
Evaluations of Overhelping and Underhelping Communication

Do Old Age and Physical Disability Matter?

Ellen Bouchard Ryan

Ann P. Anas

McMaster University

Andrea J. S. Gruneir

Brown University

Older adults and persons with disability experience communication predicaments involving inappropriate help. In a retail setting, the authors examined the meanings of overhelping and underhelping and how these may be affected by the recipient's age and (dis)ability status. Young adults ($n = 221$) were presented with a picture of either a young or an older target seated in an armchair or a wheelchair. Participants then read three different conversations across which their target was addressed in professional, overhelping, or underhelping speech styles. Salesperson overhelping style was associated with the most exaggerated intonation. Compared to the professional, overhelping led to downgrading of customer satisfaction and salesperson effectiveness. "Blame-the-recipient" effects occurred in evaluations of both underhelped and overhelped customers. The customer in a wheelchair was rated more competent than the seated target regardless of age or salesperson style. Future research will focus on assertiveness options for managing needed or unwanted help.

Keywords: *aging; disability; intergroup communication; communication predicaments; patronizing speech; overhelping*

James Bradac (2001), whom we honor in this special issue of *JLSP*, wrote about his communication experiences in a wheelchair in terms of uncertainty. Some people meeting him for the first time, or meeting him for the first time in his newly disabled status, behaved inappropriately, probably due to their uncertainty and perhaps fear of facing physical decline. They would cover up their anxiety by being pushy. Others, more relaxed and interested in interacting with him as a person, communicated much more effectively.

Authors' Note: This research was supported by a grant to the first author from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Managing help is a major source of communication predicaments for older adults and persons with disabilities (Braithwaite & Eckstein, 2003; Braithwaite & Thompson, 2000). Overhelping behavior is one of the most commonly cited types of modified communication in interactions with persons with disabilities (Fox, Giles, Orbe, & Bourhis, 2000). It is a challenge to balance the need for autonomy with the equally important goal of obtaining necessary help. Dealing with the psychosocial issues of inappropriate helping can take up a great deal of time, energy, and emotional resources.

The Communication Predicament Models of Aging and Disability have outlined the negative feedback cycle to which behaviors such as inappropriate helping have been shown to contribute (Fox et al., 2000; Hebl & Kleck, 2000; Ryan, Bajorek, Beaman, & Anas, 2005; Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986). Although older adults are also subject to positive stereotyping (e.g., benevolence, "golden ager"), the stronger negative evaluations of lower competence, dependence, and discomfort associated with human frailty can lead to modified communication toward older adults and persons with a disability. These modifications in turn can constrain recipients' opportunities for rewarding communication and for displaying their actual competence. Altered communication can include verbal features such as high-pitch, exaggerated intonation, simplified vocabulary/grammar, and repetitions. Moreover, pragmatic and nonverbal features can include avoidance, disapproval, overly familiar talk, and intrusive questions as well as dismissive gestures and facial expressions. Inappropriate stereotype-based accommodation can be driven by a desire to control the situation (because of either task efficiency or uncertainty reduction) or by an overly nurturing inclination to care for the "afflicted" individual. Regardless of motivation, patronizing communication and other elicitation of negative group stereotypes has been shown to lead to withdrawal from activities, reduced sense of control, and undermined recipient self-esteem (Braithwaite & Thompson, 2000; Hummert, Garstka, Ryan, & Bonnesen, 2004; Kemper & Harden, 1999; Levy & Banaji, 2002).

Studies on social interactions involving physical disability consistently show biased and avoidant communication behaviors toward individuals with a disability compared with behaviors toward nondisabled partners. This pattern often occurs at the same time that targets with physical disability receive more favorable direct evaluations than their nondisabled counterparts (see Hebl & Kleck, 2000).

As summarized by Bradac (1990) and Castelan Cargile and Bradac (2001), speaker-evaluation studies have long been a productive technique for indirectly assessing language attitudes. Such studies have established negative evaluations of patronizing communication directed toward older adults, largely in health settings such as long-term care, doctor's office, and hospital (Hummert et al., 2004; Ryan, Hummert, & Boich, 1995). Of special interest in this line of study has been evidence for "blame-the-recipient" effects in which the recipient of patronizing speech has been downgraded in competence and other characteristics (Harwood, Ryan, Giles, & Tysoski, 1997). Although patronizing communication has been unfavorably viewed in a driving-accident situation (Harwood et al., 1997) and in a family situation (Morgan & Hummert, 2000), health care settings are more likely to bring out patronizing commu-

nication and its negative impact (Hummert, Shaner, Garstka, & Henry, 1998). For the present study, we chose to move away from the health setting to identify problems associated with patronizing talk in less hierarchical contexts.

Fox and Giles (1996) have conducted the only speaker-evaluation study involving patronizing talk and physical disability. They compared the impact of patronizing speech to nonpatronizing speech directed toward a person with a physical disability. The recipient of patronizing speech and the third party interactant were rated as feeling less comfortable and supported, and the patronizing speaker, as less competent, sensitive, and social in contrast with the nonpatronizing condition. These findings raise the question of how evaluations of patronizing communication might differ for recipients with and without a physical disability.

The Present Study

A vignette-evaluation approach was used to examine the interpretation of underhelping and overhelping behaviors in a nonhierarchical, everyday, community setting. We chose to assess how the evaluative pattern may be influenced by recipient age and (dis)ability status because of debates concerning whether disability and patronizing (inappropriate helping) might have different effects for targets of different ages (Palmore, 1999). Since both factors are more associated with old age, they might matter less for older targets (leveling hypothesis). On the other hand, because older targets are more vulnerable to negative associations, these factors might matter more in old age (double jeopardy hypothesis).

A mixed design was used with Target Age (young vs. old) and Target Ability Status (disability vs. no disability) as between-participant factors and Speech Style of the salesperson (underhelping, overhelping, professional) as the within-participant factor. Age and (dis)ability status were manipulated through photographs, whereas speech style was presented through written scripts. We chose a retail setting so that impact of inappropriate help could be assessed outside the typical hierarchical health care setting. As featured by Swanson and McIntyre (1998), consumers frequently encounter failures of service and speak to others about their frustrations afterward.

We examined the following hypotheses and research question:

Hypothesis 1: Overhelping by the salesperson will be evaluated negatively in comparison to the professional helping condition.

Hypothesis 2: Overhelping and underhelping by the salesperson will result in less favorable ratings of the customer (blame-the-recipient).

Hypothesis 3: Overhelping by the salesperson will be more positively evaluated when the customer is either old or in a wheelchair.

Hypothesis 4: Age and (dis)ability status main effects will reflect lower competence ratings but higher benevolence ratings for customers who are old or in a wheelchair.

Research Question: Will double jeopardy or leveling describe any interaction effects of age and (dis)ability on evaluations of the customer?

Method

Participants

Undergraduate psychology students ($n = 221$, M age = 19; 56% female) participated in classroom-size groups for partial course credit.

Materials and Procedure

Three conversational scripts were constructed each depicting an interaction between one of three female salespersons and a male customer (target) shopping in a large department store for a watch, a photograph frame, and a sweater. In each script, the customer and the salesperson each had three turns with the salesperson exhibiting one of three helping styles. The underhelping style was dismissive and inattentive; the overhelping style made use of overaccommodating speech and questioned the customer's choice of item; the professional style was one showing appropriate interest and availability without being intrusive (see appendix; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). These scenarios built on the third author's experience with sales performance evaluations.

To represent the target customer, two sets of photographs were taken, each of a young (approximately 25 years) and an older volunteer (approximately 80 years) who posed in a chair and in a wheelchair.

Each questionnaire booklet contained a photograph of a customer (named John Simpson) followed by three conversational scripts, each with one of the three salespersons. The order of the shopping task and the three speech styles was counterbalanced using a modified Latin Square design.

Participants were asked to study the picture of the target and to write a short description of his physical characteristics to ensure attention to the target's photograph. The three scripts appeared in sequence, each followed by a list of adjectives with 7-point Likert-type scales as well as closed-ended questions for evaluating first the salesperson and then the target. Generally, items in target age person-perception studies were used as well as additions specific to the retail context (Hummert et al., 2004). For the salesperson, the adjectives represented the dimensions of Competence: *incompetent, knowledgeable, intelligent, capable*; Manner: *rude, inappropriate, helpful, supportive, courteous, responsive, considerate, patronizing*; "Busybody": *bothersome, pushy, interfering*; and Satisfaction: *happy, displeased, frustrated, satisfied*. For the customer, the adjectives were for Competence: *incompetent, knowledgeable, intelligent, capable*; Benevolence: *likeable, friendly, trustworthy, polite*; and Satisfaction: *happy, displeased, frustrated, satisfied*. For the salesperson, other measures were the appropriateness of her tone of voice (on a 7-point scale) and, if inappropriate, a binary choice of whether it was too flat or too exaggerated, the likelihood of hiring her (7-point scale), and estimates of the size of annual bonus she should receive. For the customer, participants rated the likelihood of his satisfaction with his purchase and the likelihood that he would recommend the store to a friend. They were also asked to indicate on a 7-point scale the likelihood of their hiring the salesperson.

As a manipulation check for target age, they were then asked to give the approximate age of the target without referring back to the scripts. Participants who gave age estimates greater than 38 for the young target or less than 50 for the old target were dropped from the data set. The mean ages given were 63.8 and 29.5 for the old and young targets, respectively.

Separate factor analyses of the salesperson and the customer evaluations were conducted, followed by multivariate analyses of variance and post hoc *t* tests with Bonferroni-type corrections for experiment-wise error. Alpha was set at .05.

Results

Principal component factor analyses followed by varimax rotation were conducted separately for the salesperson and customer evaluation ratings based on the overhelping condition. All loadings were .5 or higher, and only items that loaded uniquely on one factor were initially selected. For the salesperson, two factors emerged with 58% of the variance explained: Positive Manner: *intelligent, knowledgeable, helpful, supportive, courteous, capable, responsive, considerate*; and Negative Manner: *rude, patronizing, inappropriate, bothersome, interfering, pushy*. For Positive Manner, the reliability coefficients were .89, .80, and .91 for the overhelping, underhelping, and professional speech styles, respectively; for Negative Manner, the coefficients were .86, .64, and .70. Two factors also emerged for the customer evaluations, with 69% of the variance explained. They were Benevolence: *likeable, friendly, trustworthy, polite*; and Competence: *incompetent (reversed), knowledgeable, capable*. For Benevolence, reliability coefficients were .87, .85, and .88. The coefficients were relatively low for Competence (.6) but increased to .76, .75, and .75 when *intelligent* was included. Therefore, it was decided to add this term to the Competence measure, even though it loaded above .5 on both factors.

Reliability coefficients for the separate Satisfaction measure were .81, .66, and .78 for the salesperson, and .90, .83, and .80 for the customer.

Composite dependent variables were calculated by averaging the ratings of the items loading significantly on each factor for the salesperson and for the customer. A composite Satisfaction measure was also calculated by averaging the ratings of the four Satisfaction items.

Multivariate analyses were conducted with Target Age, Target (Dis)ability, and Speech Style as the independent variables. The salesperson Manova included Positive Manner, Negative Manner, and Satisfaction as dependent measures; for the customer Manova, the dependent measures were Competence, Benevolence, and Satisfaction.

Evaluations of the Salesperson

There was a single main effect for Speech Style, Wilks's $\Lambda = .054$, $F(6, 212) = 624.2$, $p < .001$, which was significant for all three dependent measures—Positive Manner: $F(1.9, 405.9) = 981.8$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .82$; Negative Manner: $F(1.6, 354) =$

Table 1
Evaluations of the Salesperson as a Function of Speech Style

Measure	Speech Style					
	Underhelping		Overhelping		Professional	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Positive manner	2.12 ^a	0.71	4.24 ^b	1.16	5.76 ^c	0.86
Negative manner	3.62 ^a	0.97	3.90 ^a	1.38	1.35 ^b	0.53
Satisfaction	3.46 ^a	1.20	5.35 ^b	1.14	5.93 ^c	0.84

Note: Means with different superscripts are significantly different from each other.

434.3, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .67$; Satisfaction: $F(1.9, 410.6) = 388.9$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .61$. Post hoc tests revealed that compared with the professional salesperson, the overhelping salesperson was viewed as having a less positive and more negative manner and as being less satisfied. Compared with the underhelping salesperson, she was perceived to have a more positive manner, to be more satisfied, but to be equally negative (see Table 1).

The overhelping, underhelping, and professional salesperson's voice was rated as inappropriate by 66.5%, 89.1%, and 11.8% of the participants, respectively. For the overhelping speech style, 65.6% of all participants viewed it as "too exaggerated," compared with 10.9% for underhelping and 3.6% for the professional. On the other hand, 78.3% of participants judged underhelping to be "too flat (monotone)," compared with 0.9% for overhelping and 8.1% for the professional. The extreme associations of exaggerated intonation with overhelping and of monotone with underhelping precluded the planned chi-square analysis.

Evaluations of the Salesperson's Performance

Separate ANOVAS each revealed a main effect of speech style for the measures of likelihood of customer satisfaction with the purchase, $F(1.8, 396.3) = 383.4$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .64$; the customer's recommending the store, $F(1.8, 397.6) = 498.7$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .70$; and the participant's hiring the salesperson, $F(1.7, 363) = 590.1$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .73$. All showed the same pattern; the underhelping salesperson received the lowest ratings, and the professional, the highest. Overhelping was intermediate and significantly different from the other two (see Table 2).

An objective measure of the salesperson's performance, size of anticipated annual bonus, followed a similar pattern, $F(1.6, 344.1) = 306.3$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .59$. The lowest bonus (\$92) was awarded for underhelping, whereas the highest (\$760) was recommended for professional behavior. The bonus for overhelping (\$440) was significantly less than that for the professional, albeit significantly more than for underhelping.

Table 2
Evaluations of the Salesperson's Job Performance as
a Function of Speech Style

Measure	Speech Style					
	Underhelping		Overhelping		Professional	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Customer satisfaction with purchase	2.52 ^a	1.32	3.81 ^b	1.62	5.85 ^c	1.04
Customer recommendation of store	1.60 ^a	0.97	3.29 ^b	1.73	5.62 ^c	1.38
Hiring of the salesperson	1.41 ^a	0.81	3.71 ^b	1.90	5.99 ^c	1.24

Note: Means with different superscripts are significantly different from each other.

Evaluations of the Customer

There was a main effect of Speech Style, Wilks's $\Lambda = .11$, $F(6, 212) = 297.9$, $p < .001$. Competence— $F(2, 434) = 14.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$ —and Satisfaction— $F(1.8, 391.7) = 595.6$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .73$ —significantly contributed to the effect. The customer who was underhelped was rated as significantly less competent than were customers in the overhelping and professional conditions ($M_{\text{underhelp}} = 4.53$, $M_{\text{overhelp}} = 4.85$, $M_{\text{professional}} = 4.84$). The customer who was overhelped was rated as less satisfied than the customer in the professional condition but more satisfied than the underhelped customer ($M_{\text{underhelp}} = 2.14$, $M_{\text{overhelp}} = 3.85$, $M_{\text{professional}} = 6.03$). A marginal Benevolence effect ($p = .057$) suggested that the overhelped customer was seen as being less benevolent than in the underhelping context ($M = 4.39$ vs. $M = 4.57$).

A main effect of (Dis)ability—Wilks's $\Lambda = .96$, $F(3, 215) = 3.08$, $p < .05$ —revealed that the customer in the wheelchair was more competent— $F(1, 217) = 6.08$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$ —regardless of age or salesperson speech style ($M = 4.87 > 4.62$).

Discussion

The main findings of this study concern the negative evaluations of overhelping and the blame-the-recipient effects for inappropriate helping. Whereas underhelping would obviously attract negative ratings, problems associated with overhelping are often neglected. Overhelping was associated with impressions of the most exaggerated vocal intonation (see Hummert et al., 2004). Compared with professional helping, an overhelping salesperson was viewed as less competent and less effective in satisfying the customer. These results for overhelping in a retail setting add to the evidence from only two previous studies in everyday contexts (Harwood et al., 1997;

Morgan & Hummert, 2000). A future study could tease apart the overhelping ingredients of overaccommodative wording and failure to respect the customer's choices (Braithwaite & Eckstein, 2003). It would also be useful to directly contrast conversations in a hierarchical (e.g., health care) context with a nonhierarchical community context for relative impact of underhelping and overhelping (Hummert et al., 1998).

Customers who were inappropriately helped were themselves rated low on competence in the underhelping condition and, marginally, on benevolence in the overhelping condition. These effects were not as strong as might have been expected, but they do underscore the vulnerability of recipients to the impacts of the communication style used by others. Underhelping, especially, hurts the recipient doubly by not providing the help and by communicating to others his unworthiness. It is striking that this blame-the-recipient effect was even found in a nonhierarchical context. The indirectness of this effect is all the more problematic for recipients as it is difficult not to absorb the implicit message into one's social identity (see Goffman, 1963; Levy & Banaji, 2002; Schneider, Major, Luhtanen, & Crocker, 1996). Future research may identify the circumstances under which blame-the-recipient effects are strongest; as well, future work may illuminate whether negative ratings of the recipient can be explained by interactions between different components of speech or behavior by the communicator and the context (i.e., hierarchical vs. egalitarian setting).

The customer with a physical disability was viewed overall as more competent than the one without a disability. This pattern may reflect social desirability or the participants' low general expectations for people with disabilities to engage in independent activities without a companion, such as shopping for nonessentials. The finding of upgrading for particular individuals with physical disabilities has been found elsewhere (Hebl & Kleck, 2000).

Patronizing, paternalistic behavior, and underhelping had detrimental consequences, regardless of age and disability. Yet it is the old and people with disabilities who are most often confronted with inappropriate helping situations (Braithwaite & Thompson, 2000; Goffman, 1963). The speech-style manipulation overpowered the other factors. Use of repeated measures contrasts of target age and/or (dis)ability status would provide a stronger test of the double jeopardy versus leveling hypotheses concerning the relative evaluations of overhelping and underhelping for younger or older targets, with or without disabilities. It could be that presence of a companion and/or shopping for major purchases would afford more opportunity for statistical interactions between target attributes and speech-style evaluations. Moreover, one could use a more dramatic (dis)ability manipulation, such as one affecting the conversational scenario (e.g., request for special assistance).

Inappropriate helping immediately raises questions about how the recipient should respond. Ryan et al. (2005) provide a framework emphasizing selective assertiveness as the main strategy for interrupting the negative feedback cycle of communication predicaments. Studies of assertive responding indicate a variety of benefits for a recipient of patronizing speech, even though there are risks of appearing impolite and overstepping one's role (Harwood et al., 1997; Hummert et al., 2004; Ryan, Anas, & Fried-

man, in press). Comparing passive, assertive, and aggressive responses to overhelping and underhelping in a nonhierarchical context would be particularly informative. Parallel with the current study, Ryan et al. (in press) recently observed no interactions of target age and hearing impairment status on evaluations of alternative responses to inappropriate communication. It would be valuable to extend this approach by examining whether the impact of assertive responses to underhelping and overhelping is influenced by target age or visible physical disability, especially with a stronger test design.

Interpretation of our findings needs, of course, to be constrained in accordance with the written vignette methodology used, evaluations by healthy young adults only, and the fixed gender in our vignettes (female salesperson, male customer).

Appendix Three Different Speech Styles

<i>Salesperson:</i>	[Underhelping] (busy talking to another salesperson) [Overhelping] How are we doing today, dear? What can I do for you? [Professional] Good afternoon, sir.
<i>Customer:</i>	(Excuse me) Could you tell me where the men's watches are?
<i>Salesperson:</i>	[Underhelping] They're down that way. [Overhelping] Of course! We have a wonderful selection of watches. Come along with me and I'll take you over there. [Professional] Of course. Follow me and I'll show you where they are. Our newest line of men's watches just arrived, you'll find the new ones in this case and the older ones over there.
<i>Customer:</i>	I am looking for one with a leather band.
<i>Salesperson:</i>	[Underhelping] I think we might have some with brown or black bands, but I'm not sure. [Overhelping] Well, I have watches with black leather bands and ones with brown leather bands. I think you should buy the brown; it would look really great on you. [Professional] We have watches with brown or black leather bands.
<i>Customer:</i>	I would prefer a black band.
<i>Salesperson:</i>	[Underhelping] Okay, but you'll have to look. [Overhelping] Are you sure you want a black one? Let's have you try some on and then we'll see. [Professional] Here are a few to look at, let me know if you need any assistance.

References

- Bradac, J. J. (1990). Language attitudes and impression formation. In H. Giles & W. P. Robinson (Eds.), *Handbook of language and social psychology* (pp. 387-412). Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Bradac, J. J. (2001). Theory comparison: Uncertainty reduction, problematic integration, uncertainty management, and other curious constructs. *Journal of Communication, 51*, 456-476.

- Braithwaite, D. O., & Eckstein, N. (2003). Reconceptualizing supportive interactions: How persons with disabilities communicatively manage assistance. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 31*, 1-26.
- Braithwaite, D. O., & Thompson, T. (Eds.). (2000). *The handbook of communication and physical disability*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Castelan Cargile, A. C., & Bradac, J. J. (2001). Attitudes towards language: A review of speaker-evaluation research and a general process model. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 25* (pp. 347-382). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Fox, S. A., & Giles, H. (1996). Interability communication: Evaluating patronizing encounters. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 15*, 265-290.
- Fox, S. A., Giles, H., Orbe, M. P., & Bourhis, R. Y. (2000). Interability communication: Theoretical perspectives. In D. Braithwaite & T. Thompson (Eds.), *The handbook of communication and physical disability* (pp. 193-222). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Harwood, J., Ryan, E. B., Giles, H., & Tysoski, S. (1997). Evaluations of patronizing speech and three response styles in a non-service-providing context. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 25*, 170-195.
- Hebl, M. R., & Kleck, R. E. (2000). The social consequences of physical disability. In T. F. Heatherton, R. E. Kleck, M. R. Hebl, & J. G. Hull (Eds.), *The social psychology of stigma* (pp. 419-439). New York: Guilford.
- Hummert, M. L., Garstka, T. A., Ryan, E. B., & Bonnesen, J. L. (2004). The role of age stereotypes in interpersonal communication. In J. F. Nussbaum & J. Coupland (Eds.), *The handbook of communication and aging* (2nd ed., pp. 91-114). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hummert, M. L., Shaner, J. L., Garstka, T. A., & Henry, C. (1998). Communication with older adults: The influence of age stereotypes, context, and communicator age. *Human Communication Research, 25*, 124-151.
- Kemper, S., & Harden, T. (1999). Experimentally disentangling what's beneficial about elderspeak from what's not. *Psychology and Aging, 14*, 656-670.
- Levy, B. R., & Banaji, M. R. (2002). Implicit ageism. In T. D. Nelson (Ed.), *Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older persons* (pp. 49-75). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Morgan, M., & Hummert, M. L. (2000). Perceptions of communicative control strategies in mother-daughter dyads across the lifespan. *Journal of Communication, 50*, 48-64.
- Palmore, E. B. (1999). *Ageism: Negative and positive* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer.
- Ryan, E. B., Anas, A. P., & Friedman, D. (in press). Evaluations of older adult assertiveness in problematic clinical encounters. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*.
- Ryan, E. B., Bajorek, S., Beaman, A., & Anas, A. P. (2005). "I just want you to know that 'them' is me": Intergroup perspectives on communication and disability. In J. Harwood & H. Giles (Eds.), *Intergroup communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 117-137). New York: Peter Lang.
- Ryan, E. B., Giles, H., Bartolucci, G., & Henwood, K. (1986). Psycholinguistic and social psychological components of communication by and with the elderly. *Language and Communication, 6*, 1-24.
- Ryan, E. B., Hummert, M. L., & Boich, L. (1995). Communication predicaments of aging: Patronizing behavior toward older adults. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 13*, 144-166.
- Schneider, M. E., Major, B., Luhtanen, R., & Crocker, J. (1996). Social stigma and the potential costs of assumptive help. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 22*, 201-209.
- Swanson, S. R., & McIntyre, R. P. (1998). Assertiveness and aggressiveness as potential moderators of consumers' verbal behavior following a failure of service. *Psychological Reports, 82*, 1239-1247.
- Williams, A., & Nussbaum, J. F. (2001). *Intergenerational communication across the life span*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ellen Bouchard Ryan, a psychologist, is a professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences and in gerontology at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Her current

research concerns communication predicaments experienced by older adults with sensory, cognitive, and physical impairments and the role of empowering communication in fostering successful aging with a disability.

Ann P. Anas is a research coordinator, Communication and Aging, at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Along with Ellen Ryan, she has studied intergenerational communication, computer applications, story writing, and life management of older adults.

Andrea J. S. Gruneir is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Community Health at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. She focuses her research on issues in long-term care with special interest in the care of residents with dementia. She is a recent recipient of an AARP Scholar Award.