Multiple Stereotypes of Elderly and Young Adults: A Comparison of Structure and Evaluations

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Following Schmidt and Boland's (1986) method, college student informants sorted a trait set into 1 or more groups with reference to elderly or young adults. Analysis of these data confirmed the existence of multiple stereotypes of both age groups but showed little similarity between stereotypes of the elderly and the young. Other informants made attitude, age, and typicality judgments of persons representing either the elderly or young adult stereotypes. Results showed that attitudes varied with the stereotype activated and were similar for analogous elderly and young adult stereotypes. Results also suggested that young adults do not view negative stereotypes as more typical of the elderly than positive ones; however, they believe the negative stereotypes are more characteristic of the old-old than are the positive and see positive stereotypes as more typical of young adults than negative ones.

Recent studies (Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; Brewer & Lui, 1984; Schmidt & Boland, 1986) have demonstrated the existence of multiple stereotypes of the elderly. By showing that the superordinate category older adult subsumes several positive and negative subcategories, these studies represent a significant contribution to understanding perceptions of the elderly. However, several questions regarding the nature of these multiple stereotypes of the elderly and their relationship to attitudes toward the elderly remain. First, how consistent are these stereotypes across groups (Schmidt & Boland, 1986)? Second, are there analogous stereotypes for individuals in other age groups, for example, young adults (Crockett & Hummert, 1987)? Third, because general attitudes toward the elderly are more negative than those toward the young (Crockett & Hummert, 1987; Kite & Johnson, 1988; Kogan, 1979; Lutsky, 1980), are the negative subcategories viewed as more typical of the elderly than are the positive subcategories? Finally, to what extent do the subcategories correspond to particular ages, rather than general types, of elderly individuals (Schmidt & Boland, 1986)? We investigated these questions in two studies.

Study 1

Multiple Stereotypes of the Elderly

Brewer et al. (1981) first suggested that people do not hold a single stereotype of the elderly as a group and that they have

several stereotypes for different types of elderly individuals. The researchers tested this proposition by defining three category types: grandmother, a nurturing, family-oriented woman; elder statesman, a distinguished, conservative man; and senior citizen, an inactive, isolated person of either sex. They then chose photographs of elderly individuals to represent each of the categories. As they predicted, college students (a) sorted the pictures into the three expected types; (b) attributed traits to the photographs in a way consistent with the three types; and (c) spent significantly less time studying category-consistent information about the photographs than studying category-inconsistent information, although they recalled both types of information equally well. Brewer and Lui (1984) confirmed these findings with a group of elderly participants. These elderly participants also clearly distinguished among the categories, but they grouped the photographs into significantly more categories than did the college students, suggesting that the elderly participants had more complex representations of the elderly than had the younger adults.

Schmidt and Boland (1986) demonstrated that young adults also have more representations of the elderly than the three initially conceptualized by Brewer et al. (1981). The two researchers asked one group of undergraduates to generate all the terms, both positive and negative, that they associated with the elderly. This exercise yielded a list of 99 traits. Schmidt and Boland then asked a second group to sort the traits, placing together traits that could describe the same elderly person. A cluster analysis of the groupings produced three high-level clusters: a general cluster of mostly physical traits applying to all older people, a cluster of 32 positive traits, and a cluster of 59 negative traits. Within the latter two clusters, 12 middle-level categories, 4 positive categories (John Wayne conservative, liberal matriarch or patriarch, perfect grandparent, and sage), and 8 negative categories (despondent, mildly impaired, vulnerable, severely impaired, shrew or curmudgeon, recluse, nosy neighbor, and bag lady or vagrant) were identified. As Schmidt and Boland

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pointed out, however, the degree to which other groups of young and elderly adults share these stereotypes of the elderly is unclear.

Also unclear is whether there are analogous categories of young adults corresponding to these positive and negative categories of elderly adults. O'Sullivan and Durso (1984) identified six subtypes associated with a college student population: jocks, Greeks, independents, brains, freaks, and Jesus freaks. However, no previous studies have attempted to define stereotypes of the general young adult population. As Crockett and Hummert (1987) noted in their review of the literature on perceptions of the elderly, however, Schmidt and Boland's (1986) results raise the question of "whether there are continuities in the content of subcategories from one age group to another, with the subcategories at one age providing a framework that also underlies the subcategories of later ages" (p. 237).

The two research questions suggested by this literature were investigated in Study 1. Are the multiple stereotypes of the elderly reported in the Schmidt and Boland (1986) study shared by other groups of subjects? Do subjects hold multiple stereotypes of young adults analogous to those of the elderly?

Method

Schmidt and Boland's (1986) list of 99 traits includes 5 psychological traits (e.g., retired) as well as 10 physical traits (e.g., wrinkled hands) that could only apply to the elderly. To emphasize the general psychological traits associated with the subcategories of the elderly and to allow for comparison of the subcategories generated to those that apply to another age group, these traits were eliminated from the set used in the study. Two groups of informants participated in a trait-sorting task to identify the age-related stereotypes. Within each group, the informants focused on either the elderly or young adults to avoid the biasing effect of using age as a within-subject factor (Crockett & Hummert, 1987; Kite & Johnson, 1988; Kogan, 1979; Lutsky, 1980).

Informants. Two groups of 37 informants each participated in the trait-sorting task. All informants were undergraduate students enrolled in a basic communication course and received course credit for their participation.

Materials. A set of 84 traits, drawn from the 99 traits of the elderly identified by Schmidt and Boland (1986), was used in this study. To use the same set of traits for both elderly and young adult sorting tasks, the 8 physical traits and 5 psychological traits that could apply only to elderly people were removed from Schmidt and Boland's list. These included gray-haired, wrinkled skin, wears false teeth, hard of hearing, poor eyesight, balding, gnarled hands, shaky hands, retired, senile, frustrated about mandatory retirement, jealous of young, and lives life through their children. The remaining 2 specific physical traits, short and fat, were also removed. In addition, the traits liberal and conservative were substituted for Schmidt and Boland's Democrat and Republican, and the trait dependent on family was shortened to dependent.

Procedures. Informants were given a deck of 84 cards, each listing one trait. The cards were ordered randomly for each informant. Informants were instructed to put all traits that would be found in the same older person (or young adult) into one group. They were told that they could use as many groups as they wished. If they decided that a trait belonged in more than one group, they were to place it in all of the appropriate groups. If they decided that a trait did not belong in any of the other groups, they were to place it in a miscellaneous pile. Informants were allowed to take as long as they wished to complete the sorting and to rearrange their groupings at any time. Instructions emphasized that there were no right or wrong divisions of the traits and that the researcher was interested in the participants' opinions about the appropriate groupings.

Results

In sorting the traits, informants produced more groups for young adults (M = 7.62, range = 3–15) than for elderly adults (M = 6.00, range = 3–11). A t test indicated that this difference was significant, t(72) = 2.91, p < .005, suggesting that informants had more complex representations for young adults than for the elderly.

The data from the sorting task were placed into two 84×84 similarity matrixes, one for the elderly groupings and one for the young adult groupings. The similarity measure was the number of times the same two traits were placed in the same group. A trait sorted into a miscellaneous category was scored as if it were grouped separately from all other traits, including others in the miscellaneous category (Schmidt & Boland, 1986). These similarity measures were then transformed into squared Euclidean distances (Green, 1978) between each pair of traits. The resulting matrixes were analyzed by hierarchical cluster analysis with the average linkage between groups as the criterion (Green, 1978; Norusis, 1985). With this criterion, traits were clustered so that the average distance between all pairs of traits in a cluster was smaller than the average distance from each trait in the cluster to traits in other clusters. This method is preferable to other linkage criteria because information about all pairs of distances, not just the nearest or farthest (Norusis, 1985), is considered in forming clusters.

Stereotypes of the elderly. The cluster analysis of the elderly data produced two high-level clusters, one of 31 positive traits and one of 53 negative traits, and 10 middle-level clusters, 3 positive and 7 negative. Only clusters with more than 2 traits were considered as providing enough information to describe a subcategory. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, 5 of these clusters approximated Schmidt and Boland's (1986) subcategories: perfect grandparent, John Wayne conservative, severely impaired, despondent, and shrew/curmudgeon. Although none of these clusters consisted of traits exactly matching those in the corresponding Schmidt and Boland clusters, each contained a substantial proportion of those traits. The two subcategories that were most closely duplicated were perfect grandparent, with 15 of the 19 original traits appearing in the new cluster, and severely impaired, with 7 of the 9 original traits in the new cluster. Two additional clusters, vulnerable and liberal matriarch/patriarch contained only 1 or 2 traits matching those in the Schmidt and Boland subcategories, and the recluse cluster contained no traits matching the originals; however, these clusters conceptually replicated the corresponding Schmidt and Boland subcategories. That is, the same labels used to describe the Schmidt and Boland subcategories also seemed to fit these trait clusters. Four Schmidt and Boland subcategories did not emerge as separate types in this analysis: bag lady/vagrant, mildly impaired, nosy neighbor, and sage. However, 2 new types appeared, which were labeled inflexible senior citizen and self-centered. Finally, the trait busybody, which was grouped with the negative traits by Schmidt and Boland's informants, was placed with the positive ones by the informants in this study.

Stereotypes of young adults. The cluster analysis of the young





Figure 2. Tree diagram of positive trait clusters for elderly adults. (Stereotypic traits are between dashed lines, and stereotype labels are in the margin.)

adults' data produced 2 high-level clusters of 24 positive and 60 negative traits, with 13 middle-level clusters, 4 positive and 9 negative. These clusters, with tentative category labels, are presented in Figures 3 and 4. As Figure 3 shows, several traits from the positive elderly clusters emerged in the negative clusters for young adults: conservative, distinguished-looking, wealthy, busybody, tough, doesn't like handouts, and tells stories about the past. In addition, 7 traits were grouped singly or with 1 other trait, suggesting that informants did not see them as applying to a particular type of young adult: poor driver, afraid of crime,

suspicious of strangers, doesn't like handouts, tough, capable, and useful.

Only three young adult subcategories seemed to describe younger versions of the elderly subcategories. The characteristics of the activist (Figure 4) corresponded closely to those of the liberal matriarch/patriarch (Figure 2), and the characteristics of the invalid (Figure 3) corresponded to those of the severely impaired elderly (Figure 1); finally, the characteristics of the young nosy neighbor (Figure 3) were much like those of Schmidt and Boland's (1986) subtype, although a nosy neigh-

Figure 1 (opposite). Tree diagram of negative trait clusters for elderly adults. (Stereotypic traits are between dashed lines, and stereotype labels are in the margin.)







bor subtype was not associated with the elderly in this study. No further one-to-one correspondence between the subcategories of the two age groups was evident.

1-4

Discussion

Stability of elderly subcategories. The results of Study 1 supported the validity of several of Schmidt and Boland's (1986) subcategories of the elderly. Informants in this study produced trait clusters corresponding to 8 of the 12 subcategories (perfect grandparent, liberal matriarch/patriarch, John Wayne conservative, recluse, severely impaired, vulnerable, shrew/curmudgeon, and despondent). However, the number of traits that exactly matched those in the corresponding Schmidt and Boland subcategories varied. For instance, the recluse cluster contained no traits from the Schmidt and Boland recluse cluster, yet both clusters described a recluse. In contrast, 15 of the 19 traits in the perfect grandparent cluster matched those in the corresponding Schmidt and Boland cluster.

Apparently, informants had many of the same stereotypes of

Figure 3 (opposite). Tree diagram of negative trait clusters for young adults. (Stereotypic traits are between dashed lines, and stereotype labels are in the margin.)

elderly adults as did Schmidt and Boland's (1986) informants, but the participants in this study described the stereotypes in slightly different terms. Regional or other differences in vocabulary may have contributed to these sampling differences, although little research has examined the stability of the traits used to describe stereotypes apart from the issue of the stability of the stereotypes per se.

The informants also introduced two new subcategories, inflexible senior citizen and self-centered elderly, and had no clusters corresponding to four of Schmidt and Boland's (1986) types (bag lady/vagrant, mildly impaired, nosy neighbor, and sage). Whether the new types constitute stable categories remains to be verified in future research.

These results further demonstrate the existence of multiple stereotypes of the elderly as outlined in Brewer et al. (1981) and Schmidt and Boland (1986). The results also suggest that some of these stereotypes are more widely shared across individuals than are other stereotypes. Finally, the results indicate that although the relationship of a particular trait to a particular stereotype may vary across informants, the conceptual validity of the stereotype remains intact. This pattern of results is consistent with the cognitive perspective on stereotypes outlined by Ashmore and Del Boca (1981). They pointed out that stereotypes, although representing shared beliefs at a cultural level, actually exist in individual cognitive representations. This view suggests that, as found in this study, certain stereotypes may be more consistently defined across individuals than others and that specific traits may be more strongly associated with a particular stereotype by some individuals than by others.

Comparison of young adult and elderly subcategories. Although this study demonstrates that college students have multiple stereotypes of young adults, it also shows that there is little similarity between their stereotypes of the young and of the elderly. First, informants sorted the traits into significantly more groups for young adults than for the elderly. This result is consistent with the general principle that individuals have more complex representations of their own group than of other groups (Linville, 1982). Second, only two young adult subcategories existed in one-to-one correspondence with elderly categories, (a) activist and liberal matriarch or patriarch and (b) invalid and severely impaired. Third, some traits that were grouped in positive subcategories in judgments of the elderly, for example, wealthy and distinguished-looking, were placed in negative subcategories in judgments of young adults. Finally, some traits that college students easily incorporated into their conceptions of the elderly were not associated with any of the young adult subcategories, for example, tough and doesn't like handouts.

These results document the existence of age-related stereotypes, rather than general ones. The same set of traits, when applied to young adults, was grouped differently than when the traits were applied to elderly adults. Because the proportion of positive to negative categories was about the same for both age groups, the results suggest that the elderly are not perceived more negatively than are the young. However, this result may have been a function of the trait set used; a deeper understanding of the multiple stereotypes for young adults requires that a trait-generation task be used to elicit traits of young adults as Schmidt and Boland (1986) did for the elderly.

Study 2

Study 2 extended the investigation of stereotypes of elderly and young adults by examining attitudes toward, typicality judgments about, and age associations with the subcategories identified in Study 1. Schmidt and Boland (1986) assessed general attitudes toward each category type identified in their research. Their participants read 12 descriptions of individuals representing each of the types and evaluated each individual on a 25-item, 7-point semantic differential scale (Kogan & Wallach, 1961). The 4 positive types yielded evaluations above the midpoint of the scale, and the 8 negative types yielded evaluations below the midpoint. Likewise, we expected that the positive and negative types of both elderly and young adults would elicit a similar pattern of evaluation.

In the case of the analogous subtypes of elderly and young adults, for example, severely impaired and invalid, the literature suggested that participants' attitudes would reflect only the valence of the subcategory, not the age of the individual. Linville (1982) found that college-age men made more extreme judgments, both positive and negative, of elderly men than they did of similar young adult men, a phenomenon she termed the complexity-extremity effect; however, most research has found that age has little effect on subjects' evaluations of similar young and elderly people (cf. Bell & Stanfield, 1973a, 1973b; Braithwaite, 1986; Connor, Walsh, Litzelman, & Alvarez, 1978; Locke-Connor & Walsh, 1980; Puckett, Petty, Cacioppo, & Fisher, 1983). When age effects have been found, they have favored the older individual as often as the younger (cf. Crockett, Press, & Osterkamp, 1977; Kogan & Shelton, 1962; Sherman, Gold, & Sherman, 1978).

As suggested earlier, when attitudes toward specific elderly individuals have been compared with attitudes toward similar young adults, no evidence of an age bias against the elderly has been found. In contrast, comparisons of general attitudes toward the elderly and young adults have shown that the elderly are evaluated more negatively than are the young (Crockett & Hummert, 1987; Kite & Johnson, 1988; Kogan, 1979; Lutsky, 1980). Various explanations have been offered for these conflicting findings (cf. Kogan, 1979; Lutsky, 1980), but the existence of multiple categories for the elderly offers the most promising theoretical account (Crockett & Hummert, 1987). When asked to evaluate specific elderly individuals, informants may depend on the subcategory activated by the information about that individual and produce positive or negative evaluations, as appropriate. On the other hand, when asked for evaluations of the elderly in general, informants might consider the aggregate of these categories, producing more negative than positive evaluations, perhaps reflecting the ratio of subcategories they believe exist in the general population. If this is the case, then informants might also view the negative subcategories as more typical of the elderly than the positive subcategories.

Another possibility exists, however, that would also lead to more negative evaluations of the elderly in general than of particular elderly individuals. If the more positive subcategories are associated with the young-old, whereas the more negative subcategories are associated with the old-old (Neugarten, 1975), informants' evaluations may be related to the age range activated by the stimulus information or survey item. When asked to respond to items about the elderly in general, an informant may envision a prototypical elderly individual, who is very likely to be in the old-old age range. If the negative subcategories are associated more often with the old-old than are the positive subcategories, the informant's attention may be focused on these negative subcategories, leading to the informant's expressing negative attitudes toward the elderly in general. On the other hand, the individuating information provided in a person perception study may activate a particular subcategory directly, with age associations being a part of the subcategory rather than the means of activating the subcategory. Attitude would then be a function of the valence associated with the subcategory.

As outlined earlier, the relationship between age and typicality judgments of elderly stereotypes and the valence of the stereotypes should help clarify the nature of those stereotypes. This relationship should also be informative regarding the young adult stereotypes. Just as the traits in Study 1 were associated differently with young and elderly adults, the relationship between age associations, typicality judgments, and valence of young adult stereotypes may differ from that for elderly stereotypes. These issues were examined in Study 2.

Method

With the subtypes of elderly and young adults identified in Study 1, in Study 2 informants were asked to choose a specific age range for an individual of each subtype, to indicate how typical this individual is of the general category of elderly or young adults, and to evaluate each individual on a semantic differential attitude scale. Two groups of informants were used, the first focusing on the elderly and the second on young adults.

Informants. Informants were 81 undergraduate students enrolled in basic communication courses and received course credit for their participation. Forty-four informants responded to questions about the elderly subcategories, and 37 responded to questions about the young adult subcategories. Data from 1 subject in the latter group were excluded from all analyses because of a high number of missing values.

Materials. Traits identified with each elderly and young adult subcategory, without labels, were used to describe the individuals to be evaluated. For instance, the following sentence was used to present the inflexible senior citizen type: "Think of an older adult who finds it difficult to change, is set in their ways, and old-fashioned." Each description was followed by three assessment scales. The first scale asked the informant to circle the age group in which they would be most likely to find the person. For the elderly subcategories, the informant chose among seven age ranges: 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, and 85 and older. For the young adult subcategories, the informant chose among five age ranges: 18-21, 22-25, 26-29, 30-33, and 34-37. The second asked the informant to judge how typical this person was of older adults (or young adults) in general. Informants indicated their judgment on a 7-point semantic differential scale ranging from not typical (1) to typical (7). The third assessed attitudes toward the individual by asking the informant to evaluate the individual on a 25-item, 7-point semantic differential scale (Kogan & Wallach, 1961), the same attitude assessment task used by Schmidt and Boland (1986).1

Procedures. Informants received a packet of materials presenting either the 13 young adult or 10 elderly subcategory descriptions and assessment scales. Descriptions of subcategories were ordered randomly in the packets. Informants were asked to form a picture in their minds of the person described and then to respond to the three scales. They were to repeat this procedure for each person described in their packets. Instructions emphasized that there were no right or wrong responses to the scale items and that the researcher was interested in their opinions about the persons described.

Results

Attitudes toward the subcategories. Informants' responses to scale items in which the positive trait appeared first were recoded prior to analysis so that the valence of the ratings would be the same for all items (1 = negative and 7 = positive). For each subject, attitude ratings were computed as the mean of the responses to the items on the attitude assessment scale. One item on the semantic differential scale was inadvertently omitted from the stimulus materials for two of the elderly stereotypes, so the mean attitude scores for both elderly and young adult subcategories were computed from only 24 items.

Attitude ratings of the elderly and young adult subcategories were analyzed in single-factor repeated measures multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAS), with stereotype (10 and 13, respectively) as the factor. Both analyses showed a significant main effect of stereotype on the attitude ratings, F(9, 35) =80.27, p < .0005, for the elderly and F(12, 24) = 37.15, p < .0005.0005, for the young. As shown in Table 1, multiple comparisons for repeated measures (Winer, 1971), using Fisher's modified least-significant-difference approach, showed that informants exhibited significantly more positive attitudes toward the positive subcategories of both age groups than they did toward the negative subcategories, as expected. Significant differences were also identified within the positive and negative groupings, suggesting that informants' attitudes are closely tied to the specific subcategory activated rather than to the general positive or negative valence of the subcategory. These results conform to the general pattern of attitudes toward the elderly subcategories reported in Schmidt and Boland (1986).

Attitudes toward analogous elderly and young adult subcategories. As noted earlier, two young adult subcategories directly corresponded to elderly subcategories, invalid to severely impaired and activist to liberal matriarch/patriarch. Attitude ratings for these pairs of categories were analyzed in a 2×2 (Age \times Stereotype) repeated measures MANOVA, with age as a betweensubjects factor.

The analysis identified a significant main effect of stereotype, F(1, 78) = 229.41, p < .0005. No significant main effect was found for age, F(1, 78) = .005, nor for the Age × Stereotype interaction, F(1, 78) = 2.05. Informants' attitudes reflected only the valence of the subcategories, not the age group with which they were associated. Mean attitude ratings for the negative subcategories of elderly severely impaired (M = 2.72) and young invalid (M = 2.88) were significantly lower than those for the positive subcategories of elderly liberal matriarch/patriarch (M = 5.29) and young activist (M = 5.13).

¹ The scale included the following trait pairs: successful-unsuccessful, demanding-undemanding, bad-good, attractive-unattractive, valuable-worthless, weak-strong, frustrating-rewarding, sad-happy, calm-irritable, dependent-independent, warm-cold, active-passive, slow-fast, sick-healthy, concluding-beginning, dominant-submissive, clean-dirty, hostile-friendly, wise-foolish, strict-lenient, interestingboring, relaxed-tense, humble-proud, selfish-unselfish, and broadnarrow.

Elderly stereotype	Attitude (M)	Young adult stereotype	Attitude (M)
Severely impaired	2.72	Underclass	2.69,
Shrew/curmudgeon	2.79	Redneck	2.85
Despondent	2.94	Invalid	2.88
Self-centered	3.13	Loner	3.23
Vulnerable	3.24	Homeless	3.26.
Inflexible senior citizen	4.14	Mentally handicapped	3.65
Recluse	4.16	Small-town homebody	3.85.
John Wayne conservative	4.60.	Country clubber	4.06r
Liberal matriarch/patriarch	5.29	Nosy neighbor	4.10c
Perfect grandparent	5.90.	Activist	5.13.
	- · · · · g	Mature young professional	5.58
		Athlete/extrovert	5.72 _b
		Perfect friend	5.76

 Table 1

 Attitudes Toward Elderly and Young Adult Stereotypes

Note. Means in each column with different subscripts differ significantly at p < .05. Higher means represent more positive attitudes (7-point scale).

Typicality judgments of the elderly stereotypes. Informants' judgments of the typicality of the elderly stereotypes were analyzed in a single-factor repeated measures MANOVA, with stereotype (10) as the factor (because of random missing data. N =37). The MANOVA revealed a significant main effect of stereotype on the typicality judgments, F(9, 324) = 9.85, p < .0005. However, multiple comparisons for repeated measures revealed that this significant effect was unrelated to the valence of the stereotype (Table 2). For instance, the typicality judgment for the recluse (M = 4.81), a negative stereotype, did not differ significantly from judgments for the perfect grandparent (M =4.84) or the John Wayne conservative (M = 4.73). In addition, negative stereotypes were judged both most typical (inflexible senior citizen, M = 5.30) and least typical (self-centered elderly, M = 3.35) of the elderly. Finally, the three positive stereotypes, which all received mean typicality judgments above the midpoint of the scale, were viewed as significantly more typical of the elderly than were several negative stereotypes, including despondent (M = 3.62), vulnerable (M = 3.89), and shrew/curmudgeon (M = 3.60). Together, the results showed that informants did not see the negative elderly stereotypes as more typical of the elderly population than the positive ones.

Age judgments of the elderly stereotypes. The frequency with which informants assigned each elderly stereotype to a particular age range was recorded. A chi-square analysis revealed that those frequencies differed significantly from those expected by chance, $\chi^2(54, N = 44) = 328.01, p < .0005$. A cross-tabulation of the percentage of informants choosing each age range for each stereotype is presented in Table 3. Examination of the table reveals that informants tended to associate the negative stereotypes with older age ranges than they did the positive stereotypes. For instance, 95% of the informants indicated that the severely impaired individual was most likely to be found in the 75-and-older age groups, whereas only 9% placed the perfect grandparent and 5% placed the liberal matriarch/patriarch in those age groups. Informants chose the 55-59 and 60-64 age ranges most often for the latter two stereotypes, with 63% placing the perfect grandparent and 86% placing the liberal matriarch/patriarch in those age ranges. This relationship between age and valence of the stereotypes is most evident when the judgments of the extremely positive and negative stereotypes are compared. Roughly half the informants placed the less extremely valenced John Wayne conservative, self-centered elderly, and inflexible senior citizen in the middle age ranges (65-69 and 70-74).

Age and typicality judgments of young adult stereotypes. The typicality judgments of the young adult stereotypes were subjected to a single-factor repeated measures MANOVA, with stereotype (13) as the factor. Results showed a significant main effect of stereotype on the typicality judgments, F(12, 240) =13.46, $p < .0005^2$ As shown in Table 2, multiple comparisons for repeated measures revealed that, unlike the typicality judgments for the elderly stereotypes, informants saw the positive stereotypes as more typical of young adults than they did the negative stereotypes. The athlete/extrovert was viewed as most typical (M = 5.00) of young adults, and the invalid (M = 1.23)was viewed as least typical. The other 3 positive stereotypes received typicality ratings above the midpoint of the scale, whereas only 1 of the 9 negative stereotypes, the nosy neighbor, received a typicality rating above the midpoint. The 4 positive stereotypes were judged as significantly more typical of young adults than 8 of the 9 negative stereotypes.

Typicality judgments for the two pairs of corresponding elderly and young adult subcategories (severely impaired-invalid and liberal matriarch/patriarch-activist) were analyzed in a 2×2 (Age × Stereotype) repeated measures MANOVA, with age

² Data from 14 of the 36 informants evaluating the young adult subcategories contained missing typicality judgments on one or more of the subcategories. As a result, the typicality judgments reported are based only on judgments of 22 informants. To provide additional support for the typicality analysis of the young adult subcategories, an additional 33 informants were asked to make those judgments. A MANOVA of the mean typicality judgments from that group of informants also produced a significant main effect of stereotype, F(12, 21) = 55.68, p <.0005. As in the analysis reported in this article, multiple comparisons revealed that informants judged the negative categories of young adults as significantly less typical than the positive categories.

Elderly stereotype	Typicality (M)	Young adult stereotype	Typicality (M)
Severely impaired	4.05 _a f	Underclass	2.91
Shrew/curmudgeon	3.60hc	Redneck	3.76 _b
Despondent	3.62 _b	Invalid	1.23 _c
Self-centered	3.35 _b	Loner	3.18 _{a.d}
Vulnerable	3.89 _{a.c}	Homeless	2.96 _{a.d}
Inflexible senior citizen	5.30 _d	Mentally handicapped	3.14 _{a.d}
Recluse	4.81.	Small-town homebody	3.36 _{h.d}
John Wayne conservative	4.73 _e	Country clubber	3.73h
Liberal matriarch/patriarch	4.38_{f}	Nosy neighbor	4.41
Perfect grandparent	4.84	Activist	4.46 _e
C .	•	Mature young professional	4.50 _e
		Athlete/extrovert	5.00 _f
		Perfect friend	4.77 _{e.f}

 Table 2

 Typicality Judgments of the Elderly and Young Adult Stereotypes

Note. Means in each column with different subscripts differ significantly at p < .05. Higher means represent greater typicality (7-point scale).

as a between-subjects factor (N = 78; i.e., 42 informants for elderly stereotypes and 36 for young adult stereotypes). The analysis identified significant main effects of age, F(76, 1) =16.47, p < .0005, and of stereotype, F(76, 1) = 78.69, p < .0005, as well as a significant Age × Stereotype interaction, F(76, 1) =49.62, p < .0005. Multiple comparisons for repeated measures showed that whereas age had no effect on judgments of typicality for the positive stereotypes, it had a significant impact on judgments of typicality for the negative stereotypes. The invalid (M = 1.47) was viewed as significantly less typical of young adults than was the severely impaired (M = 3.93) of the elderly; on the other hand, the activist (M = 4.58) and the liberal matriarch/patriarch (M = 4.29) were viewed as equally typical of their respective populations. These results confirmed the patterns noted in the separate analyses of the typicality judgments for the elderly and young adult stereotypes. Informants judged positive and negative stereotypes of the elderly as equally typical of the elderly population; in contrast, they viewed the negative stereotypes of young adults as significantly less typical of the young adult population than the positive stereotypes.

To examine age associations with the young adult stereotypes, the frequency with which informants assigned each young adult stereotype to each age range was recorded. A chisquare analysis of these data revealed that the frequencies varied significantly from those expected by chance, $\chi^2(48, N = 36) = 166.96$, p < .0005. A cross-tabulation of the percentage of informants assigning each stereotype to each age range is presented in Table 4. Examination of that table shows no clear relationship between the valence of a stereotype and the percentage of informants assigning it to a particular age range, in contrast

Percentage of In	formants Assigning	Elderly Stereotypes	to Age Ranges

Elderly stereotype	Age range						
	55-59	6064	65-69	7074	75-79	80-84	85 or older
Severely impaired	2.3	0.0	2.3	0.0	13.6	29.5	52.3
Shrew/							
curmudgeon	2.3	9.1	27.3	15.9	15.9	20.5	9.1
Despondent	0.0	4.5	4.5	18.2	31.8	22.7	18.2
Self-centered							
elderly	19.0	31.0	21.4	11.9	9.5	4.8	2.4
Vulnerable	9.1	4.5	25.0	11.4	29.5	18.2	2.3
Inflexible senior							
citizen	4.5	13.6	20.5	31.8	15.9	13.6	0.0
Recluse	0.0	9.1	20.5	27.3	22.7	13.6	6.8
John Wavne							
conservative	13.6	15.9	29.5	29.5	6.8	2.3	2.3
Liberal matriarch/							
patriarch	48.8	37.2	9.3	0.0	4.7	0.0	0.0
Perfect							
grandparent	34.9	27.9	14.0	14.0	9.3	0.0	0.0

Note. Rows total to 100%. N = 44.

Table 4	
Percentage of Informants Assigning	Young Adult
Stereotypes to Age Ranges	

Young adult stereotype			Age range		
	18-21	22-25	26-29	30-33	34-37
Underclass	8.3	36.1	33.3	11.1	11.1
Redneck	22.9	11.4	22.9	5.7	37.1
Invalid	19.4	16.7	25.0	8.3	30.6
Loner	47.2	27.8	11.1	8.3	5.6
Homeless	36.1	33.3	19.4	5.6	5.6
Mentally					
handicapped	52.8	33.3	5.6	2.8	5.6
Small-town					
homebody	2.8	8.3	19.4	13.9	55.6
Country clubber	11.8	23.5	29.4	26.5	8.8
Nosy neighbor	14.3	31.4	28.6	8.6	17.1
Activist	16.7	41.7	16.7	22.2	2.8
Mature young					
professional	11.4	40.0	11.4	34.3	2.9
Athlete/extrovert	25.7	31.4	28.6	11.4	2.9
Perfect friend	13.9	27.8	19.4	27.8	11.1

Note. Rows total to 100%. N = 36.

to the age judgments of the elderly stereotypes. Although approximately 70% of the informants felt that the negative stereotype small-town homebody would be found most often in the two oldest age groups (30-33 and 34-37), 85% felt that the negative stereotypes loner and mentally handicapped would be found most often in the two youngest age groups (18-21 and 22-25). Furthermore, informants assigned the positive stereotypes mature young professional and perfect friend to the 30-33 age range about as often as they did to the 22-25 age range.

Discussion

Attitudes toward the subcategories. Results confirmed the expectation that the negative subcategories of elderly and young adults would receive lower attitude ratings than would the positive ones. Although the attitude results confirmed the division between the positive and negative subcategories of elderly and young adults, they indicated a hierarchy within those divisions. These results suggest that informants saw the subcategories as representing different types of people, rather than simply collections of positive and negative traits. They also emphasize the complexity of the associations people have with age-related stereotypes.

Attitudes toward analogous elderly and young adult subcategories. When the attitude ratings for the two pairs of elderly and young adult subcategories were compared, only one significant difference was identified: The positive pairs were evaluated more positively than were the negative pairs. As expected, informants' attitudes showed no evidence of a complexity-extremity effect (Linville, 1982) nor of a negative bias toward the elderly. Informants evaluated elderly and young people with similar characteristics in a like fashion.

Typicality judgments of elderly stereotypes. In contrast to what might be expected given the prior research on general attitudes toward the elderly, informants in this study did not view

the negative stereotypes as more typical of elderly adults than they did the positive stereotypes. These results suggest that the negative evaluations of the elderly revealed in the general-attitude research are not based on informants' judgments that the negative stereotypes are more representative of elderly adults than are the positive ones, although the negative stereotype severely impaired was rated more typical of the elderly than its analogous stereotype invalid was of the young.

Age judgments of elderly stereotypes. Although informants did not indicate that the negative stereotypes were more typical of the elderly in general than were the positive stereotypes, they assigned the negative stereotypes to the older age ranges more often than they did the positive stereotypes. These results provide evidence that age associations are an integral part of each stereotype and suggest that although the negative stereotypes may not be viewed as more typical of the elderly in general than are the positive ones, they are viewed as more typical of the oldest elderly than are the positive ones. The negative evaluations of the elderly in general-attitude research may then be related to the age range activated by the researcher's inquiry about elderly individuals. To the extent that people envision a person older than 75 when queried about the elderly, they are more likely to activate a negative stereotype and thus to indicate negative evaluations of the elderly in general.

(Age and typicality judgments of young adult stereotypes. The relationship between age and typicality judgments and valence of the young adult stereotypes was the opposite of that observed for the elderly stereotypes. Informants indicated that they saw the positive young adult stereotypes as more typical of young adults in general than they did the negative stereotypes; however, the informants' age-range choices revealed no clear relationship between age and valence of the stereotype. Apparently, informants believed that positive and negative types of young adults exist at each stage of young adulthood, with the positive predominating in general. In contrast, they seemed to believe that the negative types of elderly increase with each stage of older adulthood, with the positive and negative types about equally represented in the general population.

Conclusion

Together, the results of these two studies confirm the existence of multiple stereotypes of both elderly and young adults but show that there is little similarity between stereotypes of the two age groups. Note that the results do not give a definitive picture of the informants' stereotypes of young adults, for the traits used were generated with reference to elderly people, not young ones. However, the theoretical question was whether the trait groupings associated with stereotypes of the elderly would be foreshadowed by similar groupings of traits for young adults. The answer is clearly no: The very same traits were grouped much differently for the young than for the elderly. Only two sets of subcategories were analogous for both young and old; attitudes toward these subcategories did not vary with the person's age, but only with the valence of the trait groupings.

The traits used in these studies were those obtained by Schmidt and Boland (1986) from a different population, permitting a determination of whether the subcategories identified by that population for the elderly were consistent across populations. Eight subcategories appear to be shared across the two populations, with the consensus on the traits associated with these categories being greater for some categories than for others. However, the trait set may not have included all the traits that the informant pool for these studies associated with the elderly; thus, the stereotypes may not be complete representations of this population's stereotypes of the elderly.

Finally, the results suggest that young adults do not view negative stereotypes as more typical of the elderly than positive stereotypes. Nonetheless, young adults believe the negative stereotypes are more characteristic of the old-old than are the positive stereotypes, and they see the positive stereotypes as more typical of young adults than the negative stereotypes.

The research on multiple stereotypes of the elderly has been successful in debunking the myth of widespread negative stereotyping of older adults. However, the research also shows that some elderly people are negatively evaluated, and the studies reported here suggest that the probability of negative evaluations occurring increases with target age. The ways in which individual stereotypes are activated remain to be identified. Research along this line may focus on the roles of central traits and their related behaviors and of physical characteristics in the activation process. Identifying the behaviors and characteristics (e.g., age, sex, and appearance) that activate the stereotypes is essential to understanding their full psychological implications.

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