication. Since CAT is such an influential theory of communication, I will discuss the foundations and development of CAT in the following section.

Foundations of CAT

CAT was originally named Speech Accommodation theory (SAT) (Street & Giles, 1982). It was first developed to explain “some of the motivations underlying certain shifts in people’s speech styles during social encounters and some of the social consequences arising from them” (Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982, p. 207). Furthermore, “it originated in order to elucidate the cognitive and affective processes underlying speech convergence and divergence” (Thakerar et al., p. 207). SAT was derived from three theoretical frameworks: similarity-attraction theory, social identity theory of inter-group relations, and attribution theory (Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2005).

Similarity-attraction theory suggests that perceived interpersonal similarity increases interpersonal attraction (Byrne, 1971). The relationship between similarity and attraction has been supported by considerable research. Newcomb’s study (1961) focused on the naturalistic development of relationships among housemates and neighbors. The findings showed that people were attracted to others who had similar attitudes. Byrne and his associates (1966) described a hypothetical person who had either similar or dissimilar
attitudes toward participants, and then measured participants' attraction to the hypothetical other. The results were consistent with Newcomb’s study. Although the fundamental relationship between attitude similarity and attraction is seldom questioned, the underlying mechanism of this attraction has been interpreted differently.

Generally, two types of mechanism have been used to explain the relationship between similarity and attraction. First, Byrne and Clore (1970) suggested the concept “effectance motive” in order to explore the association. Effectance motive means that similarity with others offers an individual a confirmation of his or her own value system. It assumes that there is “a learned drive to be logical, to interpret the environment correctly, and to function effectively in understanding and predicting events” (p. 118). The satisfaction of the effectance motive can result in attraction or liking of the source of the satisfaction. The second interpretation of the similarity-attraction relationship is “inferred evaluation.” Aronson and Worchel (1966) proposed:

Although there is no denying the strength and ubiquitousness of the relationship between attitude similarity and attractiveness, it is conceivable that this relationship may be due, at least in part, to an implicit assumption that people who hold attitudes similar to our own will like us. There is ample evidence to show that individuals like those who seem to like them. (p. 157)

People assume that individuals who have the same opinions as they do will also like them and people have the tendency to like those who favor them (Aronson & Worchel, 1966). Basically, similarity attraction theory predicts a positive correlation between perceived interpersonal similarity and attraction. In SAT, convergence is related to similarity attraction theory. When an individual meets another person, if they find that
they share several common interests, activities, or physical attributes that can produce a positive impression of each other, then they would like to change their communication perceptions in order to have a better understanding and self-image. Research has indicated that similarities in various aspects that result in attraction can lead to convergent communication perceptions (Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1973; Harris & Baudin, 1973; Simard, Taylor & Giles, 1976; Street, Brady, & Putman, 1983).

Social identity theory of inter-group relations is the second foundation of SAT. Social identity theory of inter-group relations was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986) in order to comprehend cognitive and motivational foundations of inter-group differentiation. Tajfel (1970) tried to understand why some group members are in favor of the ingroup members and discriminate against the outgroup members. Social identity theory assumes that an individual has more than one “personal self.” Based on various selves, an individual has developed multiple social-identities which may function in various social groups, such as family, school, or ethnic contexts. A social-identity is related to a person’s sense of group belonging. Social identity theory declares two important sociocognitive processes: “categorization (which helps distinguish group boundaries and membership) and self-enhancement (where comparisons between salient groups serve to enhance the self by favoring one’s own ingroup)” (Scott, 2007, p. 123). Tajfel and Turner (1986) found that certain actions result in individuals categorizing themselves as group members. Such categorizing can lead individuals to express ingroup favoritism. After being categorized as having group membership, individuals attain positive self-esteem by differentiating their ingroup from other groups.
Social identity theory of intergroup relations explains why individuals are likely to display ingroup favoritism when they view themselves as a part of one group. Giles (1978) largely used social identity theory to explain the intentions of divergence and convergence. People identify themselves as a part of certain groups; therefore, they choose to be similar to the other members of their groups. Research found that Canadians or Welsh who identified strongly with their language and cultural groups liked to use their ingroup language which is viewed as convergent behavior (Bourhis, Giles, Leyens, & Tajfel, 1979; Bourhis, Giles, Tajfel, 1973; Giles et al., 1973).

The third fundamental theoretical framework of SAT is attribution theory. Attribution theory is a cognitive theory that purports to understand and explain how and why things happen as they do (Weiner, 1995). Attribution theory assumes that human beings have two behavioral drives: to understand the world around them and to control their surroundings (Weiner, 1986).

Weiner (1986) developed the attribution theory based on Rotter’s (1966) concept “locus of control.” Rotter (1966) suggested that there are two types of locus of control. People who believe that a strong correlation exists between human behavior and outcomes have an internal-locus of control while individuals who do not perceive that a strong relationship exists between their behavior and outcomes have an external-locus of control. Weiner (1986) extended Rotter’s concept of locus of control to develop his attribution theory. Weiner suggested that perceived causal relationships can influence interpersonal interactions. In SAT, people evaluate an individual’s convergent and divergent behaviors by perceiving external or internal intentions. Normally, people view others’ undesirable behaviors less negatively when they believe that the behaviors were
caused by external reasons. Simard, Tylor, and Giles (1976) suggested that French
Canadians favor that English Canadians speak French because they believe that these
English Canadians have a desire to break down cultural barriers.

The three theoretical frameworks, similarity attraction theory, social identity theory of
inter-group relations, and attribution theory, provided a significant groundwork for CAT
development. In the process of developing CAT, there are three periods, which will be
discussed in the following section.

*Three Periods of CAT Development*

Gallois et al. (2005) suggested that there are three phases in the development of CAT.
In the first phase, speech accommodation theory focused on convergence and divergence
of speech styles. In the second phase, research examined the process of convergence and
divergence in a variety of contexts. In the third phase, scholars began to revise and
consolidate CAT in a comprehensible manner. In this paper, the development of CAT
will be categorized into three periods as well. The first period is consistent with Gallois et
al.'s depiction, but the second period includes certain studies that Gallois et al considered
as the part of the third phase, such as the revised model of CAT as a general theory of
intergroup communication and eleven propositions summarized by them. The third
period includes concentrated research characterized by a simplified and practical
approach to CAT.

*Period 1: Foundation and Origins*

From the early 1970s through the 1980s, social psychologists and communication
researchers were interested in the cognitive processes that mediate human beings’ social
perceptions and the skills of encoding and decoding language (e.g., BeeBe & Giles, 1984; Giles & Smith, 1979). This interest fostered the development and application of SAT.

During the 1970s, Giles and his associates initiated the groundwork of SAT based on their research in a number of nations (Giles, 1973, 1977; Giles et al., 1973; Giles, & Smith, 1979). Giles, Taylor, and Bourhis (1973) developed a model of speech diversity, "Interpersonal Accommodation Theory," that was the initial version of SAT. Giles (1973) identified "convergence" and "divergence" as important modifications of speech in social interaction. Giles and Smith (1979) investigated the optimal levels of convergence. The findings indicated that several speech attributes, especially speech rate, were considered convergence variables.

Street and Giles (1982) proposed the first formal and elaborate version of SAT. In the same year, Thakerar et al. (1982) proposed the second version of SAT's propositions. SAT included two foundational propositions: (1) communicators are motivated to modify their speech toward one another; and (2) communicators perceive and respond to the adjustments of speech (BeeBe & Giles, 1984; Giles, 1977, 1980). Giles and his associates suggested two basic concepts: convergence and divergence/maintenance. Both convergence and divergence are linguistic strategies whereby communicators react to each other's speech by adjusting or keeping a wide range of linguistic features, including speech rates, pause, utterance lengths, pronunciations, accent, and slang (Giles, 1977, 1980; Giles & Powesland, 1979; Street & Giles, 1982). Convergence refers to the requirement for approval. Human beings prefer to converge towards the speech patterns of their audience when they want their audience to support or agree with their opinions. For example, a travel agent converges toward his or her clients by using different
language styles based on the clients’ cultures. Divergence is the process that individuals use to keep their original speech systems or differentiate themselves from other groups in order to maintain a positive in-group identity or separate personally from another in inter-group communication (Street & Giles, 1982). For example, French Canadians speak French in order to separate themselves from English speakers. Research suggested that linguistic convergence and divergence usually occur in intercultural contexts (Bourhis & Giles, 1977; Bourhis, Giles, Leyens, & Taifel, 1979; Giles & Smith, 1979; Simard, Taylor, & Giles, 1976).

Scholars proposed several editions of propositions of SAT (Ball, Giles, Byrne, & Berechree, 1984; BeeBe & Giles, 1984; Giles et al., 1987; Street & Giles, 1982; Thakerar et al., 1982). All these propositions can be summarized into five. First, individuals try to converge toward the speech patterns employed by their receivers for three reasons: 1) their actions are expected to produce more rewards than costs; 2) they want to have effective communication; and 3) they use social norms as standards of convergent behaviors (BeeBe, 1981; Giles, 1973; Giles et al., 1973; Katz, 1981). Second, the magnitude of linguistic accommodation can influence communicators’ repertoires and determine the effectiveness of communication (Natale, 1975; Welkowitz & Feldstein, 1969). If the degree of speakers’ convergence or divergence is not sufficient, receivers may not consider their behaviors as convergence or divergence. Third, speech divergence or convergence is related to speakers’ skills and their needs of a positive ingroup identity (Simard et al., 1976; Street, 1982). Good communication skill can assist speakers in performing their divergent or convergent behaviors better. Furthermore, speakers who have a strong positive ingroup identity usually try hard to perform their divergent or
convergent behaviors in order to reinforce their identity. Fourth, individuals attempt to maintain their speech patterns or diverge away from the receivers’ speech patterns because they want to have a positive ingroup identity and separate themselves from the receivers’ groups (Bourhis & Giles, 1977; Cappella, 1981; Taylor & Royer, 1980). Speakers diverge from the audience’s speech patterns in order to remind the audience that they attach to different groups and hence avoid misunderstanding. Moreover, speakers’ divergence or maintenance can encourage the audience to adopt the speech patterns that belong to the speakers’ groups. Fifth, perceiving intentions are important for evaluating speech convergence and divergence (Bourhis & Lambert, 1975; Doise, Sinclair, & Bourhis, 1976; Street, 1982). The audience assesses that speech convergence is positive behavior when they perceive that the behavior is driven by benevolent purpose. For example, a presidential candidate may have a Southern accent intentionally when he or she gives a speech in front of the Southern audience in order to please the audience. The audience evaluates the behavior as accommodation because they perceive the candidate as having a good intention. On the other hand, the audience views speech maintenance or divergence as unfavorable behavior when they assume that speakers have a negative intention. However, when the audience has the same value system as the speaker or positively assesses his or her group membership, they are more likely to favor the divergence or maintenance.

During this first period of development, several important issues were explored. First, researchers distinguished between two types of accommodation: linguistic accommodation and psychological accommodation (Thakerar et al., 1982). Linguistic accommodation refers to real speech performance, while psychological accommodation
refers to speakers’ motivations. Furthermore, linguistic accommodation can be separated into two parts: objective and subjective dimensions. Previous research assumed that speakers’ behaviors are consistent with their intentions. Some speakers who want to converge or diverge actually do it. Thakerar et al. suggested that speakers may objectively maintain their own speech patterns, but they believe that they are converging. The mismatch between subjective and objective dimensions occurs in various situations.

Second, Thakerar and his colleagues (1982) suggested that accommodation has two goals: affective, e.g., evoking the audience’s social approval or maintaining the speaker’s positive identities, and cognitive, e.g., accomplishing communicational efficiency. Thakerar et al. did not point out whether the cognitive function exists in the divergence or maintenance process. However, Giles et al. (1979) suggested that the cognitive goal should exist in both convergent and divergent processes.

In conclusion, researchers defined the initial sets of propositions and “focused on the strategies of convergence and divergence of speech styles during social encounters” (Gallois et al., 2005, p. 143) in the first period of CAT research. It evaluated accommodation on the speakers’ part and defined the effects on the audience’s part.

**Period 2: Elaboration and Expansion**

In 1987, Giles and his associates developed a new version of SAT and renamed it Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). They brought new concepts into CAT and revised the propositions of CAT (e.g., Baumerister, 1993; Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles, & Coupland, 1988; Gallois et al., 1995; Gallois et al., 2005; Giles & Street; 1994). They brought the process of self-presentation and impression management into CAT (Baumerister, 1993; Giles & Street, 1994). Impression management refers to the process
in which individuals control their self-images by their self-presentation. Impression management Theory (IMT) was proposed by Erving Goffman, who stated that social life is similar to the stage, and human beings are both actors and audience (1959). Other perceptions of you become reality as they explain your intentional behaviors. Based on this key idea, he proposed that people or organizations should create and maintain impressions that are appropriately controlled by them. Furthermore, Goffman suggested that communicational behaviors of individuals and organizations are goal-oriented. The goal is for individuals and organizations to show themselves as they would like to be thought of by other individuals or organizations (Dillard, 1989). Giles and Street (1994) suggested that self-presentations and desired reactions of others could be considered as a type of convergence. According to IMT, accommodation can be considered a process of seeking an agreement of self-presentations. Both speakers and receivers attempt to create a positive impression on influential others by adopting others’ speech patterns or nonverbal behaviors during interactions.

In light of IMT, the propositions of CAT were revised three times in the second period (Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles, & Coupland, 1988; Gallois et al., 1995; Gallois et al., 2005). Among these versions, Gallois, Ogay, and Giles’ (2005) eleven basic propositions of CAT were the most straightforward and complete edition. It makes CAT more comprehensive and understandable. I have listed the eleven propositions in Appendix A. The eleven propositions explain the basic process of accommodation. Furthermore, the propositions indicate that CAT can be applied in a variety of communication studies. The process of accommodation is the process of communication (Giles & Ogay, 2006).
The propositions of CAT specify that the process of accommodative communication can be mutual, reciprocated, and symmetric (Gallois & Giles, 1998). Based on the dynamic aspect of propositions, Giles and his associates modified CAT into a comprehensive theoretical perspective. They realized “CAT is central to an extensive line of research and theorizing about the antecedents, consequences, and behaviors associated with the movements that individuals undergo to create, maintain, or decrease distance” (Shepard, Giles, & LePoire, 2001, p. 45). Because “the state of the theory as it stands now spans several disciplines, contexts, and populations,” Giles and his associates summarized “the research in an organized fashion and to establish the empirical validation of CAT propositions” (Shepard et al., 2001, p.45). Predictive models are used “in order to better organize and summarize thinking about CAT” (Shepard et al., p. 45).

Coupland et al. (1988) established the first predictive model to describe the propositions of SAT. This model presented a communication process of SAT with several elements: psychological context of speakers and recipients, both speakers and recipients’ goals, social and linguistic strategies, and assessments of communication. Gallois and her associates (1995) elaborated the model of CAT in order to explain communication between cultures and linguistic groups. Finally, Gallois et al. (2005) presented a full model of CAT, which contains all variables and concepts. Furthermore, they proposed a revised formulation of CAT that is simple but includes more elements of CAT. The model basically describes a communication process between two individuals from different groups (see Figure 2.1). Gallois et al.’ (2005) CAT model contains these concepts: sociohistorical context, norms, initial orientation, immediate interaction situation, psychological accommodation, behavior, tactics, perceptions,
Figure 1: the Model of CAT
attributions, evaluation, and future intention. In the following section, the elemental concepts of the model will be explained.

The first element of CAT is sociohistorical context. Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) suggested that all communication occurs in a context. CAT hypothesizes that sociohistorical contexts can predict individuals’ accommodating directions, such as convergence or divergence. Sociohistorical context includes history, status of groups, intergroup boundaries, stability and legitimacy of intergroup relations, societal standards for intergroup contact, and cultural values (Gallois et al., 2005). Research indicates that there is a relationship between sociohistorical contexts and accommodating styles. Giles (1973) found that the intercultural conflict between the English and the Welsh resulted in individuals in both groups who separate themselves from the out-group. Lawson-Sako and Sachdev (1996) found that Tunisians, who mostly speak Tunisian-Arabic, an ingroup speech pattern, will speak French, an outgroup speech pattern, when French language is associated with high social status.

Second, norms, which are rules or standards created by interactions, may influence the degree of convergence or divergence. These rules or standards may be explicit or implicit (Opp, 1982). Based on their Norm Violation Theory, DeRidder, Schruijer, and Tripathi (1992) argued that when two groups coexist in a society for a long period of time, they create norms in order to establish the standards or rules of intergroup communication. In CAT, the concept “norm” is influenced by sociohistorical context. For example, Amiot and Bourhis (1999) suggested that minority groups, English speakers in Montreal, usually have the norm to converge towards the majority group, French speakers, because of intergroup history.
Third, initial orientation is an “individual’s ongoing tendency to perceive encounters in either intergroup or interpersonal terms, or both, as well as to converge or diverge psychologically” (Gallois et al., 1995, p. 137). Shepard et al. (2001) suggested that initial orientation includes intrapersonal, interpersonal, and inter-group components.

Fourth, immediate interaction situation is a factor that always occurs in interpersonal relationships and is related to people’s sociopsychological condition (Shepard et al., 2001). The immediate interaction situation is guided by norms. Genesee and Bourhis (1988) found that norms, which were employed on particular jobs, affected speech patterns in communication between salesmen and customers.

Fifth, psychological accommodation is a process involving two dimensions: identities and motives (Gallois et al., 2005). The two dimensions have an influence on individuals’ accommodative strategies, such as interpretability, discourse management, interpersonal control, and emotional expression. Individuals choose accommodative and non-accommodative directions based on the balance of the two dimensions.

The sixth element of accommodation is behavior or tactics. Gallois et al. (1995) suggested that strategy and behavior are two different concepts, but “any strategy can be reflected in any behavior” (p. 144). Shepard et al. (2001) stated that “the strategies undertaken during interaction affect the behaviors that are displayed in the interaction, which in turn affect the attributions made about each interactant” (p. 49). Research on CAT has identified a variety of verbal and nonverbal behaviors related to convergence and divergence, such as speech intensity (Aune & Kikuchi, 1993), language interval (Hannah & Murachver, 1999), reply latency (Street, 1984), turn length (Putnam & Street, 1984), and patronizing talk (Fox & Giles, 1996a; Jehannes & Giles, 1997).
Seventh, perceptions and attributions refer to how individuals perceive accommodative behaviors of others and label them positively or negatively. Fox and Giles (1996b) found that these positive and negative labels are associated with receivers’ perceptions of speakers’ motivations. If speakers’ intentions are perceived positively, convergence may happen; whereas if speakers’ intentions are labeled negatively, divergence may occur. Furthermore, an optimal level of accommodative behavior is expected by recipients. Giles and Smith (1979) found that individuals have ideas about acceptable or unacceptable accommodative behavior. Convergence is labeled as positive behavior in most situations, but may be perceived as negative because of over- and under-accommodation in a few situations. Over- or under-accommodation are two types of miscommunication in which recipients think speakers’ behavior violated their expectations.

The eighth and ninth elements of CAT are evaluation and future intentions of interaction. Shepard et al. (2001) stated that each communicator evaluates the other’s behaviors and messages. “Based upon these evaluations, decisions about whether future interactions may be possible or desirable are constructed. This may be very important in situations where stereotypes are likely to be formed or expectations for future interaction may be negatively affected” (p. 50). Therefore, evaluation and future intentions are not only the end of one interaction, but also the beginning of further interactions.

These factors are significant aspects of the CAT model. Figure 1 presents how these elements work in communication. In the immediate interaction situation affected by norms, speakers take a psychologically accommodative direction influenced by motives and identities. Then they perform certain behaviors and tactics, perceive the other’s
reactions, adjust their tactics, and evaluate their interactions, which can guide future intentions.

In the second period, the propositions and models of CAT, which were revised at least three times, were developed well. CAT, now a mature theory, has been employed in interpersonal, intergroup, intercultural, and intergenerational research. In a meta-analysis of theories in interpersonal communication research, Braithwaite and Baxter (2008) found that CAT is one of the most-frequently cited theories. Furthermore, Littlejohn (2002) evaluated CAT as “one of the most influential behavioral theories of communication” (p.97). However, researchers also found that a parsimonious version of CAT would be more practical and flexible in empirical research (Gallios & Giles, 1998; Shepard et al., 2001). Thus, they believe that CAT should be revised and reconstructed in a clearer way.

*Period 3: Restriction and Concentration*

In the third period, Giles (2008b) attempted to modify CAT into a clearer and more practical format. Although the general idea of CAT can be briefly and succinctly stated, CAT has become too complex to be applied in research because there are too many propositions and models. Giles himself noticed the complexity of propositions and models. Gallios and Giles (1998) stated “CAT has become very complex, so that the theory as a whole probably cannot be tested at one time. This means that researchers using CAT must develop mini-theories to suit the context in which they work” (p. 158). This statement indicates that the complexity of CAT may result in two problems. First, complexity can increase the difficulty at conducting CAT research and may reduce researchers’ interest in using CAT in their studies. Second, the “mini-theories,” resulting
from the complexity of CAT can lead researchers to use terms inconsistently, imprecisely, and inexplicitly in empirical studies. These inconsistent and inexplicit terms can confuse other researchers or readers and inhibit their understanding and use of CAT. Therefore, complexity can restrain the application of CAT.

Communication theories should be practical. Petronio (2007) stated that “when a theory is built to be of practice … the theoretical formulations are customized to guide users toward developing translational research” (p. 218). In addition, Kaplan (1964) stated that theory “is of practice, and must stand or fall with its practicality, provided only that the mode and contexts of its application are suitably specified” (p. 296). Giles (2008a) decided to reform CAT into a more accessible form. He stated, “CAT advocates the goal of developing communicative practices that are evidence-based, in both interpersonal and intergroup situations” (p. 121). Giles and Ogay (2006) introduced four basic communication strategies as manifestations of translational practices: accommodation, under-accommodation, over-accommodation, and non-accommodation.

**Accommodation.** Accommodation now has been defined as “a process concerned with how we can both reduce and magnify communicative differences between people in interaction” (Giles, 2008b, p. 163), although other studies have conceptualized it differently. Accommodation can enhance interpersonal similarity or reinforce self-identity in order to reduce uncertainty and improve communication. Accommodation is similar but not equal to convergence, which is one of the most important topics in the first and second periods of CAT research. “Accommodation can be manifest in ways other than convergence, as we take into account the other’s conversational needs and goals” (Giles, p. 163). John, Gallois, Callan, and Barker (1999) proposed that
communicators use accommodative strategies to be closer or more equal. Accommodation is based on two individuals’ or groups’ cooperation. In other words, the recipient’s ability to accommodate is as important as the speaker’s. For example, when the Chinese teach an American how to say something in Chinese, the teachers can use phonetic symbols in English as a foundation to facilitate the learning process.

*Under-accommodation.* Under-accommodation is a miscommunicative process in which at least one participant perceives the speaker as communicating in a manner that is underplayed regarding needs (Coupland et al., 1988; Coupland, Coupland, & Giles, 1991, Williams et al., 1990). Under-accommodation is akin to perceived maintenance, or somewhat akin to divergence. For example, most young people believe that they have communication problems with their elder family members. They usually think that the elders do not understand them. Some research suggested that elders are under-accommodative to young people (Giles, Fortman, Honeycutt, & Ota, 2003; Williams & Giles, 1996). On the other hand, younger people are under-accommodative to older people because older people are overly verbose about their lives and health conditions (Barker, 2007).

*Over-accommodation.* Over-accommodation is a miscommunicative process where at least one participant perceives a speaker to overemphasize a communicative style necessary for attuning talk on a particular occasion (Coupland et al., 1991). Over-accommodation is based on language and nonverbal behavior. During intergenerational interactions, older people complain that young people talk down to them by using baby talk, such as simple grammar and slowed speech rate, and make them feel uncomfortable. In addition, some nonverbal behaviors, including constant head
nodding, over-smiling, and touching, are considered a part of over-accommodation in intergenerational communication (Coupland et al., 1991; Ryan, Hummert, & Boich, 1995; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). Therefore, controlling over-accommodation can be considered a positive behavior.

*Non-accommodation.* Non-accommodation is a miscommunicative process where at least one participant perceives that he or she is not worthy of the sender’s respect (Giles, 2008b, Gregory & Webster, 1996). The concept “non-accommodation” is similar but not identical to divergence. Partial or full non-accommodation can be triggered by dislike or mistrust of other individuals or groups. Dixon, Tredoux, Durrheim, and Foster (1994) found that people of mixed racial heritage usually used a Cape Afrikaans accent in order to diverge from a white interrogator.

The four basic communication strategies, accommodation, under-accommodation, over-accommodation, and non-accommodation, were mentioned in research focusing on CAT during the second period of CAT research (e.g., Coupland et al., 1991; Williams et al., 1990). However, recently the four strategies were introduced as important concepts of CAT in order to understand accommodative dilemmas.

The four strategies of CAT provide a clear and reasonable theoretical framework for practical research. Based on the four strategies, Giles and associates proposed several modified strategies for certain contents. For example, three strategies: accommodation, non-accommodation, and respectfully avoidant communication were used frequently in intergenerational communication studies. Besides the basic concepts of accommodation and nonaccommodation, restrained and respectful communication emerged as a unique factor in intergenerational communication. The term “respectfully avoidant
communication” indicates that avoidance can show respect in certain situations. People avoid conflicts or certain topics in order to save others’ or their own faces (Giles et al, 2002). In intergenerational relationships, young people usually feel more obligation to be respectful to older than other young people. These communication behaviors can be examined by self-report scales.

Besides the four basic communication strategies of accommodation, under-accommodation, over-accommodation, and non-accommodation, Giles (2008b) also proposed four principles in order to reduce the complexity of CAT and emphasize CAT’s practical utility.

Speaker will, up to an optimal level, increasingly accommodate the communicative patterns believed characteristic of their interactants the more they wish to signal positive face and empathy, elicit the other’s approval, respect, understanding, trust, compliance, and cooperation; develop a closer relationship; defuse a potentially volatile situation; or signal common social identities.

When attributed (typically) with positive intent, patterns of perceived accommodation increasingly and cumulatively enhance recipients’ self-esteem; task, interactional, and job satisfaction; favorable images of the speaker’s group, fostering the potential for partnerships to achieve common goals; mutual understanding, felt supportiveness, and life satisfaction; and attributions of speaker politeness, empathy, competence, benevolence, and trust.

Speaker will (other interactional motives notwithstanding) increasingly nonaccommodate (e.g., diverge from) the communicative patterns believed characteristic of their interactants, the more they wish to signal (or promote):
relational dissatisfaction or disaffection with and disrespect for the others’ traits, demeanor, action, or social identities.

When attributed with (usually) harmful intent, patterns of perceived nonaccommodation (e.g., divergence) will be evaluated unfavorably as unfriendly, impolite, or communicatively incompetent; and reacted to negatively by recipients (e.g., recipients will perceive speaker to be lacking in empathy and trust). (p. 167)

In the third period, researchers have attempted to modify CAT into a brief version in order to facilitate practical research. Four concepts: accommodation, under-accommodation, over-accommodation, and non-accommodation, have been explicated. This modification indicates a new direction for CAT research. Although only a few studies employed this new version of CAT, the clarity of the new version can help researchers understand CAT and conduct better studies.

Conclusion

In the past thirty years, CAT has been modifying and adopting other theories. The changes might bring confusion to researchers and readers. However, the basic ideas of CAT have never changed. CAT is based on three general assumptions: (1) “Communicative interactions are embedded in a sociohistorical context”; (2) “communication is about both exchanges of referential meaning and negotiation of personal and social identities”; and (3) “interactants achieve the informational and relational functions of communication by accommodating their communication behavior, through linguistic, paralinguistic, discursive, and nonlinguistic moves, to their interlocutor’s perceived individual and group characteristics” (Gallois et al., 2005, pp. 136-137). The assumptions assist in understanding the core idea of CAT in the three
periods. The different concepts, such as convergence, divergence, accommodation, under-accommodation, over-accommodation, and non-accommodation, are consistently based on the three general assumptions. In its development in the past thirty years, CAT has been applied in a range of areas of communication research, especially in intergenerational communication, in order to understand the processes of human interactions.

CAT Research on Intergenerational Communication

Studying intergenerational communication is important because of demographic changes—the population of older people has been increasing dramatically. The end of World War II brought a baby boom to many countries in Europe, Asia, North America, and Australia. The period ranging from 1946 to 1964 is widely accepted as the time of the baby boom (Marchand, 1979). Many of these baby boomers have moved into their 60’s and beyond. The increase in life expectancy is another factor for the population change. Life expectancy in the United States continues to increase. In 2007, Americans could expect to live more than 4 years longer than they did in 1978. American males could expect to live more than 5 years longer, and women more than 3 year longer, than they did in 1978 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2007) (see Figure 2.2). In addition to demographic factors, Harwood (2007) suggested that there are two reasons why people are interested in intergenerational communication. First, there are interactional problems between younger and older people. Studying intergenerational communications can improve relations between older and younger people in society. Second, older people are different. Their backgrounds and cultures make them unique.
For these reasons, research on intergenerational communication is essential and a number of communication researchers have been involved in this area. A large portion of intergenerational communication research has used CAT as its main analytical approach (Giles et al., 1991; Williams & Giles, 1996). Based on CAT, I will review models of communication and aging, intergenerational communication research in different contexts, and intergenerational research across cultures in the following section.

![Figure 2. Life expectancy of Americans](image)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Health, United States, 2007, Figure 18. Data from the National Vital Statistics System.

**Models of Communication and Aging**

There are two models of communication and aging based on CAT: the communicative predicament of aging model (CPA) and communication enhancement model of aging (CEA). CPA describes how negative stereotypes may lead to problematic communication between older and younger people (Harwood, Giles, Fox, Ryan, &
Williams, 1993; Williams et al., 1990). Harwood (2007) defined stereotype as “a cognitive representation of a group” (p. 50). Labels can produce stereotypes (Hamilton & Trolier, 1986). Palmore (1990) listed the following sociolinguistic labels for elders: coot, crone, geezer, hag, old buzzard, old crock, old duffer, old fogey, old maid, and others. All these words can function as sociolinguistic triggers of negative stereotypes of older people. Furthermore, age-specific language can result in stereotypes of aging. Research suggested that becoming older can bring a number of relative deficits, such as talking slower (Stewart & Ryan, 1982), being verbose (Gold, Arbuckle, & Andres, 1994), using simple linguistic structures, and declining in working memory (Kemper, Anagonopoulos, Lyons, & Heberlein, 1994). All these deficits can cause negative stereotypes of older people.

The negative stereotype of aging is the key issue of CPA. Williams and Nussbaum (2001) stated that “the process of CPA is cyclical in that stereotypical assumptions that hypothetically triggered the speech behavior in the first place may become part of the person’s behavioral repertoire, and they are thereby confirmed” (p.15). According to CPA, several aging cues, such as grey hair and face wrinkles, may elicit negatively stereotyped expectations (Harwood, Giles, & Ryan, 1995). The negative stereotype of aging can make young people adjust communication perceptions. When younger people make over or under accommodation toward the older, older people feel uncomfortable and attempt to inhibit communication. The constrained communication strengthens the negative stereotype of aging, which influences older people’s psychological and physical health (see Figure 2.3). Therefore, the process of intergenerational communication
becomes a negative circle which can cause misunderstandings and dissatisfactions (Bonnesen & Hummert, 2002).

The CPA research has suggested that both younger and older communicators influence the abilities of intergenerational interactions; however, younger people can break the downward cycle more easily than older people (Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Harwood et al., 1993). Although CPA is a comprehensive and innovative perspective focusing on problematic intergenerational communication, there are two problems with CPA (Nussbaum, Pitts, Huber, Krieger, & Ohs, 2005). First, CPA assumes that older people have negative attitudes toward the over- or under-accommodations from younger people and respond in a manner contradicting the negative stereotype of aging. However, there is no effective evidence to support this assumption (Ryan, Kennaley, Pratt, & Shumovich, 2000). Second, the CPA assumes that there is a positive relationship between physical cues of aging and negative stereotypes of older people (Hummert, 1994). However, research found that aging cues can result in both positive and negative stereotypes of older people (Hummert, Garstka, Shaner, & Strahm, 1994).

The communication enhancement of aging model (CEA) has been presented as an attempt to provide a solution to the intergenerational interaction predicaments, which are proposed in the CPA (Ryan et al., 1995). CEA suggests that positive stereotypes of aging can improve intergenerational communication and relationships. According to CEA, when younger and older people meet, they attempt to select the most useful communication strategies which can assist older people in using their communication skills and abilities during intergenerational interactions. When older people exhibit their
appropriate communication skills, they can give a positive impression to young people and reduce the influence of negative stereotypes of aging. Then young people will change their attitudes toward older people and use suitable communication perceptions in intergenerational contents (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001).

The two models explain interaction between two generations based on CAT. In CPA, the negative stereotypes of aging lead to over or under-accommodation which can result in problematic communication in intergenerational relationships. On the other hand, CEA model argues that younger and older people can choose suitable communication strategies to accommodate each other when they realize their age differences. Age differences can influence the accommodative strategies and affect the quality of intergenerational communication in different contexts, such as family, healthcare, and organizational settings.

**Figure 3. The communication Predicament of Aging Model**

CAT Research on Intergenerational Communication in Different Contexts

CAT research on intergenerational communication in family contexts. CAT provides a foundation for understanding family communication in intergenerational contexts. Accommodative strategies give researchers a useful set of tools for explaining and predicting family communication based on an intergroup approach. Coupland, Coupland, Giles, and Henwood (1988) summarized four specific sociolinguistic strategies based on CAT: approximation strategies, interpretability strategies, discourse management, and interpersonal control. In light of Coupland et al.’s four strategies, I will discuss five intergenerational issues in family contexts related to CAT.

First, family relationships influence accommodating strategies in intergenerational communication. Research found that children usually adopt their parents’ communication perceptions, such as speech rate or language choice, in order to accommodate their parents (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, Harwood, Soliz, and Lin (2006) suggested that CAT can “offer some additional predictive power, both in terms of the conditions under which adoption of parental styles might be more likely to occur and the conditions under which it might be consciously avoided or rejected” (p. 23). When children love their parents and strongly identify themselves as a part of their families, they will adopt their family communication perceptions. Family identity can be viewed as a shared group identity (Banker & Gaertner, 1998); thus, CAT can be a theoretical foundation for explaining the relationship between family identities and communication perceptions.

Second, intergenerational accommodative behaviors in families are affected by the communicators’ abilities to interpret meanings based on contexts. In the family setting, individuals of different generations usually accommodate each other. Parents adjust their
speech styles to their infants’ levels; thus, the babies can understand their parents and develop their language skills (Snow, 1986). However, communicators cannot always perceive their partners’ interpretive abilities precisely; thus, their accommodative strategies can be considered as over- or under-accommodating by their partners (Hamiltion, 1991).

In intergenerational relationships, over-accommodation has most commonly been discussed (Harwood, Soliz, & Lin, 2006). Negative stereotypes of aging lead younger individuals to use over-accommodative strategies that result in negative outcomes for older family members (Cappella, 1981; Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986). Hummert and Mazloff (1993) found that there were three typical situations in which patronizing interactions occurred. One of them was the interactions between adult children and their parents or grandparents. Montepare, Steinber, and Rosenberg (1992) investigated the communication between young college students and their grandparents or parents. The findings showed that young college students talked to their grandparents with a higher pitched, more feminine, deferential, and unhappy style than to their parents. Harwood (2000) suggested this kind of over-accommodation can hurt family relationships because older people want their family members to treat them as a normal individual instead of as an older and disabled family member.

Third, managing discourse is significant for intergenerational accommodative behaviors (Harwood, Soliz, & Lin, 2006). Managing discourse, such as selecting an appropriate topic or limiting the contents of speech, is an accommodative strategy. In intergenerational communication, grandparents usually ask grandchildren about their school lives. When discussing this kind of topic, the grandparents use discourse
management, which is an accommodative behavior. On the other hand, children also attempt to accommodate parents or grandparents by managing discourse if they have a strong family identity (Lin, Harwood, & Bonnesen, 2002). Children may talk about grandpas’ friends from country clubs in order to make grandparents happy.

The above predictions are based on families in which all members are from the same cultural background. How children from multicultural families manage their discourse in intergenerational relationships is another interesting topic. Research found that highlighting the ethnic or cultural identities in the family plays an important role in managing intergenerational relationships of multicultural families (Orbe, 1999; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). If parents emphasize multiple cultural or ethnic identities and attempt to provide overall information about both cultures, children will most likely adopt multiracial or multiethnic identities; while if families prefer one cultural or ethnic group and control informational communication, children will tend to have a single identity. Thus, identity is vital for discourse management which can influence accommodative strategies in intergenerational relationships.

Fourth, interpersonal control can influence accommodative strategies in intergenerational communication. Interpersonal control is common in intergenerational relationships (Morgan & Hummert, 2000). Parents want to control their children, especially when they are young; while adult children attempt to control their older parents. Thus, parents or adult children usually use baby talk or patronizing talk, which “assumes the mechanistic use of a predetermined style and underplays the dynamism of interaction” (Grainger, 1995, p. 427). Ryan et al. (1986) found that older people, such as grandparents or parents, do not like over-accommodative styles, such as baby talk or
patronizing talk, because these styles suggested that older people are relatively powerless and easily manipulated. Thus, individuals have a common desire to control others in family intergenerational contents. The need for controlling others can influence parents or adult children’s accommodative styles.

Fifth, cultures can shape intergenerational communication and accommodation strategies. Family value and belief systems are usually based on the culture that has raised the family (Parke, 1994). Cultures can affect individuals’ accommodative behaviors in intergenerational relationships. Harwood (2000) examined grandchild-grandparent relationships in North America. The findings showed that the most sensitive predictor of relational solidarity was the degree to which the speakers accommodated the receivers’ communicative requirements. However, Lin and Harwood (2003) found that self-accommodative behavior was the best predictor of relational solidarity in Taiwanese grandchildren and grandparents communication. The findings indicated a difference between individualism and collectivism (Harwood et al., 2006). Basically, individualistic cultures emphasize that a person should be independent and autonomous; whereas collectivistic cultures teach individuals to be dependent on his or her group and sacrifice for important others, such as family members (Hofstede, 1980). People from collectivistic cultures believe that communication is a shared responsibility of the family and the relationship is very important for both communicators. Thus, they are more willing to maintain family relationships than people from individualistic cultures.

This section discussed five issues of CAT research on intergenerational relationships in family settings: family relationships, communicator’s abilities to understand each other,
discourse management, interpersonal control, and culture. For these issues, CAT provides a foundation for comprehending family communication in the intergenerational contexts.

**CAT research on intergeneration communication in healthcare settings.** High-quality communication between healthcare providers and patients is important for successful health care delivery (Kreps, 1996; McCormick, Inui, & Roter, 1996; Street & Wiemann, 1988; Thornton & Kreps, 1993). Furthermore, understanding intergenerational communication is a key for effectively delivering medical care services to an aging group. Poor-quality intergenerational communication in medical care settings can cause negative health outcomes in patients (Coupland et al., 1991). The problem of unsuccessful intergenerational communication in healthcare contexts is that younger medical caregivers stereotype older patients negatively (Coupland, Giles, & Wiemann, 1991; Coupland, Nussbaum, Coupland, 1991; Street & Wiemann, 1988). Thus, younger caregivers show less respect to older patients, which inhibits successful communication (Greene, Adelman, Charon, & Hoffman, 1986). Research suggested that when younger medical caregivers stereotype older patients, they provide information or services based on their expectations of older patients instead of the actual desires of the patients (Ryan, 1991). Thus, ineffective communication caused by stereotypes may lead to incorrect medical decisions.

Older people are not the only group that experiences negative stereotypes in health communication. Young people are stereotyped by older people as well. Older people usually view young people as immature, naive, unwise, and unworldly, irresponsible, disrespectful, lazy, self-centered, and delinquent (Williams, 1992). Besides chronological age, particular physical features of young people can drive older people to apply negative
labels. An interesting example is the “baby face” phenomenon by which a person is rated as weak, submissive, honest, and naive, when he or she looks young (Berry & McArthur, 1985; McArthur & Apatow, 1983). Older patients usually have negative impressions of young medical professionals based on their chronological age and physical features and therefore try to control the conversations (Ryan & Cole, 1990).

Intergenerational health interactions usually have communication problems due to negative stereotypes. CAT research on intergenerational health communication has focused on inappropriate accommodative styles: over- and under-accommodation. Research showed that over-accommodation commonly occurs in health care contexts. When nurses or other caregivers use baby talk to communicate with an elder patient, over-accommodation occurs (Caporeal, Lukaszeski, & Culbertson, 1983). Sachweh (1998) found that almost a quarter of conversations between nurses and patients included baby talk. Researchers observed that nurses talked to others about the patients by using exaggerated praise, mentioning their nicknames or first names, and coercive talk, which is similar to baby talk (Lanceley, 1985; Fairhurst, 1981). Grainger (1995) suggested the complexity of over-accommodation in health settings. Nurses overaccommodate to some needs of older patients, but under-accommodate to other needs, such as emotional needs. The over-accommodative behaviors of nurses are motivated by their desires of gaining compliance from their patients. Therefore, the over-accommodation is based on health caregivers’ perceptions of older patients’ dependency (Hummert, Shaner, & Garstka, 1995). As a result, the physical and mental capabilities of older adult patients may not be interpreted properly in the encounter between young health caregivers and their older patients.
Under-accommodation may lead both partners to diverge from each other after miscommunication. Ryan and Cole (1990) found that younger health caregivers under-accommodate to older patients by showing little interest in their well-being. Ireland (1996) suggested that physicians under-accommodate their older patients by explaining little of their medical conditions. These under-accommodative behaviors can reduce the communication satisfaction of older patients and then increase healthcare costs, affect patients' health conditions, and cause medication problems. On the other hand, older patients may attempt to control or manage their interactions with their health caregivers. Some older patients tend to provide little information to their medical caregivers because of their pathological conditions, such as dementia and aphasia (Fields, 1991). Other older patients under-accommodate to their health caregivers because they think their caregivers are too young to be trusted. Although factors influencing intergenerational communication in the health care setting may be complex, "the social construction of age that emerges from the intergenerational interaction" should be recognized as a main reason (Bethea & Balazs, 1997, p.132).

There are accommodative problems in intergenerational health communication according to the above discussion. Appropriate accommodation between health caregivers and older patients is definitely necessary. Bourhis, Roth, and MacQueen (1988) found that older patients feel more comfortable when health caregivers accommodate them by using everyday language instead of maintaining medical jargon. Health caregivers find a balance of accommodation in order to ensure patients' satisfaction and compliance. Research on CAT might help them fulfill this goal. Watson and Gallois (1999) examined Australian student patients' past conversations with health professionals.
The findings suggested that satisfying conversations were associated with accommodation; while unsatisfying interactions were associated with non-accommodation. CAT is very helpful for improving the quality of health communication by identifying effective strategies of communicating.

Intergenerational communication in healthcare settings is problematic. Negative stereotypes can lead both older patients and younger medical professionals to over- or underaccommodate each other. The problematic communication can influence the satisfaction of older patients and then increase healthcare costs, affect patients’ health conditions, and cause medication problems. Research indicated that CAT can help younger medical professionals find a balance of accommodation in order to ensure older patients’ satisfaction and compliance.

**CAT research on intergenerational communication in organizational settings.**

Several scholars applied CAT to organizational communication. For example, Sparks and Callan (1992) found that establishing a convergent style with customers could improve interpersonal communication in the hospitality industry. Boggs and Giles (1999) developed the “workplace gender nonaccommodation cycle model” in order to explain how gender differences affect communication in organizations. This section emphasizes two issues related to CAT research on intergenerational communication in organizational settings: stereotypes of aging and power in workplaces.

First, stereotypes of aging have played a significant role in intergenerational communication in organizational settings. There are different opinions about the older group in workplaces. Research found that common impressions portray older workers as slower, less flexible, and worse in health than younger workers; but more dependable,
watchful, and trustworthy than younger counterparts (Doering, Rhodes, & Schuster, 1983; Stagner, 1985). However, general impressions of older workers are more negative than general impressions of young workers (Bird & Fisher, 1986; Kirchner & Dunnette, 1954). Negative stereotypes of aging have a noticeable influence on employment decisions. A number of studies indicated that age discrimination has commonly existed in the job market (e.g., Kasschau, 1976; McCauley, 1977).

Using stereotypes of aging and CAT as a theoretical foundation, researchers have conducted a couple of studies of intergenerational relationships in organizational settings. McCann and Giles (2007) asked 277 university students with work experience in Thailand and the United States to assess their communication beliefs about inter-and intra-generational relationships in organizational settings. The findings suggested that young workers had negative attitudes towards older workers because they thought that older workers were self-centered. However, young workers still felt that they should be polite and respect the elders during the intergenerational interactions; thus, they avoided conflicts with the elders. The findings indicated that there were communication problems between two generations in organizational settings. Young employees feel more comfortable when they communicate with their young peers than with their elderly peers.

Power is the second issue of CAT research on intergenerational communication in organizational settings. The early social and organizational research defined power as the possible capability of an agent to affect the others (French & Raven, 1959). Moorhead and Griffin (1998) defined power is “the potential ability of a person of group to exercise control over another person or group” (p. 385). Power is the central feature of organizational life. Office communication is essentially about power: who has it, who
wants it and who can control its transfer at any given moment (Kenig, 2000). Bass (1960) suggested two types of power sources: position and personal power. Position power, which is related to one’s official position, involved using legitimate power to influence other’s action. Thus, position power typically indicates the existing organizational hierarchy and management control system. The personal power is related to individuals’ characteristics. Moorhead and Griffin (1998) identified five most significant forms of power: authority, expertise, control of rewards, coercive power and personal power.

Organizations are inherently intergroup in nature; therefore, there are various groups existing in workplaces. Based on position power differences, managers and non-managers can be considered two groups. According to CAT, people usually favor their ingroup members and treat the outgroups differently; hence, it is reasonable to expect that non-manager-level group communicate with their own group members differently from the member of the manager-level group. Gardner and Jones (1999) found that CAT is useful for understanding and analyzing both superordinates and subordinates’ communication behaviors. The finding suggested that both subordinates and superordinates have a consistent belief of best and worst communication behaviors in order to accommodate each other. McCann and Giles (2006) examined intra- and intergenerational communication perception in workplaces in Thailand and U.S. In this study, 348 non-managerial-level bankers were requested to describe their communication beliefs about intra and intergenerational interactions. The findings indicated that there were differences of accommodative styles between two age groups. Young bankers believed that they were accommodated less by elderly bankers than by younger bankers. On the other hand, young bankers perceived that they communicated more respectfully
and carefully with elder bankers than young bankers. Furthermore, young bankers in both cultures perceived more non-accommodation from managers than their peers and performed more respectfully avoidant communication with their managers than their peers.

The number of older employees in the workforce is increasing. Managing conflicts and improving intergenerational relationship in organizational settings is important. Conducting CAT research on this issue can help both organizations and employees understand how to deal with problems in intergenerational relationships. However, only a few studies have been conducted on this issue.

*CAT Research on Intergenerational Communication across Eastern and Western Cultures*

CAT is a communication theory which has been widely used in intergroup research. Cultural differences usually create distinctive groups. Thus, a large body of CAT research examined cultural differences on intergenerational communication (e.g., Gallois et al., 1988; Giles, Ballard, McCann, 2002). However,

Much of the foregoing intergenerational research has been conducted in Western Anglophone cultures, primarily with young adult Anglo-European participants from Canada, Britain, Australia, and the U.S.A. Naturally enough, it is important to examine other cultures to see if the conclusions drawn in Anglophone societies hold true cross-culturally. Moreover, such comparisons may point to cultures where intergenerational interactions are more positive and hence provide ideas for solutions to them. East Asian nations provide an interesting comparison group. (McCann, Cargile, Giles, & Bui, 2004, p. 276)
Therefore, conducting CAT research on intergenerational communication across Eastern and Western cultures is vital. This section will review two issues: research on the differences and views of intergenerational relationships across Western and Eastern cultures.

Eastern and Western cultures are different. Most Western cultures are individualistic. People from individualistic cultures emphasize independence and autonomy. Fulfilling personal goals are usually more important than pleasing the elders (Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida, & Ogawa, 2005). Young people in organizational settings might stereotype and show less respect to the elders (Coupland et al., 1991; Greene et al., 1986; Street & Wiemann, 1988). Most Eastern Asian cultures, such as Chinese and Japanese cultures, are collectivistic. People from collectivistic cultures define themselves based on their kinship relations (Hsu, 1985). Eastern cultures usually teach children that getting along with elderly people is very important. In addition, filial piety is the most vital value for a child (Yang, 1988). Filial piety is a life-long parent-child relationship based on children’s submission and obedience (Kiefer, 1992; Palmore, 1975). Filial piety has been advocated by Confucianism, which has influenced the Chinese and other Asian cultures for more than two thousand years (J. Chen, 1980; P. N. Chen, 1979). Furthermore, obeying the elder is one of Confucius’ “Three Cardinal Principles.” Intergenerational relationship is one of Confucius’ “Five Ethical Relations” (Cheng, 1982). In the Analects, the classic of Confucianism, filial piety is often referred to as an essential virtue. For example, when a person asked Confucius about filial piety, Confucius said, “Never disobey” (Analects 2:5). The teaching of Confucius about filial piety has been strongly correlated with collectivism and considered the basic principle of intergenerational relationships in a
number of Eastern countries and regions, such as Korea (Kim, Kim, & Hurh, 1991), China (Turkowski, 1975), Japan (Tobin, 1987), Taiwan (Lee, Parish, & Willis, 1994), and Hong Kong (Ikels, 1975). Elderly family members play a dominant and respected role in collectivistic cultures (Ho, 1994; Levy & Langer, 1994; Martin, 1988; Yum, 1988). Therefore, filial piety has played a key role in Asian family relationships. Moreover, filial piety might not be restricted to elderly family members, but attributed to all elderly people in the Asian Pacific Rim (Park & Kim, 1992; Yuan, 1990).

Based on these cultural differences, researchers have attempted to compare intergenerational relationships between Eastern and Western cultures. Researchers have two types of views toward intergenerational relationships between Eastern and Western Cultures. First, several researchers found that there are significant differences between Eastern and Western cultures in intra- or intergenerational communication. Williams and colleagues (1997) examined intergenerational communication across nine countries and regions, including Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and Canada. The findings showed that young people in Eastern cultures felt more under-accommodated by the elderly than their Western counterparts. Furthermore, younger people in Eastern cultures accommodated the elderly more than their Western counterparts. In addition, research showed that young people in Eastern cultures treated family and nonfamily elders differently. For example, Ting-Toomey (1994) suggested that Asians might accommodate the family elders more than the nonfamily elders because family members could be categorized as ingroup members, whereas nonfamily elders could be viewed as outgroup members. There were also several similarities and differences among Asian regions
(Williams et al., 1997). Hong Kong and PRC young people held the least positive attitude toward their communication with elders. Among the five Asian regions, young people in Hong Kong tended to perceive the highest level of nonaccommodation from elders. Furthermore, this perception was associated with the least obligation to elders. South Korean and Japanese young people also had negative attitudes toward elders, but they perceived higher pressure to obey elders than young people in Hong Kong. Young Filipinos had less pressure to obey elders than South Korean and Japanese counterparts while holding less negative attitudes toward elders than their Hong Kong and Chinese counterparts. Research showed that there might be less social distance and more equality in intergenerational communication in Western cultures than in Eastern cultures. In addition, rapid social transformation has a significant influence on intergenerational relationships in Eastern cultures, especially for young people.

Researchers investigated intra- and intergenerational communication among Anglo-Americans, Anglo-Australians, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong people (Giles, Liang, Noels & McCann, 2001). The findings were consistent with Williams et al.'s (1997) research. Young Chinese reported less pleasurable intergenerational interactions than Western counterparts, but they were more likely to obey elders than young peers. Giles et al. (2003) examined the perception of intra- and intergenerational relationships among young adults from six Western and Eastern countries. The finding suggested that young Asians thought family elders were as accommodative as their young peers, while young Westerners believed that family elders were more accommodating than their young peers. Respondents in the six countries perceived more accommodation from same-age peers.
than the two elder groups. Young East Asians were more likely to have more negative attitudes toward elders than were young Westerners.

Second, some studies found no or only a few differences between Westerners and Asians in intra- and intergenerational communication. Ng, Liu, Weatherall, and Loong (1997) examined intra- and intergenerational relationships of young Europeans and Chinese in New Zealand. The findings showed that young people viewed family elders more positively than non-family elders in both cultures. In addition, young people viewed family elders as positively as peers. There was no cultural difference of intra- or intergenerational communication in that study. McCann and Giles (2006, 2007) conducted research on intra- and intergenerational communication perception in Thailand and the U.S.A. Young employees perceived their same-age peers as more accommodative than elder peers in both nations. The only cross-cultural difference was that young Americans perceived greater accommodation from others than did Thais.

The findings of these studies suggested that young people across cultures perceive less accommodating behaviors from elders than from the same-age group. Young people perceive that family elders accommodate them more than do non-family elders. Furthermore, most studies found that there is a difference between Eastern and Western cultures in intra- or intergenerational communication, although a few studies were not consistent with this conclusion.

Summary

Scholars from a variety of discipline have conducted a number of studies that applied CAT in intergenerational communication. Besides improving theoretical development of CAT, most studies have focused on research on intergenerational relationships in family
settings (e.g., Banker & Gaertner, 1998; Bandura, 1977; Cappella, 1981; Hamilton, 1991; Harwood, Soliz, & Lin, 2006; Snow, 1986), health settings (e.g., Bethea & Balazs, 1997; Bourhis, Roth, & MacQueen, 1988; Fields, 1991; Ireland, 1996; Watson & Gallois, 1999), and different cultures (e.g., Giles, Liang, Noels & McCann, 2001). Only a few researchers have attempted to understand intergenerational relationships in organizational settings (McCann & Giles, 2006, 2007). However, research on intergenerational relationships in organizational settings is important because the population of older workers is increasing. Therefore, this study will investigate this issue in both the United States and China.

Self-Construals

Kim, Tasaki, Kim, and Lee (2007) suggested that self-construal is “one of the most prominent approaches for measuring cultural differences at the individual level” (p. 304). Markus and Kitayama (1991) first proposed two types of self-construals: independent and interdependent. Based on their concepts, scholars have examined self-construals on many studies. Self-construals can affect cognition, emotion, and motivation. This section will review the concepts and research on self-construals.

Concepts of Self-construals

The concepts of self-construals originated from the discussion of self-culture relationship. In the 1980s, Markus, sponsored by the Research Center for Group Dynamics (RCGD) at the University of Michigan, visited and lectured in Japan. After a couple of weeks, Markus found Japanese students were different from the Westerners. Japanese students did not argue with her when they had different ideas. Furthermore, a straightforward question to students, such as “which one is better?” usually came with an
ambiguous answer, such as “you know, it depends.” During this period, Kitayama was a graduate student majoring in social psychology in the University of Michigan. He found that American people around him were nice and agreeable, but people kept a certain distance from others. Furthermore, he found American students actively talked in class and interrupted others’ speeches. The situations confused the two scholars from both Western and Eastern cultures. After knowing each other for several years, Markus and Kitayama (1991) began to discuss the communication differences between Japanese and American cultures.

They found that the psychology of small social events and situations are highly correlated with cultures. Certain actions and social encounters are guided by the culture-specific knowledge, which are obvious to the native, but difficult to the outsider (Markus & Kitayama, 2003). They found the different behaviors and thoughts between two cultures actually are associated with the concept of “self.” Researchers have different opinions towards “self.” Some suggested that self is universal. Hallowell (1955) found that human beings attempt to know themselves by making themselves distinct from others. Head (1920) suggested there is a universal schema that allows one to know who he or she is. However, other researchers believed that aspects of the self relate to social influences. Durkheim (1912/1968) suggested that social factors could construe and frame the self. Markus and Kitayama (1991) agreed that social factors can produce the self. They stated, “The sense of belongingness to a social relation may become so strong that it makes better sense to think of the relationship as the functional unit of conscious reflection” (p.224). Other researchers’ findings have been consistent with Markus and Kitayama’s (Gilligan, 1982; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Lykes, 1985; Sampson, 1985, 1988,
1989; Smith, 1985; Triandis, 1989; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984; White & Kirkpatrick, 1985). For example, Triandis (1989) suggested that three cultural factors, including individualism/collectivism, tightness/looseness, and cultural complexity, can produce three types of the self, including the private self, the public self, and collective self. Sampson (1988) suggested that three main cultural values, freedom, responsibility, and achievement, influence self-concepts.

Singelis (1994) proposed that self-construal is a “constellation of thoughts, feelings, and actions concerning one’s relationship to others, and the self as distinct from others” (p. 581). Markus and Kitayama (1991) conceptualized two types of self-construals: independent and interdependent. The independent construal is based on the belief of separateness of distinct persons in Western cultures. A human being is a unique individual and can express him or her freely (Johnson, 1985; Sampson, 1985, 1988, 1989). “The essential aspect of this view involves a conception of the self as an autonomous, independent person”; thus, Markus and Kitayama “refer to it as the independent construal of the self” (p.226). More Westerners hold this view than do Easterners. People with an independent self-construal usually express themselves directly and freely in order to achieve personal goals. Other-self relationships are vital for self-evaluation, which is through social comparison. In Figure 4A, the large circle is the self and the smaller circles represent important others, such as family members and friends. The Xs represent different attributes of the self. In certain social interactions, people with an independent self-construal share some similar attributes Xs; thus, the largest circle and the small circle intersect.
Compared to Western cultures, Eastern cultures emphasize maintaining the interdependence among people (Hsu, 1985). Others’ thoughts, feelings, and actions in the relationship can influence one’s self. “This view of the self and the relationship between the self and others features the person not as separate from the social context but as more connected and less differentiated from others” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). Individuals in non-Western cultures are encouraged to accommodate others in order to maintain various interpersonal relationships. An interdependent self generally has more public components than an independent self. Others are important for social comparison in an interdependent formulation of the self as well. Furthermore, these others function as “an integral part of the setting, situation, or context to which the self is connected, fitted, and assimilated” (p. 228). In most social interactions, people with an interdependent self set their own opinions, abilities, and characteristics in a secondary place to achieve the primary task of interdependence. People with an interdependent self-construal usually have intersections with others in most social settings. Maintaining the relationships is more important than keeping self-attributes (see Figure 4B). The core of the interdependent self-system is the significance of interpersonal relationships.

The notion of interdependent self is associated with the Eastern philosophical thought that self is not the inner self, but is a part of nature and society (Bond, 1986; Sass, 1988). The self in non-Western cultures includes subjective components, such as personal thoughts and ideals of self, and objective elements, such as others and situations (Galtung, 1981). For example, Chinese culture advocates harmony, which emphasizes the interactions among individuals, others, and situations (Moore, 1967). Bond (1986)
observed that the Chinese attempt to fulfill others’ needs and fit in social relationships rather than achieve personal goals.

Figure 4. Independent view of self and interdependent view of self


By reviewing the above research, Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1995) initially contended the concepts of self-construals were based on cultural differences. Therefore, there should be a relationship between cultures and self-construals. However, other researchers might not agree with Markus and Kitayama. In the following section, this issue will be discussed deeply.

Research on Self-Construals

A number of studies have investigated self-construals in different cultures. This section will review three issues: research on the relationship between cultures and self-construals, the influences of self-construal on people’s cognition and behaviors, and self-construals in intergenerational relationships.
Research on the relationship between cultures and self-construals. Researchers, conducting a number of studies of self-construals in a variety of cultures, found two types of results about the relationship between cultures and self-construals (Li, Zhang, Bhatt, & Yum, 2006). First, several researchers found that cultures effect self-construals. Trafimow et al. (1991) conducted two experiments to examine the organization of self-cognitions in both North American and Chinese cultures. The findings showed that both self-construal priming and cultures could influence self-construals. Kashima et al. (1995) found that Australians were more independent than Japanese and Koreans. Dhawan, Roseman, Naidu, and Rettek (1995) found that Americans and Indians had different self-construals. Lay et al. (1998) found that individuals from Eastern cultural groups scored higher in a context-bound measure of allocentrism-idiocentrism, the Family Allocentrism Scale (FAS). The concepts of allocentrism and idiocentrism, which are influenced by cultures, are similar to the concepts of interdependent and independent self-construals. The FAS includes items that can measure independent and interdependent self-construals, such as Item 1 “I am very familiar to my parents” and Item 21 “It is important to feel independent of one’s family.” The findings indicate that individuals from Eastern cultures have the tendency to have an interdependent self-construal, whereas people from Western cultures usually hold an independent self-construal. Wang (2001) examined the earliest childhood memory among American and Chinese college students. The finding showed that American students reported more lengthy, detailed, self-focused, and emotional memories than did Chinese students. In addition, the Americans talked more about personal attributes than did the Chinese. The analyses of both cultural- and individual-levels indicate there is a vital relationship between earliest childhood
memories in different cultures and self-construals. Kanagawa, Cross and Markus (2001) found that Japanese women described themselves more negatively than did their American counterparts by investigating the self-concepts of Japanese and American women. Furthermore, Japanese women were affected more by social contexts and others than were the Americans.

Fernandez, Paez, and Gonzalez (2005) examined interdependent and independent self-construals among 5688 students from 29 counties and regions: Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Iran, Italy, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Russia, Salvador, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United States. The findings suggested that more interdependent and less independent self-construal is more typical of hierarchical cultures – and not of individualism. Less interdependent and more independent self-construal is more highly stressed in egalitarian cultures – and not in collectivist cultures. In hierarchical cultures, social status is associated with social power across contents; while in egalitarian cultures; social status is narrowly associated with particular contents. People from Asian cultures are associated with an interdependent self-construal because most Asian cultures are hierarchical cultures. Therefore, cultures have a significant influence on self-construals. Park and Guan (2007) examined people’s self-construals in both China and the United States. The finding showed that young Chinese considered themselves more interdependent than others from their own culture; while young Americans perceived themselves as more independent than other Americans.

Second, some studies showed mixed results or no differences in self-construals across cultures. Cross (1995) found that there was no significant difference of interdependent
self-construal between Asian and American students, although Asian students scored a little bit higher on the interdependent self-construal scale than American students. Brockner and Chen (1996) used a scale developed by Triandis et al. (1986) to examine independent and interdependent self-construals among both American and Chinese cultures. The 11-item scale included statements, such as “One should live one’s life independently of others as much as possible” and “One does a better job working alone than working with a group.” They found that there was no significant difference in self-construals between the Chinese and Americans. Li (2002) found that there was no major difference in self-construals between the Chinese and Anglo-Canadians in self-friend relationships, although the Chinese were more interdependent than Anglo-Canadians in self-family relationships. Li, Zhang, Bhatt, and Yum (2006) found that Anglo-Canadians’ self-construals were more independent than the Chinese and Indians in construing their relationships with family members, friends, relatives, colleagues, and neighbors. However, the findings also showed that the Chinese were less interdependent than Indians. Chinese self-construals were as interdependent as Indians’ in close-family and relative relationships, but less interdependent than Indians’ in self-other connections.

Many studies that I reviewed found a difference in self-construals between Western and Eastern cultures but several studies reported no difference or mixed results. There are two implications of these findings. First, self-construals are personal traits, which are heavily influenced by cultures, but not predicted by cultures all of the time. Second, globalization has been influencing self-construals. The Western idea of individualism has had a significant influence on young Easterners for the last three decades, although there
is still a strong belief that one should maintain traditional ideas and norms in Eastern societies. Young people in Eastern cultures are struggling to balance the two types of ideologies. Most studies of self-construals used college students; thus, the mixed findings reflect the changes and struggles among these young people. Furthermore, the changes and struggles among these young people actually indicate the importance of conducting self-construal research among different cultures because the changes of self-construals seem like a mirror that can reflect the transformation of Eastern cultures.

*The influences of self-construal on cognition and behaviors.* Besides investigating the cultural influence on self-construals, researchers have attempted to understand the consequences of self-construals. The outcomes of human beings’ activity depend on the nature of self-construals. Specifically, there are two important outcomes of self-construals: cognitive and behavioral influences in interpersonal relationships.

First, self-construals affect human beings’ cognition, such as the decision-making process and individual’s values. The initial point for cognitive research on self-construals was the assumption that people with an interdependent self-construal will value and try to improve important and close relationships more than people with an independent self-construal. By examining the relationship between Chinese patients’ self-construals and medical decision-making, Kim, Smith, and Gu (1999) found that the Chinese with an interdependent self-construal preferred giving their right of medical decision-making to their families; while the Chinese with an independent self-construal preferred making their own decisions. However, both groups desired to share decision-making with their family members. Cross and Morris (2003) examined individual differences in self-construals in roommate relationships. They found that people with a high level of
interdependent self-construal more easily predicted their new roommates’ values and beliefs. The interdependent self-construal was strongly associated with these measures of relationship cognition in distant relationships.

Kim, Kim, Kam, and Shin (2003) examined how self-construals affected the perception of self-presentation styles in Korea. More than two hundred Korean college students read a scenario of a bragging process and then assess the speaker’s self-presentation styles in this study. The findings suggested that people with an interdependent self-construal favored the positive presentation less than did people with an independent self-construal. Kim, Kam, Sharkey, and Singelis (2008) investigated how cultural identity influenced deception motivations and perception of deceptive communication. More than six hundred undergraduate students from Hong Kong, Hawaii, and the mainland United States participated in their research. The finding showed that self-construals could be a significant predictor in determining people’s general willingness to engage in deceptive communication. A higher level of independent self-construal was associated with a lower motivation to deceptive; while a lower level of interdependent self-construal was associated with a higher motivation of deception. Chang (2009) examined how self-construals influenced people’s attitudes towards anti-smoking ads. The findings showed that “self-referring ads generated more negative smoking attitudes than other-referring ads among adolescents with independent self-construals, whereas other-referring ads generated more negative smoking attitudes than self-referring ads among adolescents with interdependent self-construals” (p. 33). Furthermore, the finding indicated that smokers with a higher level of independent self-construal rated self-referring ads more effective than other-referring ads.
In addition to cognitive research on self-construals, researchers have focused on the effect of self-construals on behaviors. In a theoretical analysis of minding close relationships, Harvey and Omarzu (1997) suggested that the interdependent self-construal is related to high levels of self-disclosure because self-disclosure is a critical way to nurture a new relationship. Oetzel (1998) found that the interdependent self-construal was associated with obliging, avoiding, integrating, and compromising conflict styles among the youths from different ethnic groups, including Asian Americans. In addition, he suggested that self-construal is a better predictor of conflict management styles than ethnic or cultural background. In a laboratory study, Cross et al. (2000) found that people with a higher level of interdependent self-construal were more likely to self-disclose to close others than people with a lower level of interdependent self-construal. Yeh (2002) found that Taiwanese students with an interdependent self-construal were more likely to seek help from a counselor or therapist than the students with an independent self-construal. She suggested that “people, who tend to be more interdependent, or reliant on others, tend to have more positive attitudes toward help seeking” (p.26). Utz (2004) examined how self-construals affected cooperation in social dilemmas. The findings suggested that individuals with an independent self-construal had lower levels of cooperation than their counterparts with an interdependent self-construal.

Holland, Roeder, van Baaren, Brandt, and Hannover (2004) conducted three studies in order to investigate the influence of self-construals on interpersonal proximity. The results suggested that there was a clear relationship between self-construals and the physical distance between the self and others. The studies showed that a higher level of independent self-construal was positively associated with more personal distance, while a
higher level of interdependent self-construal was related to less physical distance. Downie, Koestner, Horberg, and Haga (2006) conducted a study in order to understand the relationship between self-constructions and personal goals. The findings showed that self-construals were related to the behavior of pursuing personal goals. There are four reasons for goal pursuit: external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995, 1998). External reason refers to achieving goals based on others’ will. Introjected reason is that people pursue goals because of ashamed and anxious feelings. Identified reason is that people pursue goals because they believe these goals are very important to them. Intrinsic reason is related to purely personal interests of the goals. Downie et al. (2006) found that “interdependent self-construals were significantly associated with introjected reasons for pursuing goals, experiencing conflict among goals, and achieving less goal progress” (p. 528). Furthermore, “independent self-construals were significantly associated with intrinsic and identified reasons for goal pursuit and greater goal progress” (p. 528).

**Self-construals in intergenerational relationships.** All these studies suggested that self-construal is an important personal feature that could influence individuals’ cognition and behavior in interpersonal communication. Because of the importance of self-construal as a personal feature, understanding how self-construal affects intergenerational communication can help people establish a harmony intergenerational relationship. However, only two studies investigated self-construals in intergenerational relationships. Neha (2005), evaluating the intergenerational conflict among Indian, other Asian groups, and Caucasian Americans, found self-construals could not be used to explain ethnic group differences on intergenerational conflict. Winnie Ma and Yeh (2005)
conducted a study to understand how intergenerational family conflicts and self-construals influenced young Chinese Americans’ career decision. The findings showed that young Chinese Americans with a higher level of interdependent self-construal had less uncertainty when they made career decisions.

Researchers have not examined how self-construals influence intergenerational relationships in organizational settings. Furthermore, no study has investigated how self-construals influence accommodation styles in intergenerational communication in organizational settings. Researchers have paid attention to various accommodation styles in intergenerational communication in organizational settings at macro levels, such as from cultural levels (McCann & Giles, 2006, 2007). However, understanding accommodation styles in organizational settings at micro levels, such as from self-construal levels, is necessary because identifying individuals’ unique features can help us know their relationships with others better.

Summary

Since Markus and Kitayama (1991) proposed two types of self-construals: independent and interdependent, researchers conducted a number of studies based on their concepts. Today, self-construals can be considered one of the most influential concepts in cross cultural communication research. Furthermore, self-construals are conceptualized as an individual level construct that explains culturally based differences in cognition and behaviors. Finally, understanding self-construals’ influence on intergenerational relationships in organizational settings is necessary.
Hypotheses and Research Questions

This paper discussed several issues focusing on CAT in intergenerational communication: models of communication and aging, family communication, organizational communication, health communication, and intercultural communication. Among these issues, CAT has been employed least in studies of intergenerational communication in organizational settings. However, intergenerational researchers should pay more attention to young employees and their communication with their elderly peers because of the increasing population of elderly workers. CAT can help researchers understand and improve intergenerational relationships in workplaces. Furthermore, research on intergenerational relationships in workplaces can assist researchers in developing CAT into a more useful theory since “there are many important intergroup contexts where CAT has not been developed at all” (Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2005, p.143). Thus, workplaces can be viewed as an important and practical site for future intergenerational research on CAT.

Intergenerational Relationships in the Workplace

Understanding the intergenerational communication in the workplace is very important because it can help people improve intergenerational relationships in organizations. This study examined intra- and intergenerational relationships in workplaces based on CAT. According to CAT, intergenerational communication is stereotypical because of outgroup bias. CAT suggests that young people favor their own age group more than other age groups. A number of studies supported this assumption. Williams and Giles (1996) found that young adults had negative attitudes when they communicated with the elders. Although young adults converge to elderly adults in order
to show respect, they generally do not like doing it. Giles and associates (2003) examined perceptions of intra-and intergenerational communication among young adults in Thailand, Japan, and the United States. They found that younger adults were more likely to converge to elderly adults; while they viewed elderly adults as more nonaccommodative than younger peers. McCann and Giles (2006) examined intra- and intergenerational communication perception in the workplace in Thailand and the United States. The findings also indicated that there were differences in accommodative styles between the elders and the younger. McCann and Giles (2007) found that young workers had negative attitudes towards elderly workers, but young workers still felt that they should respect their elders during intergenerational communication. They avoided conflicts with their elders.

In these studies, the terms accommodation, non-accommodation, and respectfully avoidant communication were used frequently. In brief, accommodation refers to behavior that can confirm or identify an ingroup membership, such as giving useful suggestions and compliments. On the contrary, people may communicate in ways that distinguish themselves from another group. Behavior such as expressing disinterest and being unsupportive are considered as non-accommodation. Finally, restrained and respectful communication is a particular factor that emerged in intergenerational communication. People avoid conflicts or certain topics in order to save others’ or their own faces (Giles et al, 2002). Based on the above findings, the following hypotheses are posited:

H1: Young workers perceive less accommodation from elderly peers than from young peers in both American and Chinese cultures.
H2: Young workers perceive more nonaccommodation from elderly peers than from young peers in both American and Chinese cultures.

H3: Young workers perceive that they use more respectfully avoidant communication with elderly peers than with young workers in both American and Chinese cultures.

Cultures and Intergenerational Communication

This study attempts to extend research on intergenerational relationships from Western cultures to Asian cultures. Globalization makes the world smaller; therefore, people from different cultures have more possibilities to work together. Knowing the cultural influences of China, the second largest economy, and the United States, the largest economy in the world, on intergenerational communication can assist people from the two cultures to have a harmonious relationship in workplaces.

The current CAT research on intergenerational communication across cultures showed that young Asians' perceptions of intergenerational communication may be more negative than their Western counterparts. Williams and colleagues (1997), examining intergenerational communication across nine countries and regions, found that young people in Eastern cultures felt more under-accommodated from the elderly than their Western counterparts. Furthermore, younger people in Eastern cultures accommodated the elderly more than their Western counterparts. Noels, Giles, Gallois, and Ng (2001) found that young people in Hong Kong reported less pleasurable intergenerational interactions than Western counterparts, but they were more likely to obey the elders than young Westerners. Giles, Liang, Noels, and McCann (2001) found that young Anglo-Americans perceived more accommodation from elderly people than did young
Taiwanese. Ota, Giles, and Somera (2007) found that young Japanese and Filipinos reported more respectful obligation and avoidant behaviors than did their American counterparts when they interacted with the elders. McCann, Ota, Giles, and Caraker (2003) found that young Americans felt that others were more accommodative than did young Thais and Japanese. Therefore, the following hypotheses are offered:

H4: Young Chinese workers report receiving a lower level of accommodation from elderly peers than young American workers.

H5: Young Chinese workers report receiving a higher level of nonaccommodation from their elderly peers than young American workers.

H6: Young Chinese workers use more respectful yet avoidant communication with elderly peers than young American workers.

Power and Intergenerational Communication

In organizations, power is another important issue. Understanding how power influences communication in workplaces can help improve organizational intergenerational relationships. According to CAT, people develop a bias in favor of one’s own group and treat the other groups differently (Harwood, Giles, & Ryan, 1995). In healthcare settings, research found that nurses who belonged to a group with more power treated patients who had less power differently from their own group (Lanceley, 1985; Fairhurst, 1981; Sachweh, 1998). Grainger (1995) suggested that the communication accommodation differences exist because health caregivers’ perceptions of older patients’ dependency give health caregivers more power. In intergenerational communication, parents with more power usually use baby talk or patronizing talk (Morgan & Hummert, 2000). Ryan et al. (1986) found that elderly people do not like
over-accommodative styles because these styles suggest that older people are relatively powerless and easily manipulated. Thus, individuals have a common desire to control others in family intergenerational contexts. The need for controlling power can influence parents or adult children’s accommodative styles.

Accordingly, younger workers should treat elderly supervisors differently from their own group members. McCann and Giles (2006) found that young bankers in both Thailand and the United States view their communication with supervisors more negatively than with peers. Young bankers perceived more nonaccommodation from their supervisors than their peers. Furthermore, young bankers felt that they use respectfully avoidant communication more with their supervisors than with their peers. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Young workers report perceiving a lower level of accommodation from elderly managers or supervisors than from their elderly peers.

H8: Young workers report perceiving a higher level of non-accommodation from their elderly managers or supervisors than from their elderly peers.

H9: Young workers use more respectful yet avoidant communication with elderly supervisors or managers than with their elderly peers.

Self-construal and Intergenerational Communication

Culture is an important factor that can influence intergenerational communication, but it is definitely not the only factor. In order to understand intergenerational communication better, this study will examine “self-construal” in organizational settings.

A number of studies have investigated self-construals in different cultures. Researchers, conducting a number of studies of self-construals in a variety of cultures,
found two types of results about the relationship between cultures and self-construals (Li, Zhang, Bhatt, & Yum, 2006). Several researchers found that cultures effect self-construals (e.g., Dhawan et al., 1995; Lay et al., 1998; Kashima et al., 1995; Park & Guan, 2007; Trafimow et al., 1991; Wang, 2001). Others found that there was no significant difference of interdependent self-construal between Easterners and Westerners (e.g, Brockner & Chen, 1996; Li, 2002; Li et al., 2006). Therefore, the third research question is proposed:

RQ1: what is the relationship between self-construals and culture?

Self-construals are a personal trait, but influenced by cultures. Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggested two types of self-construals: independent and interdependent. Markus and Kitayama (1995) believed that people from Western cultures usually have an independent self-construal, while people from Eastern countries mostly have an interdependent self-construal. A number of studies concluded that there is a relationship between cultures and self-construals (e.g., Dhawan et al., 1995; Kanagawa et al., 2001; Kashima et al., 1995; Lay et al., 1998; Wang, 2001). For example, Sun and Guan (2007) reported that young Chinese believed that they were more interdependent than other Chinese; whereas young Americans perceived themselves as more independent than other Americans. Because cultures have an important influence on intergenerational communication (e.g., Giles, Liang, Noels, & McCann, 2001; McCann, Ota, Giles, & Caraker, 2003; Noels, Giles, Gallois, & Ng, 2001), self-construals, which are highly influenced by cultures, can be considered a vital factor in intergenerational relationships as well. However, no studies have investigated the relationship between self-construal and communication perceptions in intergenerational settings. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:
RQ2: Are young workers’ interdependent and independent self-construals associated with their perceptions of accommodation, nonaccommodation, or respectfully avoidant communication in organizational settings?

Although both self-construals and cultures may be considered important factors that can influence intergenerational communication in organizational settings, how they work together and which one is more important are two issues that need investigation. This investigation can help people better understand intergenerational relationships.

Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, and Kimberlie’s (2001) study of self-construal types and conflict management styles among African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, and Latina/o Americans showed that individuals’ self-construals explained conflict management styles better than did cultural backgrounds. However, no studies have compared influence of self-construals and cultures on intergenerational communication. Therefore, the research question is proposed:

RQ3: What are the relative contributions of self-construals and culture to younger workers’ use of accommodative, nonaccommodative, or avoidant strategies?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The current study recruited students from the University of Southern Mississippi and the Suzhou University of Science and Technology to participate in the research. Participants were between eighteen and thirty-four years old. In addition, young workers in two Chinese companies, Hongyu Technology Company and Guodi Biotechnology Company, were asked to volunteer for participation in this study.

In the United States, the student sample was used to represent younger workers because the majority of students at the University of Southern Mississippi have a full- or part-time job. In the current study, 273 students completed the questionnaire and 75% (n=205) reported work experiences. In addition, I asked 20 young workers in local malls and restaurants. I asked whether they were taking a class from any local colleges, and 13 said yes. In China, the combined sample of students enrolled in night classes and young workers was used to represent young workers for several reasons. First, unlike their American counterparts, most Chinese undergraduate students enrolling in daytime classes do not have part or full time jobs. Some work as tutors for helping middle or high school students, but they usually have no coworkers. Hence, it is impossible to use traditional Chinese college students to represent young Chinese workers. Second, most Chinese undergraduate students enrolled in night classes have part or full time jobs, but they are usually older than traditional college students and many of them are more than thirty-four years old. Thus, the current study only used Chinese students enrolled in night classes as a part of the sample. Third, Chinese graduate students usually have part-time jobs;
therefore, the current study collected data from several Chinese graduate students. In order to avoid a significant age difference between the Chinese and American sample, several American graduate students were recruited to participate in the study as well. Fourth, the sample included many young Chinese workers, who can represent best the targeted population.

I or my research assistants administered the questionnaires during class at the University of Southern Mississippi and the Suzhou University of Science and Technology. The procedure took less than 15 minutes. I or my research assistants gave a 3-minute oral presentation in order to briefly explain the purpose of the study, the procedure, and anticipated risks and to secure their informed consent to participate. The students who were not interested in the study could do other things such as reading their books. The study was approved by the institutional review board at the University of Southern Mississippi (see Appendix C).

In the two Chinese companies, the research assistants asked young workers to volunteer for participation in the research and gave them the questionnaire and an informed consent form. Young workers could fill out the questionnaire immediately or take the questionnaires home and bring them back to the research assistant later. Participants received a 4-page questionnaire with instructions. Participants in the study were not expected to have any direct benefits.

A total of 751 respondents participated in this study including 273 American students and 478 Chinese. Among them, 485 respondents were included in the analyses. The following were the criteria for exclusion. First, participants who did not answer the question “How old are you?” were excluded from the analyses. Second, participants who
chose “elderly family members” as the targeted group were not selected. Third, participants who had no work experiences were not included (they answered “no” to the item A1, “Have you ever been hired to perform a job on regular basis by an employer?”). Fourth, participants who were more than 34 years old were removed from the final data. Fifth, participants who answered less than 59 items (the total number of items was 64) were excluded. Sixth, participants who did not answer more than two items in every sub-scale were excluded from the analyses. Seventh, participants who did not fill out the questionnaires seriously were excluded. For example, several participants answered all items with the same number.

The final sample totaled 485 participants. Fifty-nine percent were female (n= 287) and forty-one percent were male (n= 198). Age ranged from 18 to 33 and the mean age was 23.4. Seventy-nine percent reported having a job (n= 384) and twenty-one percent presently had no job (n=101). Among the participants with a job, 66.4% had a full-time job (n= 247) and 35.6% had a part-time job (n= 137). Among the final sample, 205 were from the United States and 280 were from China. Among the American sample, 66.3% were female (n= 136) and 33.7% were male (n= 69). The mean age was 20.5 and the average number of years of work experience was 3.8. Sixty-two percent had a job (n= 127) and thirty-eight percent had no job (n= 78). Among the American participants who had a job, only 8.7% had a full-time job (n= 11) and 91.3% had a part-time job (n= 116). The American sample included 62% European-American (n= 127), 29.3% African-American (n= 60), 2.4% Latino-American (n= 5), and 4.9% others (n= 7). Among the Chinese sample, 53.9% were female (n= 151) and 46.1% were male (n= 129). The mean of age was 25.5 and the average number of years of work experiences was 3.1.
Ninety-two percent reported having a job (n= 257) and eight percent had no job (n= 23). Among the Chinese participants who had a job, 92.5% have a full-time job (n= 235) and 7.5% had a part-time job (n= 19). Forty-two percent were college students (n= 117) and fifty-eight percent were not (n= 163).

Measures

Measures of Self-Construals

A considerable body of research focused on measures of self-construals. Two important debates among these studies are discussed in this section. The first issue is how many dimensions of self-construal exist. Most studies of self-construals embraced the two dimensional model because Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1995) originally conceptualized self-construals into two dimensions: independent and interdependent. Singelis (1994) investigated self-construals by using a sample of multiethnic undergraduates in Hawaii. His study supported the two distinctive dimensions and constructed a 24-item scale of measuring self-construals. Gudykunst, Matsunoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, and Heyman (1996) used an item-pool combining 94 items from several scales, including Singelis’ scale, to construct a scale measurement of self-construals. College students from the United States, Japan, Korea, and Australia, participated in this study. The results, submitted to a factor analysis, showed a two-factor orthogonal solution. This scale includes 29 items: 14 measured independent self-construal and 15 measured interdependent self-construal. Leung and Kim (1997) developed the modified self-construal scale, which is a two-dimensional scale: 15 items to measure the independent-self and 13 items to measure the interdependent-self. The scale included items from other self-construal scales, including Singelis’ and Gudykunst et al.’s, and
several newly-written items. The three scales are widely used in measuring self-construals (Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, & Wittenbaum et al., 2003).

However, several researchers suggested that the concept of self-construal can be more than two dimensions. Kashima et al. (1995) conducted a study of self-construal involving five cultures, including Australia, the United States, Hawaii, Japan, and Korea. The findings indicated that there were three dimensions of self-construal: individualistic, collective, and relational. The individualistic dimension is characterized as independent, self-directed, and separate. The collective and relational self-construals are two aspects of the interdependent dimension. People with a collective-interdependent self-construal usually know their roles in their groups and value the collective goals more than their personal goals. Individuals with a relational self-construal usually valued relational goals more than personal goals because they believe the close relationships are important. Kashima and Hardie (2000) developed the Relational-Interdependent Construal Scale (RICS) in order to measure the three dimensional model of self-construal. Cross, Bacon, and Morris (2000) conducted three studies to develop a measure of the relational-interdependent self-construal and found strong evidence of their scale’s reliability and validity. The findings indicated that people with a higher level of relational-interdependent self-construal described their most important relationships as closer and more committed than did individuals with a lower level of relational-interdependent self-construal. Furthermore, higher relational-interdependent people were more likely than lower relational-interdependent people to take into account the opinions or needs of friends and family when making important decisions.
Uleman, Rhee, Bardoliwalla, Semin, and Toyama (2000) developed the Circles of Closeness Scale (CCS) by using a sample that included Euro-American, Asian-American, Dutch, Turkish, and Japanese college students. The results revealed that there were three ingroups: immediate family, relatives, and friends. Furthermore, the findings indicated that there were six types of interdependence including emotional, supportive, identity, reputational closeness, similarity to others, and happiness with the group. Fiske (2002) analyzed national and ethnic differences in individualism and collectivism based on other researchers’ studies. He suggested that four types of interdependent self-construals and approximately ten types of independent self-construals are possible. Although researchers have a variety of opinions toward the classification of self-construal, the two dimensions of self-construal have been generally used in most studies (Bresnahan, Chiu, & Levine, 2004). In fact, other classifications of self-construal are based on the independent and interdependent dimensions. Kashima et al.’s (1995) and Uleman et al. (2000) argued that there is more than one type of interdependent self-construal; while Fiske (2002) concluded that both interdependent and independent self-construals have multiple dimensions. The two basic branches, interdependent and independent self-construal, have always been used to classify self-construals.

The second controversy in this literature is over the validity of self-construal scales. Many researchers used self-construal scales and concluded that these measures were valid (e.g., Leung & Kim, 1997; Singelis, 1994). However, several researchers recently doubted the validity of self-construal scales. Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, & Wittenbaum et al. (2003), published a meta-analysis of cross-cultural studies of self-construal. The findings showed that the three common measures of self-construal
(Gudykunst et al., 1996; Leung & Kim, 1997; Singelis, 1994) were “radically multidimensional and highly unstable within and across cultures” (p.210). The authors concluded that “catastrophic validity problems exist in research involving the use of self-construal scales in cross-cultural research” (Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, & Wittenbaum et al., 2003, p. 210). Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, & Lee et al. (2003) reconfirmed the invalidity of the three main self-construal scales. Bresnahan et al. (2005) conducted a multimethod multitrait validation study of self-construal scales and found Singelis’ (1994) self-construal scale, the Cross, Bacon, and Morris (2000) Relational Interdependent Self-construal Scale (RISC), and the Kulm and McPartland (1954) Twenty Statement Test (TST) lacked convergent and discriminant validity, both pan-culturally and within each of the three countries included in the study … The results of all analyses were inconsistent with the claim that self-construal measures are construct valid. (p.33)

Gudykunst and Lee (2003) argued that Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, & Wittenbaum et al.’s (2003) study did not “necessarily lead to the conclusion that there are problems with the validity of the scales” (p. 253). They suggested the sample sizes of the self-construal studies in Levine et al.’s analysis, ranging from 121 to 323, might not be large enough for stable coefficients. Among these studies, only six had more than 200 respondents. Moreover, no studies reached the per-group criterion of 50 to 100 respondents plus the number of degrees of freedom. Furthermore, they argued that the selection of Levine’s studies were not a good fit for testing the scales. For example, only one of the studies used a sample from the location in which the scale was developed (Leung & Kim, 1997). In addition, they suggested that numerous studies employed the
three self-construal scales and two dimensions of the self-construal concept. It is strong
evidence to support the validity of these scales. Finally, Gudykunst and Lee concluded:

We summarize other evidence for the construct validity of self construal scales which
indicates that there are theoretically consistent findings across approximately 50
studies using the 3 scales. This would not be possible if there were major problems
with the 2-dimensional model of self construals or the scales used to measure them.
We conclude that the 2-dimensional model of self construals and the current scales
are viable for use in future research. (p. 253)

In summary, the dimensions and validity of self-construal scales are two important
issues for conducting self-construal research. Although researchers have different
opinions toward the dimensions and validity of self-construal measures, most researchers
agree that self-construal has two underlying dimensions and is a valuable concept in
intercultural communication. This study accepts the promise that self-construal is a two
dimensional concept.

The “Modified Self-Construal Scale” (Kim & Leung, 1997) was used as the
operational definition of young people’s self-construals. This scale consists of 28 items
followed by a 7-point response continuums (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The
first 15 items measure the independent-self (e.g., “I should be judged on my own merit”;
“I act as a unique person, separate from others”; and “I don’t like depending on others”) and
the following 13 items measure the interdependent-self (e.g., “I feel uncomfortable
disagreeing with my group”; “I conceal my negative emotions so I won’t cause
unhappiness among the members of my group”; and “my relationships with those in my
group are more important than my personal accomplishments”) (see Appendix A). The
scale has been used to examine the relationship of Chinese people’s cultural orientations and medical decision-making in Hong Kong and Beijing (Kim, Smith, & Gu, 1999). Cronbach’s coefficient alpha (reliability) of the scale for independent self-construal was .86 and for interdependent self-construal was .78 for the Chinese in Beijing. The scale exhibited construct validity because there was a significant difference between people with an interdependent self-construal and with an independent self-construal on medical decision making (Kim et al., 1999). Therefore, the scale was selected to examine self-construal in the current study.

The Computer program EQS was used to test the two-factor model of the modified self-construal scale (Kim & Leung, 1997). The result of the confirmatory factor analysis showed the original model of the self-construal scale did not fit in the current data. I tried to identify certain items in the scale that could fit the two-factor model. Items with factor loading less than .55 were deleted in this model, which is in order to maximize the number of original items included in the scale without adversely affecting the fit indices. Three error covariances, which indicate that there a common cause other than the factor reasoning were added in this model in order to improve the fit. Item 21, which belonged to the interdependent self-construal factor, loaded across two factors because this item might explain both factors. The CFI and GFI is more than .90 and RMSEA is less than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). This analysis showed that the model had acceptable goodness of fit indices, $X^2 (73, N=485) = 205.20, p<.05; CFI = .93; GFI = .94; RMSEA = .06$. The $X^2$ statistic was significant but it can be ignored because of its excessive sensitivity for large numbers of constraints, especially in analyses with large sample sizes (Little, 1997). This analysis established the construct validity of the current self-construal scale.
Figure 5. The Final Model of Self-Construals
Reliability analyses yielded coefficient alphas .76 for the independent self-construal scale and .84 for the interdependent self-construal scale. The final model of the scale (see Figure 5) included the following fourteen items. C5, C6, C12, C13, C14, C19 (factor 1: independent self-construal), C9, C19, C21, C22, C23, C24, C25, and C28 (factor 2: interdependent self-construal) (see Appendix B). The intercorrelation of the two factors was .02 (p > .05).

CAT research on intergenerational communication. “Global Perception of Intergenerational communication” (GPIC) scale was used as the operational definition of participants’ communication perceptions in intergenerational relationships (see Appendix B). McCann and Giles (2006) developed the GPIC for their research on communication with people of different ages in the workplace. McCann and Giles (2006, 2007) used the GPIC in order to investigate intergenerational communication in Thai and American cultures. A number of items in the GPIC scale are based on Williams’ et al’s (1997) 41-item scale to measure intergenerational communication. The GPIC contains two main parts: perceptions of others’ communication and perceptions of one’s own communication. The first part of GPIC, perceptions of others’ communication, includes two dimensions: accommodation, which refers to the behaviors that can confirm or identify an ingroup membership (e.g., “they were supportive”, “they were helpful”, “they gave useful advice”, and “they had kind words for me”), and nonaccommodation, which refers to the behaviors that can distinguish people from another group (e.g., “they ordered me to do things”, “they acted superior to me”, “they talked as if they knew more than me, and they spoke as if they were better than me”). The second part, perceptions of one’s own communication, includes nine items of respectfully avoidant communication, which
refers to certain behaviors that can save others’ or people’s own faces (e.g., “I spoke in a respectful manner”; “I remained silent if my opinion conflicted with them, I held back my opinions”; and “I restrained myself from arguing with them”). The GPIC scale used a 5-point Likert response continuum. The scale was used to examine intergenerational relationships in Thailand and the United States (McCann & Giles, 2007). Because this short version scale has never been used in China, the following seven items were added to this scale in order to enhance the reliability.

Two accommodation items are:

B20. They comforted me.
B21. They were nice to me.

Two non-accommodation items are:

B22. They did not support my plans or ideas.
B23. They criticized me.

Three avoidant communication items are:

B24. I tried not to embarrass them.
B25. I avoided conflicts with them.
B26. I expressed my opinion indirectly.

The confirmatory factor analysis showed the three factor model including twenty-six items did not fit this sample. I tried to limit items in the scale and found a three factor model consisting of twenty items (see Figure 6). Items with factor loading less than .40 were deleted in this model, which is in order to maximize the number of original items included in the scale without adversely affecting the fit indices. Three errors covariances were added in this model in order to improve the fitness. This analysis showed that the
Figure 6. The Final Model of Communication Perceptions
model had goodness of fit indices, $X^2 (164, N=485) = 519.93$, $p<.05$; CFI = .91; GFI = .90; RMSEA = .07. The result of this analysis showed the current scale had construct validity. Cronbach's coefficient alphas (reliability) of the scales for accommodation, nonaccommodation, and respectfully avoidant communication were .88, .81, and .79. This reliable and valid scale included the following items: B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B20, B21 (accommodation items), B7, B8, B9, B10 (nonaccommodation items), B11, B12, B13, B14, B15, B19, B24, and B25 (respectfully avoidant communication items) (see appendix B). The intercorrelation of accommodation and nonaccommodation was -.32 ($p < .001$), the intercorrelation of accommodation and respectfully avoidant communication was .26 ($p < .001$), and the intercorrelation of nonaccommodation and respectfully avoidant communication was .15 ($p < .001$).

**Questionnaire structure and translation**

The questionnaire included three parts. Part A included the introduction (The purpose of this survey is to help us learn how workers communicate with each other. Thanks for your willingness to help us learn about how workers communicate in the workplace) and demographic items. Also in part A, participants were asked to think about conversations with elderly peers. If participants had no experience with elderly peers, they were asked to think about conversations with elderly managers or supervisors. If they had no experience with elderly coworkers, they were asked to recall communication experiences with young peers. If they had no work experiences, they were asked to recall communication experiences with an elderly family member.

This section, which provided choices for participants, made data collection efficient. However, this long description might distract participants' attention on the group that
they chose. Therefore, the item “please circle the group that you choose (please circle one)
followed the description in order to make sure that participants recalled the
communication experience with the targeted group. Part B included the nineteen items of
GPIC, seven new items (two accommodation items, two nonaccommodation items, and
three respectfully avoidant communication items) and two questions about the amount of
contact with both young and elderly populations. Part C contained twenty-eight items of
the modified self-construal scale. Back-translation (Werner & Campbell, 1970), a
common and powerful strategy in intercultural research, was used to produce and check
for translation accuracy. I translated the questionnaire from English to Chinese. A
bilingual person fluent in both Chinese and English translated the questionnaire back
from Chinese to English. Then they compared, discussed, and adjusted the translation
until there were no significant differences between the two English versions. After the
translation process, the new Chinese version of the questionnaire was checked by four
Chinese graduate students who spoke both English and Chinese. I discussed and modified
the Chinese version according to their suggestions. The final version was distributed in
Suzhou, China.

Data Analyses

Scale Assessment

The Mean and Covariance Structures (MACS) analyses were used to confirm the
dimensions of two scales in China and the United states: GPIC and the modified
self-construal scale (Little, 1997).
Variable Analysis

MANOVA was used to test the hypotheses 1-6, which predict that intergenerational relationship and culture influence dependent variables: accommodation, nonaccommodation, and avoidance. Furthermore, another MANVOA test was used to examine the hypotheses 7-9, which predict that power can affect inter- or intragenerational communication behaviors. Finally, three multiple regressions were used to test the research question 1 and 2, which ask whether self-construals and culture can affect intergenerational communication.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The current study was executed in order to further our understanding of people’s intergenerational communication experiences in organizational settings. In addition, this study examined the effects of self-construals and power on intergenerational communications in both Chinese and American cultures. This chapter, which presents results of this study, will describe the following issues: 1) missing data and normality of data, 2) mean and covariance structure analyses, 3) MANOVA analyses, and 4) regression analyses.

Missing Data and Normality of Data

Prior to statistical analyses, the data were cleaned by checking missing data and normality of distributions. Missing data were not a problem in this study because .08% of cases involved on missing value. Normality of variables was checked by examining the scores of kurtosis and skewness. The scores of skewness and kurtosis of the variables (Table 1) were less than 3.00 and did not violate the assumption of normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

Mean and Covariance Structure (MACS) Analyses

In this study, a three factor structure model of communication perceptions (accommodation, non-accommodation, and respectfully avoidant communication) and a two factor structure model of self-construals (interdependent and independent) were compared between American and Chinese participants. Mean and Covariance Structure (MACS) analyses were computed to test the equality of factor structure loading across two cultural groups.
Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accommodation</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>-.65</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-accommodation</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>-.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant communication</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>-.55</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>-.60</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependent</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three types of two-group model analyses were conducted to establish the metric invariance for the self-construals scale. In the first test, the measurement model with two factors was tested with freely estimated model parameters across the two groups. The produced fit indices showed good fit for the baseline model, $X^2 (162, N=485) = 332.14$, $p<.01$; $CFI = .90$; $GFI = .91$; $RMSEA = .08$, indicating that general structure of the weak model was tenable. The test of the weak model with the equality constraints of the factor loadings across the groups also demonstrated good fit, $X^2 (162, N=485) = 350.12$, $p<.01$; $CFI = .90$; $GFI = .91$; $RMSEA = .07$. The strong model that included the equality constraints of both factor loadings and intercepts showed a good fit of indices, $X^2 (162, N=485) = 415.04$, $p<.05$; $CFI = .92$; $GFI = .91$; $RMSEA = .07$. Three models have the similar fit indices. Therefore, the factor structure of self-construals was equivalent in the two cultures and the scale measures in the same concept in both cultures.
Three types of two-group model analyses were conducted to establish the metric invariance for the communication perception scale. In the first test, the measurement model with three factors was tested with freely estimated model parameters across the two groups. The produced fit indices showed the good fit of the baseline model, \(X^2 (347, N=485) = 704.14, p<.01; \text{CFI} = .90; \text{GFI} = .90; \text{RMSEA} = .07\), indicating that general structure of the model was tenable. The test of the weak model with the equality constraints of the factor loadings across the groups demonstrated good fit, \(X^2 (347, N=485) = 743.13, p<.01; \text{CFI} = .90; \text{GFI} = .90; \text{RMSEA} = .07\). The strong model that included the equality constraints of factor loadings and intercepts showed good fit indices, \(X^2 (162, N=485) = 887.56, p<.05; \text{CFI} = .90; \text{GFI} = .91; \text{RMSEA} = .07\). Three models have the similar fit indices. Therefore, the factor structure of self-construals was equivalent in the two cultures and the scale can be assured in the same concept in both cultures.

**MANOVA Analyses**

Among the participants (\(N = 485\)), 142 chose elderly peers as the targeted group, 121 chose elderly supervisors as the targeted group, and 222 chose young peers as the targeted group. The original data (\(N = 485\)) were separated into two sets: intergenerational communication without power influences (\(n= 364\)) and intergenerational communication with position power influences (\(n= 263\)). Separated multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were used for the two data sets.

**MANOVA of Cultures and Targeted Age Groups**

For the first data set, a 2 (targeted age groups: elderly peers vs. young peers) x 2 (cultures: United States vs. China) MANOVA was conducted in order to test hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The dependent variables were accommodation, nonaccommodation, and
respectfully avoidant communication. The results of the MANOVA analysis showed that Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices (Box’s M= 43.84, F= 2.40, df1 = 18.00, df2 = 290913.66, p< .01) and Levene’s Tests of Equality of Error Variances for young workers’ perceptions of accommodation, F (3, 360) = 3.37, p = .02, and nonaccommodation, F (3, 360) = 6.55, p < .01, were significant. The results violated the assumption of using a MANOVA. However, if the sample sizes of groups are approximately equal or less than 150% of the other group and the data are normal, violations are not serious (Hair et al., 2006). The cell sizes of the targeted group were 142 elderly peers (63 American and 79 Chinese) and 222 young peers (93 American and 129 Chinese). The violations could be not ignored because some cell sizes were more than 150% of the other cells. I randomly selected 63 participants from elderly Chinese peers, young Chinese, and young American peers in order to have an equal sample size.

The main effect of culture was significant, F (3, 246) = 3.52, p= .02, and the effect size was small, Partial Eta Squared = .04. The main effect of targeted groups was not significant, F (3, 246) = .82, p=.49, Partial Eta Squared = .01. Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were not supported. No interaction was found. To explain culture effects, the ANOVA results of communication perceptions measures were presented.

**Accommodation.** There was no culture-level effect for young workers’ perceptions of accommodation from their peers, F (1, 246) = 1.35, p = .25, Partial Eta Squared = .01. Hypothesis 4 was not supported. Young Chinese workers did not perceive a lower level of accommodation from their peers than young American workers.

**Nonaccommodation.** There was no culture-level effect for young workers’ perceptions of nonaccommodation from coworkers, F (1, 246) = .14, p = .71, Partial Eta Squared < .01.
Hypothesis 5 was not supported. Young Chinese workers did not perceive a higher level of nonaccommodation from their peers than young American workers.

*Respectfully avoidant communication.* There was a culture-level effect for using respectfully avoidant communication, $F (3, 358) = 9.06$, $p = .01$, Partial Eta Squared $< .03$. Young Chinese workers ($M = 3.60$) used more respectfully avoidant communication than their American counterparts ($M = 3.39$). Hypothesis 6 was partially supported. Culture affected all types of commutation, not only intergenerational communication.

**MANOVA of Power and Culture**

A 2 (targeted power groups: elderly peers vs. elderly supervisors) x 2 (cultures: United States vs. China) MANOVA was conducted for the second data set in order to test hypotheses 7, 8, and 9. The dependent variables were accommodation, nonaccommodation, and respectfully avoidant communication. The results of the MANOVA analysis showed that the Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices (Box’s $M = 30.43$, $F = 1.65$, $df1 = 18.00$, $df2 = 182903.37$, $p = .04$) and the Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances for young workers’ perceptions of nonaccommodation from others were significant, $F (3, 259) = 3.27$, $p = .002$. The results violated the assumption of using a MANOVA. However, the cell sizes of the two targeted groups: 142 elderly peers (American = 63 and Chinese = 79) and 121 elderly supervisors (American = 49, Chinese = 72). Since these cell sizes were approximately equal with no cell exceeding another by 150%; the violations could be ignored. The main effect of culture was significant, $F (3, 257) = 3.33$, $p = .02$, Partial Eta Squared $= .05$. The main effect of targeted groups was significant, $F (3, 257) = 4.08$, $p = .01$, Partial Eta Squared $= .05$. No interaction was found.
Thus, targeted groups and cultures independently influenced communication perceptions in organizational settings.

**Accommodation.** The targeted group effect was not significant for perceptions of accommodation from elderly peers and supervisors, $F (3, 257) = .02, p = .89$, Partial Eta Squared < .01. There was no culture-level effect for perceptions of accommodation from elderly peers and supervisor, $F (3, 257) = .63, p = .43$, Partial Eta Squared = .002. Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

**Nonaccommodation.** The targeted group effect was significant for perceptions of nonaccommodation from elderly peers and supervisors, $F (3, 257) = 7.28, p = .01$, Partial Eta Squared = .03. Hypothesis 8 was supported. Young workers' perceptions of nonaccommodation from elderly peers ($M= 2.68$) were significantly lower than from elderly supervisors ($M= 2.99$). There was no culture-level effect for young workers' perception of nonaccommodation from others, $F (3, 358) = .75, p = .39$, Partial Eta Squared < .01.

**Respectfully avoidant communication.** A targeted group effect emerged for the respectfully avoidant communication measure, $F (3, 257) = 6.97, p = .01$, Partial Eta Squared = .03. Hypothesis 9 was supported. Young workers used more respectfully avoidant communication with their elderly supervisors ($M= 3.74$) than elderly peers ($M= 3.53$). There was a culture-level effect for using respectfully avoidant communication, $F (3, 257) = 9.06, p = .01$, Partial Eta Squared = .03. Young Chinese workers ($M= 3.72$) used more respectful yet avoidant communication with their elderly peers and supervisors than their American counterparts ($M= 3.50$).
MANOVA of Cultures and Self-Construals

MANOVA was conducted in order to answer the first research question. The independent variable was culture and the dependent variables were interdependent and independent self-construals. The results of the MANOVA analysis showed that Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices (Box’s M= 12.30, F= 4.10, df1= 3.00, df2=1.96, p< .01) was significant. The Levene’s Tests of Equality of Error Variances for interdependent, F (1, 483) = .58, p < .48, and independent self-construals, F (1, 483) = 2.28, p < .13, were not significant. The results violated the assumption of using a MANOVA. However, if the sample sizes of groups are approximately equal, violations are not serious (Hair et al., 2006). The main effect of culture was significant, F (2, 482) =86.65, p< .01, Partial Eta Squared = .26. The culture effect was significant for interdependent self-construal, F (1, 482) = 74.44, p < .01, Partial Eta Squared = .13. The culture effect was significant for independent self-construal, F (1, 482) = 69.12, p <.01, Partial Eta Squared = .13. Young Chinese workers usually have a higher level of interdependent self-construal (M = 5.09) than their American counterpart (M = 4.46), while young American workers usually have a higher level of independent self-construal (M = 5.80) their Chinese counterpart (M = 5.18)

Regression Analyses

Three sequential multiple regression procedures were used to analyze the data in order to answer the second and third research questions. The intercorrelations of the six variables, which were examined in the regression models, appear in Table 2. I produced graphs in order to examine the linearity of the relationships among key variables. The graphs showed no apparent curvilinear relationship between the selected variables.
Furthermore, I produced graphs of unstandardized residuals and unstandardized predicted values to determine if there was homoscedasticity. The graph seems to be randomly distributed. Therefore it has not violated the assumption of homoscedasticity. The variance of errors is not a function of the independent variables.

Table 2

_Correlations of Main Variables_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>.046</td>
<td>.149**</td>
<td>-.365**</td>
<td>.354**</td>
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<td>.090*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.067</td>
<td>.370**</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: culture: American = 0, Chinese = 1

**Accommodation**

In the first sequential multiple regression model, independent and interdependent self-construals were entered in the first step to examine the influence of self-construals on young workers' perceptions of accommodation from others. Culture was entered in the second step in order to examine whether it explained the remaining variances in the
dependent variable. The two targeted group variables, elderly supervisors and young peers, were entered in the third step.

The first model of young workers’ perception of accommodation from others was significant, F (2, 482) = 26.47, p < .01. The combination of interdependent and independent self-construals can explain 9.5% of variance of the dependent variable, accommodation (R² = .095). Interdependent (β = .24, t= 5.49, p< .01) and independent self-construals (β = .20, t= 4.59, p< .01) were significant (see Table 4.13). Interdependent self-construal has a larger influence on young workers’ perceptions of accommodation from others than independent self-construal. The rule of magnitude of effects (β) is: a small effect is from .05 to .10, a moderate effect is from .11 to .25, and large effect is more than .25 (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Thus, all these effects were moderate. The second model of young workers’ perceptions of accommodation from others was significant, F (3, 481) =18.81, p < .01. The combination of culture, interdependent, and independent self-construals can explain 9.9% of variance (R² = .099). In the second model, culture (β = -.09, t= -1.80, p= .09) had no significant effect on the dependent variable (see Table 3). R² change of the second model was not significant (p < .07).

In the models, the independent variables could be explained separately because multicollinearity was not an issue. Multicollinearity exists when variables are highly correlated. When variables are highly correlated in a multiple regression analysis it is difficult to identify the single contribution of every variable in predicting the dependent variable because the highly correlated variables are predicting the same variance in the dependent variable. Multicollinearity exists when Tolerance is below .10 and VIF is
greater than 10. In this case, the scores of Tolerance ranged from .74 to 1 and VIF less than 1.36; therefore, there was not a multicollinearity problem.

Table 3.

_Coefficients of Accommodation_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
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<td>.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 (Constant)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture</td>
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<td>.08</td>
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</table>

_Nonaccommodation_

A two-step sequential multiple regression was used to examine how independent, interdependent self-construals, culture, elderly supervisors, and young peer, influence young workers’ perceptions of nonaccommodation from others.
The first model of young workers' perception of nonaccommodation from others was not significant, $F(2, 482) = 1.52, p = .22$. The combination of independent and interdependent self-construals had no significant effect on the nonaccommodation dependent variable in the first model. When only culture was entered in the first model, the model was also not significant, $F(1, 483) = 1.00, p = .32$. The second model of nonaccommodation was significant, $F(3, 481) = 2.63, p < .05$. The combination of culture, interdependent, and independent self-construals can explain 2% of variance ($R^2 = .02$).

Table 4

*Coefficients of Nonaccommodation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
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<tr>
<td>independent</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultures</td>
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<td>.09</td>
<td>.12</td>
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</table>
In the second model, the factors: interdependent self-construal, \((\beta = -.11, t = -2.34, p = .02)\), and culture \((\beta = .12, t = 2.19, p = .03)\) had significantly effects on the dependent variable. Independent self-construal \((\beta = .09, t = 1.74, p = .09)\) had no significant effect on the dependent variable (see Table 4). Because the second model statistically controls the effects of all the independent variables, the culture and interdependent self-construal variables were significant. \(R^2\) change of the second model was significant \((p = .03)\). The scores of tolerance ranged from .74 to 1 and VIF were less than 1.36; therefore, there was no multicollinearity problem.

Table 5

**Coefficients of Respectfully Avoidant Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
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</table>
Respectfully Avoidant Communication

A three-step sequential multiple regression was used for examining how the independent variables influence young workers’ perception of using respectfully avoidant communication. The first model of perception of respectfully avoidant communication was significant, $F(2, 482) = 40.52, p < .01$. The first model can explain 14.4% of variance of the dependent variable ($R^2 = .144$). The variables: interdependent ($\beta = .37, t = 8.75, p < .01$) and independent self-construals ($\beta = .08, t = 1.95, p = .05$) resulted in a significant effect on the dependent variable. The second model of respectfully avoidant communication was significant, $F(3, 481) = 27.67, p < .001$, but culture had no significant effects on the dependent variable (see Table 5). $R^2$ change of the second model was not significant ($p = .18$). The scores of tolerance ranged from .72 to 1.00 and VIF were less than 2; therefore, there was no multicollinearity problem.

Summary of Hypotheses and Research Questions

H1, H2, and H3, which were related to young worker’s perceptions of intra and intergenerational communication in workplaces, were not supported. There were no significant differences on young workers’ perceptions of accommodation, nonaccommodation, and respectfully avoidant communication from elderly peers and from young peers.

H4 and H5, which focused on the cultural influences on perceptions of accommodation and nonaccommodation from elderly peers, were not supported. H6 was partially supported. Young Chinese workers generally used more respectful yet avoidant communication with their peers than young American workers.
Of the three hypotheses related to the power issue, only H7 was not supported. There was no significant difference in young workers’ perceptions of accommodation from elderly peers and from elderly supervisors. H8 and H9 were generally supported. Young workers perceived a higher level of nonaccommodation from elderly managers or supervisors than from elderly peers. Young workers used more respectful yet avoidant communication with elderly managers than with their elderly peers. The findings, answered the first research question, showed that there is a relationship between culture and self-construals.

The results of regression tests answered the second and third research questions. Young workers’ interdependent self-construal can predict all types of communication perceptions in intergenerational communication in workplaces. Young workers’ independent self-construal can predict their perceptions of accommodation and respectfully avoidant communication. Culture was significant for nonaccommodation, but not significant for accommodation and respectfully avoidant communication. Interdependent and independent self-construals had a bigger contribution to young workers’ perception of accommodative and avoidant communication than culture.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The current study was conducted to further our understanding of people’s intergenerational communication experiences in workplaces. This chapter will discuss the results which are related to several issues: young workers’ general perceptions of intergenerational communication and the influences of culture, power, and self-construals on intergenerational communication perceptions in workplaces. The chapter concludes with a general dissuasion of limitations of the current study and directions of future research.

General Perception of Intergenerational Communication

The present findings did not support H1, H2, and H3. The statistical analyses showed no significant differences between young workers’ communication perceptions of elderly and young peers. The current study did not confirm the findings of previous studies. McCann and Giles (2006, 2007) found that young workers perceived more nonaccommodation from elderly peers than from young peers and used more respectfully avoidant communication with elderly peers than with young peers. Their studies did not find the significant differences on accommodation, which is similar to the finding of the current study. These findings suggested young workers perceived communication with elderly peers as more problematic than their communication with other young workers. Furthermore, the current findings were inconsistent with the basic assumption of CAT, which is that people treat the outgroups differently from the ingroups; therefore, negative stereotypes of aging lead younger individuals to use different communication strategies with elderly people (Cappella, 1981; Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986).
There are two possible reasons for the contradiction. First, the research methods used in this study may have been problematic. The long description of how to choose a targeted group on the questionnaire might have confused the participants and then they might have randomly selected the answers instead of basing judgments on real perceptions of interactions with the chosen targeted group. Such a random selection may have resulted in no significant differences between young workers’ communication perceptions of young peers and perceptions of elderly peers. However, the significant effects of power indicate that participants did not randomly choose their answers. The instructions apparently enabled participants to differentiate between peers and supervisors.

A second possibility is that age is not an important factor in organizational communication. People in workplaces may not consider age as a foundational standard to divide groups. Young workers might view their elderly peers as part of their ingroup and treat them similarly to their young peers. Furthermore, young workers might consider other factors which are more important than age as a standard to construct groups. The current study, which found power has significant influences on young workers’ communication perceptions, supports this assumption. Therefore, the current findings did not contradict the assumption of CAT, that people treat the outgroups differently from ingroups. Power is more important than age in defining groups in workplaces. The power issue will be discussed more later.

**Culture and Communication Perceptions**

H4 and H5 were not supported and H6 was partially supported. Young Chinese workers generally used more respectfully avoidant communication with their peers than
young American workers. The majority of pervious research across Eastern and Western cultures found differences in young people’s perceptions in intergenerational relationships but not in intragenerational relationships between Eastern and Western cultures. Young Asians’ perceptions of intergenerational communication may be more negative than their Western counterparts (e.g., Giles et al., 2001; McCann, et al., 2003; Noels, et al., 2001; Williams et al., 1997). However, the current findings indicate that culture influences young workers’ communication perceptions in all relationships, not only in intergenerational relationships. An explanation for why the current findings were different from the majority of research on intergenerational relationships may be that the age difference is not vital in organizational settings.

This explanation is supported by two previous studies in organizational communication. McCann and Giles (2006) found that Thai bankers perceived both young and elderly workers as less accommodating and more nonaccommodating than did their American counterparts in general. McCann and Giles (2007) found that young Americans reported receiving greater accommodation from others than did Thais in general. These studies found that culture, not age, can influence communication perceptions in organizations. Asian cultures, such as China and Thailand, and Western cultures, such as the United States, are different. In Western cultures, people are valued for their uniqueness and independence (Johnson, 1985; Sampson, 1985, 1988, 1989); thus, they usually communicate directly with others. Differently from Western cultures, Eastern cultures value maintaining interpersonal relationships (Bond, 1986; Hsu, 1985; Sass, 1988); thus, they express themselves indirectly in order to have a harmonious relationship.
Therefore, young Chinese workers generally used more respectfully avoidant communication with others than did young American workers.

Power and Communication Perceptions

H7 was not supported but H8 and H9 were supported. The results showed that young workers perceived a higher level of nonaccommodation, but not accommodation, from their elderly supervisors than from their elderly peers. Young workers used more respectful yet avoidant communication with elderly supervisors than with their elderly peers in general. It seems that the position power influence is consistent across cultures. McCann and Giles (2006) reported the same findings that young bankers from both Thailand and the United States reported that their communication with supervisors were more problematic than their interaction with their peers. Young bankers perceived more nonaccommodation from managers than from peers and they reported using more respectfully avoidant communication when talking with elderly managers than with peers.

The findings are consistent with CAT. Power is an important issue of CAT research on intergenerational communication (French & Raven, 1959) and organizational communication (Hathaway, 1992). Office communication is essentially about power: who has it, who wants it and who can control its transfer at any given moment (Kenig, 2000). CAT, which was developed from social identity theory, suggests that individuals are likely to display ingroup favoritism when they view themselves as a part of one group (Scott, 2007; Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Ingroup members usually prefer their ingroups to be relatively positively assessed, as this contributes to a positive social identity. Therefore, ingroup members usually communicate with their group members
with a positive attitude, but communicate with their outgroup members with a negative attitude. Organizations are hierarchical. Based on position power differences, managers and non-managers can be considered two groups. According to CAT, it is reasonable to expect that non-manager-level individuals communicate with their peers differently than with managers.

Furthermore, the findings can be explained by social exchange theory, which is a theory based on the exchange of rewards and costs to assess the values of outcomes for an individual (Befu, 1977). Power is associated with social exchanges (Huston 1983; McDonald 1981; Thibaut & Kelley 1959). Supervisors have more power and resources. For example, they can decide who will be promoted. Young workers use certain behaviors, such as accommodation and respectfully avoidant communication, to maintain the balance of exchange relationships with their supervisors. Therefore, young workers in both China and the United States should use more respectfully avoidant communication with elderly managers than with their elderly peers and perceive a higher level of nonaccommodation from their elderly supervisors than from their elderly peers.

Self-Construals, Culture and Intergenerational Communication

This section answers Q1, Q2 and Q3 and discusses the influence of self-construals and culture on young workers’ communication perceptions. The findings of MANOVA of cultures and self-construals indicate that young Chinese reported a higher level of interdependent self-construal and a lower level of independent self-construal than young American. Furthermore, the current study found that young workers’ interdependent self-construal can predict their perceptions of accommodation, nonaccommodation, and respectfully avoidant communication in intergenerational communication in workplaces.
Young workers’ independent self-construal can explain their perceptions of accommodation and respectfully avoidant communication. Culture had a significant effect on perceptions of nonaccommodation from others, but no significant effects on perceptions of accommodation from others and perceptions of using respectfully avoidant communication.

**Accommodation**

The results of regression analyses showed the significant effects of interdependent and independent self-construals on young workers’ perception of accommodation from others. The higher individuals’ scores of interdependent and independent self-construals, the more accommodation from their co-workers they perceived. Interdependent self-construal apparently has a larger effect on perceptions of accommodation from coworkers than independent self-construal. The findings of these studies indicate that individuals with high scores at one or both self-construals, who have a strong sense of self, perceive a higher level of accommodation because they have a strong sense of self-identity. This type of individual is able to have an integrated and consistent identity; therefore, they have a positive attitude toward others and they perceive a high level of accommodation from others. On the other hand, individuals with a low score on both self-construals, who have a weak sense of self, perceive a lower level of accommodation because they have an ambivalent self-identity. They are neither connected to others nor unique. Therefore they have a passive attitude toward others and then perceive a low level of accommodation from others as rewards. The current findings indicate maintaining a unified identity is important for having better communication in
workplaces, which can improve the quality of organizational relationships. Harmonious organizational relationships can help workers fulfill organizational goals.

Furthermore, the findings showed that the two self-construal variables were orthogonal. Singelis (1994) argued that both dimensions of self exist within every person. Kim et al. (1996) suggested that the two self-construals should be considered together because it can avoid dichotomizing people as either independent or interdependent. The current study supported this position because some individuals had high scores on both self-construals, while others had low scores on both self-construals.

Culture did not significantly influence young workers’ perceptions of accommodation from others. Therefore, culture has less effect on the perceptions of accommodation than self-construals. It seems personal level factor can provide a better explanation of young workers’ perception of accommodation from others than culture. The findings confirm the findings of Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, and Kimberlie’s (2001) study, which indicated that individuals’ self-construals explained conflict management styles better than did cultural backgrounds.

Nonaccommodation

The combination of culture, interdependent, and independent self-construals can help us understand young workers’ perceptions of nonaccommodation from others. In the first regression model, interdependent and independent self-construals were not significant. But they were significant with culture in the second model. When culture was entered in the first step, it was not significant. Therefore, examining the simultaneous effects of three variables is central for understanding young workers’ perceptions of nonaccommodation from others. Furthermore, culture is as important as interdependent
self-construal for explaining young workers’ perceptions of nonaccommodation from others.

The findings of the current study showed that the higher level of interdependent self-construal young workers had, the less nonaccommodation from others they perceived. Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggested that relationships are important for interdependent self-construal. For people with an interdependent self-construal, maintaining relationships is more important than being unique (Bond, 1986; Sass, 1988). Their initial orientation for accommodation is to maintain their relationships with important others. In the CAT model, initial orientation is an “individual’s ongoing tendency to perceive encounters in either intergroup or interpersonal terms, or both, as well as to converge or diverge psychologically” (Gallois et al., 1995, p. 137). Therefore, people with an interdependent self-construal usually do not use nonaccommodation in interpersonal interactions in order to maintain relationships. Accordingly, their relational partners use positive communication as rewards; then people with an interdependent self-construal perceived less nonaccommodation from their relational partners. These reactions were consistent with social exchange theory (Katherine, 2005). Social behavior is an exchange procedure. When giving something to others, individuals usually try to get something from them. When getting something from others, people are under pressure to give something to them as rewards (Befu, 1977). People with a high level of interdependent self-construal care more about others and their relationships. Then others perceive their positive intentions and show less nonaccommodation as rewards. Independent self-construal was not significant for young workers’ perceptions of nonaccommodation from others. It indicates the independent self-construal may not be
important for young workers' perceptions of nonaccommodation from others. The possible explanation is that people with an independent self-construal are usually less concerned about their relationships with others; thus, they are less sensitive to perceptions of others' nonaccommodative behaviors.

Respectfully Avoidant Communication

Both interdependent and independent self-construals have significant effects on young workers' perceptions of respectfully avoidant communication. Interdependent self-construal has the largest effect on the dependent variable. The core of interdependent self-construal is the importance of interpersonal relationships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1995). People with an interdependent self-construal consider maintaining interpersonal relationships as their initial orientation, which is the motivation to accommodate or nonaccommodate in CAT (Gallois et al., 1995). Accordingly, people with an interdependent self-construal use respectfully avoidant communication in order to have a harmonious relationship if they have conflicts with relational others.

Besides CAT, face-negotiation theory provides a useful explanation for the connection between the interdependent self-construal and respectfully avoidant communication (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Face-negotiation theory explains why and how cultural and personal factors influence conflict management and communication. There are three types of face concerns: self-face, other-face, and mutual-face in face-negotiation theory. Self-face refers to individuals' concerns about their own images, other-face refers to individuals' thoughts of others' images, and mutual-face refers to individuals' concerns about both sides' images and their relationships (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Face-negotiation theory assumes that cultures and self-construals are associated with face
concerns and face concerns relate to conflict management styles. Independent self-construal is positively related to self-face concern, while interdependent self-construal is positively associated with other-/mutual-face concern. In face-negotiation theory, face-concerns are initial orientations. Individuals with an interdependent self-construal care about others’ face and their relationships and use it as initial orientations. Therefore, interdependent self-construal is associated with obliging or avoiding conflict style, which try to avoid conflicts (Pruitt & Carnevale; 1993; Rahim, 1983). Research on face-negotiation theory found that people with an interdependent self-construal usually use avoiding conflict styles across a number of cultures (e.g., Gao, 1998; Oetzel et al., 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1994, Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). All these previous studies are consistent with the findings of the current study that people with an interdependent self-construal usually use respectfully avoidant communication, which is similar to avoiding conflict styles.

The independent self-construal has a positive influence on young workers’ use of respectfully avoidant communication. The effect is relatively small, compared to the effect of interdependent self-construal. But if people with an independent self-construal are only concerned about themselves, they won’t use respectfully avoidant communication. The specific conditions of workplaces can help us understand the contradiction. An organization usually has a common goal, which is consistent or inconsistent with individuals’ goals. From a scientific management perspective, organizational goals are more significant than personal goals. Organizational goals are usually embed in organizational tasks. Therefore, even young workers with the highest level of independent self-construal are concerned about organizational goals. Accordingly,
they use respectfully avoidant communication in order to fulfill organizational goals and tasks but not to maintain others’ face or interpersonal relationships. For example, individuals with an independent self-construal have projects in their hand and they cannot work these out without others’ help. They discuss the project and try to avoid conflict with others in order to fulfill the task effectively and successfully. Culture was not significant for the models of young workers’ use of respectfully avoidant communication. Culture is not as important as self-construals for explaining the dependent variable.

In conclusion, the findings of the current study indicate that young workers’ self-construals can predict their communication perceptions in workplaces. Furthermore, self-construals are more important for explaining communication perceptions than culture.

Summary

By examining the intergenerational communication perceptions of young Chinese and American workers, I have enhanced understanding of intergenerational relationships. Four interesting and important conclusions are discussed.

First, power is the primary influence on communication perceptions in workplaces. Various groups, such as age and power groups, exist in workplaces because organizations are inherently intergroup in nature. According to CAT, people usually favor their ingroup members and treat the outgroups differently. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that young workers communicate with their own group members, such as the same age members and non-managers, differently from the outgroup members, such as the elderly peers and managers. A number of studies supported these assumptions (e.g., Gardner & Jones, 1999; Giles et al., 2003; McCann & Giles, 2006, 2007; Williams & Giles, 1996). However, no studies have compared the factors of age and power. The findings of the
current study indicate that power is more important for understanding communication perceptions than age in workplaces. In the current study, there were no significant differences between perceptions of young and elderly peers’ communication behaviors, while significant differences appeared perceptions of power groups: elderly peers and elderly supervisors. This finding is understandable because power is the central feature of organizational life.

In workplaces, power usually comes with age. Supervisors are typically older than subordinates because they spend a long time working before being promoted. Therefore, it is difficult to identify how each factor influences communication perceptions because the two factors are combined. The current study found a significant difference between young workers’ perception of communication with elderly peers and elderly supervisors. Young workers reported perceiving a higher level of non-accommodation from their elderly supervisors than from their elderly peers. Young workers used more respectful yet avoidant communication with elderly supervisors or managers than with their elderly peers. Furthermore, there were no significant differences between young workers’ perceptions of communication with elderly and young peers. The findings indicate that power, not age, can influence young workers’ communication perceptions.

Second, the findings explain the relationship between culture and self-construals. Markus and Kitayama (1991) conceptualized two types of self-construals, independent and interdependent based on the differences between Western and Eastern cultures. The belief of the separateness of distinct persons in Western cultures is the foundation of the independent construal (Johnson, 1985; Sampson, 1985, 1988, 1989). The interdependent self-construal is related to the importance of various interpersonal relationships in Eastern
cultures (Bond, 1986; Sass, 1988). Although self-construals were originally established to explain cultural differences, research has produced mixed results on the relationship between cultures and self-construals (Li, Zhang, Bhatt, & Yum, 2006). Most researchers found that Eastern cultures are characterized by the interdependent self-construal, while Western cultures are characterized by the independent self-construal (e.g., Fernandez, et al., 2005; Kashima et al., 1995; Lay et al., 1998; Park & Guan, 2007; Trafimow et al., 1991; Wang, 2001). Other researchers found that there was no significant difference in self-construals between Eastern and Western cultures (e.g., Brockner & Chen, 1996; Triandis et al., 1986; Li, 2002). The current study supports the original theory, that people from the Eastern culture, China, have a higher level of interdependent self-construal, while people from the Western culture, the USA, have a higher level of independent self-construal. Therefore, self-construals can help account for cultural differences.

Although cultures influence self-construals, they also have distinctive effects on communication perceptions. In the three sequential regression analyses, culture, interdependent, and independent self-construals explained different parts of the dependent variables’ variance. Furthermore, self-construals, especially interdependent self-construal, had larger effects on young workers’ communication perceptions than culture. Moreover, the combination of culture and self-construals can explain young workers’ communication perceptions, especially perceptions of nonaccommodation, better than any of them separately. In summary, culture influences self-construals, but is also different from self-construal. Combining effects of both culture and self-construal can help us understand individuals’ communication perceptions.
Third, culture influences communication perceptions across age groups. There were significant differences on young workers’ communication perceptions between Chinese and American cultures across intra and intergenerational communication. The findings are only partially consistent with most previous research across Eastern and Western cultures, which found that young Asians’ communication perceptions on intergenerational relationships were more negative than young Westerners (e.g., Giles et al., 2001; McCann, et al., 2003; Noels, et al., 2001; Williams et al., 1997). The possible explanation for the current findings is that culture, not age, is vital for organizational communication. The assumption is supported by two previous studies in organizational communication across Thailand and American cultures (McCann & Giles, 2006; 2007).

Fourth, the concept and scales of self-construals are complex. As mentioned earlier, the current version of self-construal scales only included fourteen items, which was 50% of the original scales. This might support Levine, Bresnahan, Park, Lapinski, & Lee et al. (2003) conclusion that both independent and interdependent self-construal scales are multidimensional. Other researchers had similar suggestions. Several researchers proposed three dimensions of self-construal: individualistic, collective, and relational (Cross et al., 2000; Kashima et al., 1995; Kashima & Hardie, 2000). Fiske (2002) recommended four types of interdependent self-construals and approximately ten types of independent self-construals. However, many researchers suggested that there were two types of self-construals: independent and interdependent (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Leung & Kim, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1995; Singelis, 1994). Therefore, the dimensions and concept of self-construals are ambiguous and imprecise.
It seems that researchers should not examine self-construals in their studies because of the ambiguity of self-construals. However, researchers have examined self-construals for almost twenty years, and they are still examining self-construals because self-construals have important influences on human beings’ cognition and behaviors (Chang, 2009; Cross et al., 2000; Cross & Morris, 2003; Downie et al., 2006; Kim et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2008; Harvey & Omarzu, 1997; Holland et al., 2004; Oetzel, 1998; Yeh, 2002; Utz, 2004; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995, 1998). The current study confirmed that self-construals had a significant influence on young workers’ communication perceptions, although there were only fourteen items in the scale.

The findings of previous and current studies indicate that the effects of self-construals are influential, although the concepts are not clear and the scales are not precise. Thus, to give up examining the effects of self-construals is not wise. However, before conducting new studies to examine the self-construal influences, more attention to the concepts and scales is necessary.

Limitations of the Study

By examining intergenerational communication perceptions in both China and the United States, the current study had several meaningful and interesting findings. However, the current study is not without its contextual and methodological limitations, which are discussed in this section.

First, the two targeted age groups may not be clearly identified. Workers aged 18 may not consider workers aged 34 as their ingroup members; workers aged 34 may not consider workers aged 50 as their outgroup members; and people may not consider workers aged 50 as elderly people. The current study did not find any significant
differences in young workers’ communication perceptions of elderly and young peers. The unclear classification of age groups perhaps accounts for the failure to support the first three hypotheses.

Second, the current study used a student sample to represent young American workers and a combination sample, including students and young workers, to represent young Chinese workers. Although it seems reasonable to use the current sample to represent the general population of young workers in both countries, the sample may create a problem for generalizing to the larger population. It may hurt external validity of the current study. Future research should use only young workers in both countries to avoid the problem.

Third, the cultures chosen for the current study may be too diverse. In the United States, the contemporary culture involves a variety of cultures. The history of the United States not only included a number of European immigrants, but also American Indians, Hispanic Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans. A diversity of cultures still exists in the United States; therefore, it is hard to say that the American culture is one culture. The sample used in the current study included European Americans, American Indians, Hispanic Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans; therefore, it does not represent a single and unified culture. In China, there are 56 ethnic groups and Han is the majority group. Almost all young workers and students in the current study were from Han, which includes both northern and southern Han cultures. The Southern Chinese have significant differences from the Northern Chinese. Lin (1938) identified the difference between Southern and Northern Chinese cultures:
For on the one hand we have the northern Chinese, acclimatized to simple thinking and hard living, tall and stalwart, hale, hearty and humorous, onion-eating and fun-loving, children of nature, who are in every way more Mongolic and more conservative than the conglomeration of people near Shanghai and who suggest nothing of their loss of racial vigour. They are the Honan boxers, the Shantung bandits and the imperial brigands who have furnished China with all the native imperial dynasties... Down the south-east coast, south of the Yangtse, one meets a different type, inured to ease and culture and sophistication, mentally developed but physically retrograde, loving their poetry and their comforts, ...shrewd in business, gifted in belles-lettres, and cowardly in war....(p.18)

Accordingly the Northern Chinese culture is more masculine while Southern Chinese culture is more feminine (Hofstede, 1980). Because young workers and students in the current study are from different areas in China, the Chinese sample may not be considered as a unified cultural sample. Therefore, more detailed classification of cultures is needed in the future studies.

Fourth, the instruments used in the current study may still have a Western bias, although they were translated into Chinese carefully and back-translation was used to produce and check for translation accuracy. Scales developed from non-Western researchers will help us understand communication perceptions better.

Fifth, a majority of American participants had a part-time job while most of Chinese participants had a full-time job. Possibly job status accounts for the observed differences between these groups
Direction for Future Research and Conclusions

This study, guided by CAT, examined how age, self-construals, power, and culture influence intergenerational communications. The findings showed no significant differences among young workers’ perceptions of communication between with elderly peers and with young peers across cultures. Young Chinese workers used more respectful yet avoidant communication with peers than their American counterparts, although there were no significant differences on young workers’ perceptions of accommodation and nonaccommodation from peers between Chinese and American cultures. Furthermore, young workers reported more nonaccommodation from their elderly supervisors than from their elderly peers, but they felt that they had the obligation to use more respectful yet avoidant communication with elderly supervisors than with their elderly peers.

Finally, self-construals can influence young workers’ communication perceptions. Culture had a significant effect on perceptions of nonaccommodation from others, but no significant influences on perceptions of accommodation from others and perceptions of using respectfully avoidant communication. Therefore, self-construals play a more influential role in young workers’ communication perceptions than culture.

Relatively little research has investigated intergenerational communication in workplaces and even less has examined personal factors that affect communication, such as self-construals. The current findings provide implications for future organizational and intergenerational research. Moreover, the findings can help both elderly and young workers have a better understanding of communication in workplaces.

While the findings of this study provide a strong baseline for examining intergenerational communication in workplaces, results must also be viewed in terms of
opportunities for future research. Three possible directions of future research were discussed in this section.

First, investigations of how power influences young workers' communication perceptions of young supervisors are warranted. Research that investigates interactions between young workers and young supervisors will improve the understanding of young workers' communication in organizational settings. Second, elderly workers' perceptions of intergenerational communication should be examined. For most researchers, collecting data from young workers is convenient because young workers, such as students and friends of students, are easily found. However, intergenerational communication researchers cannot ignore one group and make conclusions by examining only the other group. Furthermore, the population of elder workers is increasing dramatically across cultures. Hence, investigating elderly workers' intergenerational perceptions in workplaces is essential. Third, researchers should use other research methods for examining intergenerational communication in workplaces. The intergenerational communication in the real world is so complex that researchers cannot have a comprehensive understanding based on the findings of a questionnaire. Interview, observation, and case study may provide profound knowledge for examining intergenerational communication in workplaces. Based on the findings from these future qualitative studies, perhaps better instruments can be developed.

In conclusion, this study demonstrated the influence of self-construals and power on intergenerational communications in both Chinese and American cultures. Moreover, the current study enhances our understanding of young workers' communication perceptions in organizational settings across Chinese and American cultures.
APPENDIX A:
THE ELEVEN PROPOSITIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 A speaker A is predisposed to have an intergroup orientation toward interacting with a partner B, and be motivated toward nonaccommodation with B’s perceived group characteristics when: (1) there is a salient negative intergroup history between A’s and B’s ingroups, (2) A identifies strongly with one or few ingroups and perceives this ingroup’s vitality to be low or makes insecure social comparisons with B’s group, or (3) A has had an earlier negative interaction with another member of B’s group whom A perceived as typical of B’s group. However, A is predisposed to have an intergroup orientation but be motivated to accommodate to B’s perceived group characteristics when: (1) A is a member of a subordinate with which A identifies weakly, perceives the group’s vitality to be low and intergroup boundaries to be soft, and perceivers intergroup relations to be legitimate and stable, (2) A is a member of a dominant ingroup with high subjective vitality and perceives intergroup relations as legitimate and stable, or (3) A has had an earlier positive interaction with a member of B’s group whom A perceived as typical of B’s group (p. 138).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A speaker A is predisposed to have an interpersonal orientation toward interacting with a partner B and be motivated to accommodate to B's perceived personal characteristics when: (1) A and B share a positive interpersonal history and (2) A identifies weakly with salient ingroups or there no salient ingroups. However, A is predisposed to have an interpersonal orientation but be motivated toward nonaccommodation with B’s perceived personal characteristics when A and B share a negative interpersonal relationship history.

When A perceives that personal identities are salient in the interaction, A’s psychological accommodation is directed at the perceived personal characteristics of B; whereas, when A perceives that social identities are salient in the interaction, A’s psychological accommodation is directed at the perceived group characteristics of B.

When A has an intergroup orientation, A is likely to perceive narrower, more constraining norms for the behavior of outgroup members, and wider, more tolerant norms for ingroup behavior; whereas, when A has an interpersonal orientation, A is likely to perceive similar norms for ingroup and outgroup members.

When affective motives predominate for A in the interaction, and A feel a need for assimilation, A is likely to accommodate psychologically even at
the cost of facilitating comprehension; however, when affective motives
predominate for A but A feels a need for differentiation, A is likely to
nonaccommodate psychologically, even at the cost of facilitating
comprehension.

6 When cognitive motives predominate for A in the interaction, and A feels
that comprehension would be facilitated through increasing similarity with
B, A is likely to accommodate psychologically, even at the cost of identity
maintenance or development; however, when cognitive motives
predominate for A and A feels that comprehension would be facilitated
through differentiating from B, A is likely to nonaccommodate
psychologically, even at the cost of identity maintenance or development.

7 In a status-stressing situation, A is likely to accommodate psychologically
to the sociolinguistic markers and behavior of the dominant group.

8 When a speaker B accommodates to a receiver A, A is likely to interpret
the behavior and evaluate B positively, especially when: (1) A attributes
B’s behavior internally to benevolent intent or (2) B is a member of A’s
ingroup.

9 B nonaccommodates to a receiver A, A is likely to interpret the behavior and
atively, especially when: (1) A attributes B’s behavior internally to
When A evaluates B positively in an interaction, A is likely to have positive intentions toward (1) interpersonal interactions with B as an individual or as an ingroup member; (2) interactions with other members of B’s group when A considers B to be a typical member of this group; however, when A evaluates B’s behavior positively, A is likely to maintain A’s original intentions toward B’s group when A considers B to be an atypical group member.

When A evaluates B negatively in an interaction, A is likely to have negative intentions toward (1) interpersonal interactions with B as an individual; (2) interactions with other members of B’s group, especially when A considers B to be a typical member of this group; however, when A evaluates B’s behavior negatively, A is likely to maintain A’s original intentions toward B’s group when A considers B to be an atypical group member (pp. 138-142).
APPENDIX B:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction: The purpose of this survey is to help us learn how workers communicate with each other. Thanks for your willingness to help us learn about how workers communicate in the workplace.

Part A: Please indicate your choice by circling the answer

1. Have you ever been hired to perform a job on regular basis by an employer?  
   1. Yes 2. No

2. How many years have you been working? ___.

3. Do you hold a job now?  
   1. Yes 2. No

4. This job is:  
   1. Full-time 2. Part-time

5. How old are you? ________.

6. You are:  
   1. Female 2. Male

7. Your cultural background  

Please think about conversations you have had in the workplace with workers aged 50 and older who are **not managers or supervisors**. Circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement or disagreement that each behavior is typical of your conversations with them.

If you have no experience with elderly peers, think about conversations you have had in the workplace with workers aged 50 and older who are **managers or supervisors**. Circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement or disagreement that each behavior is typical of your conversations with them.

If you have no experience with elderly coworkers, think about conversations you have had in the workplace with workers aged 18-34 who are **not managers or supervisors**. Circle the response that indicates your degree of agreement or disagreement that each behavior is typical of your conversations with them.

If you have no work experience, please use your communication experience with your elderly family member.

8. Please circle the group that you choose (please circle one)

**Part B**

**Based on the group that you choose please indicate how much you agree with each statement by circling one of the seven numbers provided, one being “strongly disagree” and seven being “strongly agree.”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. They were supportive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. They were helpful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. They gave useful advice.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. They complimented me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. They had kind words for me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. They were considerate.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. They ordered me to do thing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. They acted superior to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. They talked as if they knew more than me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. They spoke as if they were better than me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I spoke in a respectful manner.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I felt obliged to be polite.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I spoke in a polite way.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I did not criticize them</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I waited until asked to speak.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I avoided certain topics.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I remained silent if my opinion conflicted with theirs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I held back my opinions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I restrained myself from arguing with them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. They comforted me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. They were nice to me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. They did not support my plans or ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. They criticized me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
24. I tried not to embarrass them. 1 2 3 4 5
25. I avoided conflicts with them. 1 2 3 4 5
26. I expressed my opinion indirectly. 1 2 3 4 5
27. How often do you talk with older (aged 50 or more) workers? (Please circle one)
   1. Never  2. rarely  3. sometimes  4. frequently  5. very frequently
28. How often do you talk with younger (aged 18-34) workers? (Please circle one)
   1. Never  2. rarely  3. sometimes  4. frequently  5. very frequently

Part C

Please indicate how much you agree with each statement by circling one of the seven numbers provided, one being “strongly disagree” and seven being “strongly agree.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I should be judged on my own merit.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I voice my opinions in group discussions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel uncomfortable disagreeing with my group.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I conceal my negative emotions so I won’t cause unhappiness among the members of my group.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I prefer to be self-reliant rather than dependent on others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I act as a unique person, separate from others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I don’t like depending on others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My relationships with those in my group are more important than my personal accomplishments.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My happiness depends on the happiness of those in my group.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I often consider how I can be helpful to specific others in my group.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I take responsibility for my own actions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. It is important for me to act as an independent person.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>6 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. I have an opinion about most things:  
I know what I like and I know what I don’t like.  

15. I enjoy being unique and different from others.  

16. I don’t change my opinions in conformity with those of the majority.  

17. Speaking up in a work/task group is not a problem for me.  

18. Having a lively imagination is important to me.  

19. Understanding myself is a major goal in my life.  

20. I enjoy being admired for my unique qualities.  

21. I am careful to maintain harmony in my group.  

22. When with my group, I watch my words so I won’t offend anyone.  

23. I would sacrifice my self-interests for the benefit of my group.  

24. I try to meet the demands of my group,  
even if it means controlling my own desires.  

25. It is important to consult close friends and  
get their ideas before making decisions.  

26. I should take into consideration my parents’ advice  
when making education and career plans.  

27. I act as fellow group members prefer I act.  

28. The security of being an accepted member of a group is very  
important to me  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
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Thanks for your help!
Questionnaire (Chinese)
问卷

介绍: 这个调查的目的是帮助我们了解在工作中人与人的交流。谢谢您能够帮助我们做这个调查。

Part A: 请您圈出您选择的最佳答案（只能选一个）。

1. 您是否工作过？
   1. 是的  2. 不是

2. 您工作多少年了？

3. 您现在是否有一份工作？
   1. 是的  2. 不是

4. 这个工作是
   1. 全职  2. 兼职

5. 您的年龄是

6. 您是
   1. 女性  2. 男性

7. 请在下列选项中圈出您的教育程度

   1. 中学  2. 大专  3. 本科  4. 硕士  5. 博士  6. 其他

7. 您是否现在还在上学（包括职业培训，研究生教育，普通高校教育，夜校，成人高考，和自学考试）？
   1. 是的  2. 不是

Part B

请回忆50岁以上的经理或上司的同事，并且根据您与他们相处的经历，在以下每一句话圈出一个数字来表示您的意见。如果您没有与50岁以上的同事相处过，您可以回忆您与40岁以上的上司相处的经验，并且回答以上问题。如果您没有与50岁以上的人工作过，您可以回忆您与年纪大的家人相处的经验，回答以下问题。如果您没有工作过，您可以回忆您与年纪大的家人相处的经验，回答以下问题。

8. 您所回忆的人群是（请您圈出您选择的最佳答案）（只能选一个）
1. 年纪大的同事  2. 年纪大的上司  3. 年纪轻的同事  4. 年纪大的家人

根据您选的人群，请您在您同意的数字上画圈（1是“强烈不同意”，5是“强烈同意”）只能选一个

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>强烈不同意</th>
<th>强烈同意</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 他们支持我。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 他们是有帮助的</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 他们给了我有用的建议。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 他们称赞我</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 他们对我说亲切的话。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. 他们考虑周到。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. 他们命令我做事</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. 它们表现得好像我的上级一样。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 他们以比我懂得多的样子和我说话。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 他们以比我优越的样子和我说话。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. 我以一种尊重人的态度谈话。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. 我感觉到有责任表现得有礼貌。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. 我以一种有礼貌的方式说话。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. 我不批评他们。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. 我等到让他们发言我才说话。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. 我会避免一些话题。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. 如果我的意见与他们不同，我会保持沉默。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. 我隐瞒我的意见。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. 我控制自己不和他们争论。</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. 他们安慰我。 1 2 3 4 5
21. 他们对我很好。 1 2 3 4 5
22. 他们不支持我的计划或主意。 1 2 3 4 5
23. 他们批评我。 1 2 3 4 5
24. 我尽量不让他们尴尬。 1 2 3 4 5
25. 我尽量避免与他们有矛盾。 1 2 3 4 5
26. 我不直接表达我的观点。 1 2 3 4 5

27. 您在工作中与年纪大的同事（年龄50岁以上）接触的机会是：
1. 从不  2. 很少  3. 有时  4. 经常  5. 非常

28. 您在工作中与年纪轻的同事（年龄18-34岁）接触的机会是：
1. 从不  2. 很少  3. 有时  4. 经常  5. 非常

**Part c**
请您在您同意的数字上划圈（1 是“强烈不同意”， 7 是“强烈同意”）（只能选一个）。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>强烈不同意</th>
<th>强烈同意</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

1. 别人应该以我的优点或价值评判我。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. 在集体讨论的时候，我发表我的观点。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. 当我和我的集体意见不同时，我会觉得不安。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. 我不想让我团体中的其他人不开心，因此我隐藏我不同的意见。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. 我的个人认同和独立对我非常重要。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. 我喜欢依靠自己而不是别人。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. 我是一个独断独行的人。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. 我不喜欢依靠别人。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. 我与团体中他人的关系比我的个人成就更重要。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. 我所属的团体快乐我就快乐。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. 我常常考虑如何帮助我所属的团体中某些人。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. 我对我的行为负责。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. 对我来说，做为一个独立的人很重要。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. 我对大部分事情都有自己的观点。 我知道我喜欢什么和不喜欢什么 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. 我乐意与众不同。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. 我不会为迎合多数人而改变自己的观点。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. 在一个工作或合作团体中发表意见对我来说不是个问题。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. 有一个活跃的想象力对我来说很重要。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. 了解自己是我生命中一个主要的目的。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. 我很高兴别人赞美我独特的品质。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. 我很仔细地维护我所属的团体的和谐。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. 当我与要求一起时，我会注意我的语言以免冒犯了别人。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. 我愿意为我所属的团体牺牲我个人的利益。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. 我努力去满足我所属团体的要求，即使这需要控制我自己的欲望。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25. 在做决定前，咨询密友并且知道他们的看法是重要的。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. 在做教育和事业的决定时，我应该考虑我父母的建议。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27. 我所属团体的成员希望我做的我就做。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. 成为一个被接受的团体成员这种安全感对我来说很重要。 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

谢谢你的帮助！
APPENDIX C:
IRB APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.

Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 29032309
PROJECT TITLE: An Across-Culture Study of Intergenerational Communication in Organizational Settings
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 04/01/09 to 03/31/10
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation or Thesis
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Yan Guan
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Arts & Letters
DEPARTMENT: Speech Communication
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 04/20/09 to 04/19/10

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair
REFERENCES

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