

MEDIA EFFECTS ON CHINESE AND AMERICAN STEREOTYPES  
IN COLLEGE SETTINGS

by

LIN ZHU

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## ABSTRACT

### MEDIA EFFECTS ON CHINESE AND AMERICAN STEREOTYPES IN COLLEGE SETTINGS

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This study examines national stereotypes in the contexts of Chinese and American universities and discusses how mass media and previous personal contact affect perceptions of the outgroup separately and interactively. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods: focus groups and surveys.

During the first stage, eight focus groups were conducted in China and America. Based on the analysis of focus group transcripts, a survey was designed and distributed to 400 students in America and China during the second stage. Main findings from this study include: 1) there is high level of consensus on perceptions of Americans and Chinese; 2) the use of American news media is related to perceptions of China as a competitor and threat to America; 3) watching Hollywood movies is related to more

positive perceptions of Americans; 4) personal contact is associated with more positive and less stereotypical perceptions of people from the other group.

Finally, the implications and limitations are discussed and suggestion for future research is offered.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

A stereotype, defined as pictures in the mind (Allport, 1954) or a belief about a group of people (Kanahara, 2006), is an oversimplified perception with gross attributes of a group. Even though stereotypes are not necessarily negative, they tend to be denigrating when applied to a group where one does not belong (Sheriff, 1966). Stereotypes form the basis of intergroup prejudice and may be destructive to communication. Mass media (including general sources of current information—newspapers, radio, TV and the Internet) are often the major source of stereotypes of foreigners, because many people have never met a foreigner (Harris, 2004). Therefore, mass media images of a group of people may have serious unintended consequences. For example, during the 1870s to 1880s, America passed a series of discriminatory laws against Chinese based on the popular Yellow Peril stereotype of Chinese (Shim, 1998).

The effects of mass media on public opinion in general have been extensively studied and the role of mass media in forming negative stereotypes for women and African Americans has been a major emphasis in these studies (Goffman, 1979; Siann & Wilkinson, 1995; Allen, 1998; Cooks, 1993; Dates, 1980; Greenberg, 1972; Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006). However, rarely has attention been paid to the media's role in forming stereotypes of Chinese in America and stereotypes of Americans in China. In addition, many studies have focused on Asian Americans in America instead

of Chinese (Cartwright, 1953; Funk, 1976; Kawai, 2005; Kitano, 1981; Shah, 2003). This study focuses on stereotypes of *outsiders*—foreigners in America and China instead of ethnic minorities in society.

This study illuminates the nature of stereotypes and determines their prevalence in both American and Chinese societies. The study is timely in that the United States and Chinese people are increasingly interacting with each other given their interdependence in the context of global business. The two countries have always been engaged in close business contact. According to Murray (2006), United States Senator from Washington State, China became Washington's third-largest and fastest-growing trade partner by 2005. On the other hand, America has been China's largest trading partner (King, 2005).

This chapter begins with a review of previous literature on stereotypes, and the roles mass media and personal contact play in stereotype formation. The literature review also relates literature to the current study of Chinese and American stereotypes in particular.

### 1.1 Stereotype

Stereotype formation is related to a cognitive process called *categorization* (Harnad, 1987). Categorical thinking helps us to store information in the most efficient way. According to Lippman (1922), stereotypes are mental maps that allow us to navigate successfully in the complex world. However, stereotypes are often sources of prejudice, especially when applied to disadvantaged minority groups or when

intergroup relationships are tense. This section examines the features of stereotypes and discusses causes of negative stereotypes.

### *1.1.1 Nature of Stereotypes*

Human beings think in terms of categories. As Lakoff (1987) states, “There is nothing more basic than categorization to our thought, perception, action and speech.” (p.5) The human mind is like a miser cognitively, and storing information in categories saves work and space (Lakoff, 1987). The formation of a stereotype is a by-product of categorization of people (Macrae, 2001). Therefore, as Rinehart (1963) explains, stereotypes are “sets of beliefs, usually stated as categorical generalizations, that people hold about the members of their own and other groups.” (p.137)

People can be categorized on a number of levels, for example, gender, age, race, occupation, nationality, etc. Each level incorporates a list of attributes or features. The attributes can be about physical attributes, such as skin color or gender. Attributes can also be attached to intelligence or personality. For example, Chinese immigrants in America have been stereotyped as intelligent, hard-working and possessing a tendency to interact with people from the same ethnic groups (Kao, 2000). A common stereotype of the English is that they “keep a stiff upper lip” and display the attributes characteristic of the “British bulldog” (Goddard, & Patterson, 2000, p.189). National stereotypes contain attributes from physical appearance to personality. When two nations have different races, stereotypes become more distinct due to differences in visible features such as skin color. According to Kinder (1998) physical features are

associated with membership in social groupings and they activate personality traits that are associated with the category in the long term memory.

Since stereotypes are categorical perceptions of a group of people, they are often oversimplified. Most contain “a few crude ‘traits’ or common attributes.” (Tajfel, 1978, p.427) Lippman (1922) saw stereotypes as an oversimplified picture of the world that satisfied a need to see the world as more understandable and manageable than it really is.

Despite being oversimplified, once stereotypes are formed, these “crude traits” (Tajfel, 1978, p.427) are universally recognized and remain unchanged for a long time. Rinehart (1963) summarizes the content and distribution of stereotypes in the following statements:

- (1) There is high agreement concerning the traits used to describe particular groups.
- (2) People of diverse ethnic groups and national origins tend to stereotype the members of certain groups, such as Negroes, in similar terms.
- (3) Members of minority groups frequently stereotype themselves in much the same manner as others stereotype them.
- (4) While similar traits are sometimes applied to several groups, in general the stereotypic depictions of groups are mutually exclusive. (p.139)

Ethnic or national stereotypes are consistent and pervasive across different countries. Buchanan (1953) investigated national stereotypes across eight countries and found that stereotypes of ethnic groups were approximately the same throughout the Western World. For example, people generally agreed that Russians were

“domineering,” Americans were “practical,” Chinese were “hardworking,” and British were “self-controlled.” (Guichard & Connolly, 1977, p.348)

Maykovich (1972) believes that stereotypes reflect “the power relationships of dominant versus minority groups in a given social structure.” (p. 876) The dominant groups are stereotyped as having positive attributes while the minority groups are assigned negative stereotypes. He employs the *mirror image* to explain this phenomenon: minority groups accept the images that the dominant group has towards them and reinforce these stereotypes.

Stereotypical attributes assigned to ethnic groups have the characteristic of generally being mutually exclusive. For example, while African Americans were described to be “mentally inferior, immoral, superstitious, emotionally unstable, musical and happy-go lucky,” (Rinehart, 1963, p. 139-140) Jews were assigned the attributes of “shrewd, mercenary, industrious, grasping, intelligent, ambitious, sly, clannish, overaggressive, extravagant, proud, rich and powerful, in control of business and finance, unscrupulous, and overbearing.” (Rinehart, 1963, p. 139-140)

### *1.1.2 Stereotyping and Outgroup Prejudice*

Stereotypes are not only descriptive but also evaluative. Researchers have found that when stereotypes are used to describe a group to which one belongs (the ingroup) they contain attributes that glorify that ingroup; when stereotypes are employed to depict a group to which one does not belong (the outgroup), they tend to be denigrating toward that group (Wetherell, 1996; Nardo, Voils, Monteith, 2001).

Rinehart (1963) notes that stereotypes are related to prejudice, a feeling of hostility toward the members of racial, national, and ethnic groups. Dong & Murrillo (2007) also point out that stereotypes are connected closely with prejudice and discrimination.

Why do people stereotype an outgroup in a negative way? According to Tajfel's (1972) social identity theory, individuals derive their social identity from the ingroup and use outgroups as a reference for evaluating one's own group's prestige. Therefore, an individual's positive self-esteem could be achieved through favoring the ingroup, which is a projection of self, and discriminating against outgroups, which are comparison to self.

To further illustrate this point, Tajfel (1972) conceptualizes stereotyping and prejudice as a search for *coherence*, i.e., the need to maintain self-worth and self-esteem. Since stereotypes are held by a group, individuals have to conform to these norms and values to be accepted by the group. Therefore, expression of stereotypes reinforces one's group identity. Rinehart (1963) believes the reason stereotypes are so pervasive is because they function as "symbolic expressions of group identification and belongingness." (p. 142) For example, a previous study suggests that stereotypes assist individuals in simplifying cross-cultural interactions and in maintaining a positive sense of self-esteem deriving from their group memberships (Willnat, Zhou, & Hao, 1997). On the other hand, researchers find that prejudice toward an outgroup is also related to people's self-image that derives from comparison with an outgroup (Turner, 1985; Ellemers, Rijswijk, Roef, & Simions, 1997; Hogg, 1988, 1996; Abrams & Hogg, 2001).

The valence of stereotypes is affected by intergroup relationships. Sheriff (1962) observes that if two groups are engaged in competitive relations, stereotypes of each other tend to be negative. Sheriff (1962) devised a series of large-scale experiments to engage people into competitive groups and found that members from each group developed a distorted view against their peer group as a result of the intergroup competition. Sheriff concluded that intergroup competition led to psychological effects which might result in hostility and denigrating stereotypes between members of two groups, and self-glorifying or self-justifying attitudes toward the in-group (Sheriff, 1962). Sheriff (1962) uses the model of realistic conflict to conceptualize prejudice resulted from intergroup competition (Sheriff, 1962, 1966).

The theory of realistic conflict helps to explain the change of stereotypes of different ethnic groups within a nation or across different nations. For example, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Mexican descendents were perceived by Americans as “respectful, hard-working, musical, and interested in mechanical training.” (Niemann, 2001, p.56) However, with increasing conflicts between Mexican immigrants and local Americans in recent decades, Latino immigrants are seen as “a parasite on society, feeding off food stamps, and living on welfare” (Chavez, 1993, p.101).

### 1.2 Mass Media and Stereotypes

Media representations are the only source of information about other cultures for many people (Harris, 2004). As Baker (1996) asserts, “When experiential knowledge does not exist, we often assume that images we see in film reflect reality.” (p.261)



Unfortunately, instead of providing accurate and detailed descriptions of ethnic groups, the media are quite often engaged in creating, reinforcing and magnifying stereotypes (Ross, 2003). Park et al. (2006) argues that in the entertainment media industry, stereotypes serve the need to quickly convey information about characters and to stimulate certain expectations about characters' actions.

Prejudice and stereotypes are found in the entertainment media as well as among professional journalists, especially in photo journalism (Enteman, 2003). For example, photojournalists stereotype by selecting one picture from thousands of pictures. Entman (1991, 1993) suggests that media frames are constructed by using words and pictures consistently and making certain issues or interpretations more salient. Perlmutter (1998) observes that journalists supply pictures to a story to reinforce the power of framing.

Because journalists are limited by the structure and organization of media bias toward certain frames, the media as a whole have failed to refute popular stereotypes about different ethnic groups including Asian-Americans in America (Ross, 2003; Maykovich, 1972; Shim, 1998; Shah, 2003; Kao, 2000; Park et al., 2006). The following section examines media stereotypes of Chinese and Americans from different historical and cultural contexts.

### *1.2.1 Media Stereotypes of Chinese/Asian-Americans and Americans*

Although there has been controversy about whether the mass media are responsible for creating social stereotypes or simply following public perception, it is generally assumed there is constant interaction between media stereotypes and public

opinion (Baker, 1996; Gerbner & Gross, 1994). Perlmutter (1998) argues that the media elites and political elites have power to create frames that set the public agenda, while the public contributes to stereotypes formation by *decoding* these frames. Ross (2003) further explains that the public interprets frames through recognition of cultural meanings associated with the “words, images or juxtapositions.” (p. 31) Therefore, the audience and the media elite co-construct meanings of frames, and the interaction between them is constrained by the culture in which they live. In stereotyping people from other nationalities, mass media and the public are influenced by political frames, one of them being the relationship between their own country and the other countries. For example, during World War II-era, the Bugs Bunny cartoon was used to stereotype Japanese as having glasses, buck teeth and crying “oh, sorry, sorry, sorry” (Harris, 2004; Kashiwabara, 1996, <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/Amydoc.html>). These derogative images reflected the international situation at that time, and they remained popular because both the media elite and the public shared contextual frames in interpreting them (Ross, 2003).

Historical changes in stereotypes are important because essentially race is a social and historical construction (Omi & Winant, 1994). Overall, the U.S.-China relationship may be viewed as going through four stages: early 20<sup>th</sup> century; World War II-era; 1950s to 1970s; and 1970s to the present. Media stereotypes of Chinese/Americans in two countries have undergone changes as the relationship fluctuated.

In early 20<sup>th</sup> century, China was at the end of the Qing Dynasty and was led by a corrupt government. America joined European military forces in putting down the Boxer Rebellion in China in order to thwart Chinese resistance to colonial expansion and preserve trade interests (Rice, Shafer, & Freedman, 2005). The Western forces succeeded in forcing China to open its doors to the outside world. That was the first contact Chinese people had had with America and Americans. At the same time, a large number of Chinese immigrants went to California and Hawaii for railroad construction, prompting Americans to begin to form opinions of the Chinese.

During this period, the dominant mass media stereotype of the Chinese immigrant in America was the Yellow Peril. Due to American resistance to the Chinese immigrants, stereotypes of Chinese were denigrating (Shim, 1998; Rice, Shafer, & Freedman, 2005; Shah, 2003). The Yellow Peril stereotype described Chinese immigrants as having crooked yellow bodies and speaking Pidgin English (Ma, 1993). Their race was “unassimilable,” and their character “disgusting” (Katino, 1981, p.1128). Characteristics associated with the Yellow Peril were “immorality, treachery, unscrupulous competition, and subversive intent.” (Maykovich, 1971, p.448)

During the second stage of U.S.-China relationship—World War II, China was led by the pro-America Nationalist Party. America’s support in the war against the Japanese invasion of China was both generous and much needed by the Chinese government. The relationship between two countries was positive during this time. Charlie Chan character was created during this time, reflecting a positive change in the bilateral relationship. The best-known Charlie Chan movies began in 1931 with

*Charlie Chan Carries On*. In these series of movies, Charlie was described as a brilliant detective with limited English, good observation and logic. He was an “antidote to the then-common popular-fiction treatment of Asians as sinister, heartless villains” (Karnick, 2006, <http://article.nationalreview.com>). Compared with the brutal Japanese, Chinese were depicted as “virtuous, industrious, and trustworthy” by Hollywood movies (Shah, 2003, p.5). Even so, Charlie was still shown as being deferential to white people.

During the third stage of U.S.-China relations from 1950s to 1970s, the relationship between the two nations deteriorated, due to the regime change from the Nationalist Party to the Communist Party of China. America did not recognize communist China and continued to support the Nationalist Party which occupied Taiwan after 1949. Overall, the relationship between China and America was marked by hostility. The notion of the “China Threat” appeared in America as early as 1950s because of the ideological differences (Huck, 1973, p.617). Shah (2003) noted that the images of Chinese in movies and TV shows in America were uniformly negative during this period. The Chinese were often depicted as “deceitful, cruel, addicted to drugs and hateful of Westerners.” (Shah, 2003, p.6) In the Chinese media, Americans were consistently depicted as evil partners of the Nationalist Party, resentful of Chinese people and often lacking courage in wars. Mao Zedong, chairman of the communist party, created a metaphor called “paper tiger” (August 1946, *Selected Works of Mao*, <http://art-bin.com/art/omao6.html>) to refer to America as seemingly strong but actually weak. This image stayed in people’s minds for about two decades.

In the fourth stage, the frozen relationship between China and America started to thaw after President Nixon visited China in 1972. On December 15, 1978, President Carter officially derecognized the Nationalist Chinese government in Taiwan. Eventually, China and America established a diplomatic relationship on January 1, 1979. But the triangular relationship between the U.S., China, and Taiwan has not been resolved (Kindermann, 1980; Chen, 1987). To this day, the Taiwan issue is still the main issue that causes tension between both nations. The complex relationship is reflected in media depictions. Roy (1996) notes that the China Threat image has gained popularity again in recent years. Some analysts in America believe that China poses a potential threat to the rest of world. From the Chinese perspective, America is seen as “trying to hinder China’s growth,” according to a nationwide survey in China by *Global Times* (March, 7, 2006, <http://www.internationalrelations.cn/news/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=1147>), a national newspaper in China. The *Global Times* survey was conducted in five major cities in China and over 1175 respondents participated in the survey. In a degree, this survey is representative of Chinese household owners’ perceptions of America and Americans.

On the other hand, positive stereotypes are also prevalent reflecting increasing economic interdependence and a more receptive attitude. One such new image is the model minority stereotype in America. Although employed by the media to refer to Asian Americans in general (Shim, 1998; Kawai, 2005; Taylor, Landreth, & Bang, 2005; Lee & Joo, 2005; Wong, Nagasawa & Lin, 1998), the stereotype also applies to Chinese in China. The model minority describes Asian Americans as highly affluent,

well educated, professional, and technologically skilled (Paek & Shah, 2003). However, some scholars argue that this seemingly positive image of Asian Americans is just the benign version of the Yellow Peril (Shim, 1998; Okihiro, 1994). Kawai (2005) observes, “People of Asian descent become the model minority when they are depicted to do better than other racial minority groups, whereas they become the yellow peril when they are described to outdo White Americans.” (p.115)

The image of model minority does not fully replace the old stereotypes. For example, in *Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan (1989) describes four Chinese mothers and their four daughters in America. Even though the book and subsequent movie were widely praised and accepted by American mainstream culture, both were also criticized for perpetuating “the stereotype of Chinese women as sexual objects, the *China Doll*.”(Yin, 2005, p.151) In contemporary American movies, the images of Chinese women have not changed either. *Year of the Dragon* and *China Girl* created characters that fall into Chinese stereotypes of exoticism, seduction, and feebleness (Ling, 1993).

In the Chinese entertainment media, portrayals of Americans as evil partners of the Nationalist Party have been replaced with positive depictions of Americans as business partners, friends, and even lovers. According to the author’s observation as a native Chinese, many American characters in Chinese popular TV dramas are portrayed as free-spirited, modern, and most importantly, interested in Chinese culture. In the popular Chinese TV series *Nothing in the Mirror*, an American character, even though peripheral in the show, appeared to be very interested in the Chinese culture and wore a very traditional Chinese costume upon his arrival in China.

When mass media images are distributed, they will have some effect on the public. The following sections discuss the effects of mass media on public opinion in general.

### *1.2.2 Media Effects*

Previous research has found the media are not only a source of information, but have the power to influence or shape attitudes (Emmers-Sommer & Allen, 1999). As Lippman (1922) pointed out in Public Opinion, media images construct pseudo environments that only approximate truth. These pseudo events are nevertheless powerful enough to shape people's interpretation and to influence public opinion. The study of media effects examines how exposure to media leads to certain attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. This next section reviews theories on media effects, including Social Learning Theory, Agenda-Setting and Cultivation Theory and discusses how these theoretical frameworks are relevant to the current study.

#### 1.2.2.1 Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory deals with the social cognitive aspect of learning (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961, 1963; Tan, 1986). The central idea is that people learn by observing others performing and then imitating them (Harris, 2004). Mass media are an important instrument of social learning. For example, children who are exposed to violent behaviors on television might model these behaviors. Harris (2004) cites a famous example of a mid-1980s Bedford gang rape case, where several men raped a woman on a pool table in a bar. Later it was revealed the rapists had recently seen a movie with a barroom gang rape scene. Of course, people do not always

imitate what they observe. For learning to take place, people have to observe images from the media and construct meaning from media message. Finally, under certain internal and/or external motivational factors, they translate what they have learned from the media into actions (Harris, 2004).

Therefore, when personal contacts with people from another culture are limited, the mass media might serve as important social learning agent in the formation and maintenance of social stereotypes (Willnat, Zhou, & Hao, 1997).

While Social Learning provides a theoretical basis for media effects studies, the Agenda-Setting theory provides guidance for conducting practical research in the field of media effects.

#### 1.2.2.2 Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory deals with the relationship between news media and the public agenda (McCombs, & Shaw, 1972; Funkhouser, 1973; Iyengar, & Kinder, 1987; Brosius, & Kepplinger, 1990). According to McCombs (2001), agenda-setting is a theory about the “transfer of salience from the mass media’s pictures of the world to those in our heads.” (p.67). The mass media may not be very successful in telling us *what to think*, but it is successful in telling us *what to think about* and *what is important* (Cohen, 1963). For example, the amount of coverage on a news event directly determines how important the public perceives the issue to be. Therefore, the American public perceives that the presidential election is important because of the huge amount of news coverage the election receives. Similarly, Americans might think that international events are peripheral, due to the relative insignificance that the



American media place on international news. Harris (2004) notes that there has been a precipitous drop in the coverage of international news in the last twenty years. According to Harris, CBS evening news spent 1,591 minutes on the O.J. Simpson murder trial in 1995; in contrast, it spent a total of 1,991 minutes on news broadcasts from foreign correspondents in the same year (Harris, 2004, p.190). Yang & Stone (2004) also report that only one previous non-wartime study by Wanta and Hu (1993) found foreign affairs registering high enough to be included in the top 10 public agenda issues.

In addition to influencing the public in assigning priority to issues, mass media also tell the public *how to think about* some issues (McCombs, 2001). For example, Funkhouser (1973) examined the relationship between public opinion, news coverage and *reality* and found there was substantial correlation between public opinion and news coverage. In addition, findings in this study showed there was little relation between public opinion and reality (McCombs, 1994). In controlled laboratory experiments, researchers have also established the relationship between participants' opinion and exposure to television programs (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

Even though few would argue that the news media have agenda-setting influence, the agenda-setting theory is a theory of limited media effects, due to the active role played by media users. McCombs (1994) explains that selective perception in viewers' part can drive the public to adopt mass media agenda or not. Shaw, McCombs, Weaver & Hamm (1999) developed agenda melding concept to explain the weak effects of the mass media. According to this concept, agenda-setting is only an

intervening part of a social process called agenda melding. Individuals join groups by joining agendas. Even though the mass media set agendas, individuals can choose to adopt them if these agendas support their views or avoid them if information from the mass media is disagreeable with their attitudes or beliefs (Shaw, McCombs, Weaver & Hamm, 1999). An individual's drive to meld propels them to seek groups or communities whose agendas fit theirs. When an individual has no alternative way to relate to a community, the press agenda is the community. Agenda-melding concept compliments agenda-setting theory in that it explains why the agenda-setting effect is limited: individuals can actively select agendas.

While the agenda-setting theory mainly deals with the news media, cultivation theory focuses more on the role of entertainment media. The next section reviews the cultivation effects of mass media, especially the effects of television viewing.

### 1.2.2.3 Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory was developed by George Gerbner (1976, 1979, 1980, 1994). It explores the relationship between television viewing and construction of social reality (Gerbner, et al., 1979, 1980; Potter, 1993; Pfau, Mullen, Deidrich, & Garrow, 1995; Shrum, 2002). Gerbner & Gross (1994) say that television has become "the primary common source of socialization and everyday information." (p.18). Through repetitive patterns of myths, facts, relationships, ect., television produces coherent set of images and message. The diverse population, therefore, shares these conceptions of reality, and this process is called cultivation (Gerbner, 1994). Potter (1994) summarized the central proposition of cultivation theory in the following statement:

Television viewers who say they are exposed to greater amounts of television are predicted to be more likely (compared to viewers who say they are exposed to lesser amounts) to exhibit perceptions and beliefs that reflect the television world messages. (p.1)

Cultivation theory differs from agenda setting theory in that it examines the long-term effects of mass media exposure. In earlier cultivation research, studies were done on the relationship between television viewing and estimates of the rate of crime and violence, and personal victimization, etc. (Gerbner, 1979, 1980; Hetsroni & Tukachinsky, 2006). Researchers found that long-term exposure to television, which frequently displays violence, tends to “cultivate the image of a relatively mean and dangerous world”—this cultivation is called the “mean world syndrome.” (Gerbner & Gross, 1994, p.30)

Cultivation research often starts with examining the discrepancies between the real world and “the world portrayed by on television” (Gerbner & Gross, 1994). The next step is to explore people’s perceptions of reality and see whether there are correlations between higher versus lower exposure-to-television viewers and perceptions of social reality (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Mayes, 1981 & Selnow, 1990; Potter, 1990). For example, even though those over 65 constitute the fastest growing population in the United States (the real world), they are underrepresented in television drama. As a result, heavy viewers are more likely to feel that the elderly are a “vanishing breed”—that they are disappearing, which is contrary to fact (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980b, p.46).

Since previous research has found a relationship between mass media and the construction of social reality, this study assumes that media portrayals of ethnic groups affect people's perceptions of these groups. The next section talks about the relationship between media depictions of Asian-Americans/Chinese and Americans and the construction of social stereotypes.

### *1.2.3 Media Effects on Social Stereotypes*

Mass media have been accused of engaging in negative stereotyping of ethnic groups and leading the public into forming unfavorable judgment of other groups, especially in evaluations of ethnic minorities (Gorham, 2006; Tan, 1982; Volgy & Schwarz, 1980; Mastro & Tropp, 2004). Greenberg (1972) found that children, in particular, have relied heavily on television for information. Park *et al.* (2006) examined *Rush Hour 2* with focus groups and found that comedy serves to encourage the audience to naturalize racial differences and stereotypes. In a study about effects of racial stereotypes, participants were found to be more likely to form a negative judgment of African-Americans after watching comedies where black characters were depicted as demeaning and stereotypical, because these depictions activated constructs such as "fun-loving," "happy-go-lucky" and "poor" that had been formed through accumulated exposure (Ford, 1997, p.267).

Stereotypes of Asians in America have ranged from the Yellow Peril to the Model Minority. The Yellow Peril stereotype was mainly used to describe earlier Chinese immigrants. It not only brought humiliation to these immigrants, but it affected legislative and political decisions concerning them (Shim, 1998). Even the seemingly

positive model minority stereotype has negative connotations. Lee & Joo (2005) argue that repetitive portrayals of Asian-Americans as “diligent, hard working, technologically competent, and mathematically skilled” (p.655) might create undue pressure on Asian Americans to live up to the expectations. Another negative side of the Model Minority is that the image is often labeled as “quiet Americans.” (Maykovich, 1971, p.449)

Stereotypes of Americans in China have not only been affected by Chinese mass media, but also by American entertainment media. In 1999, 65.5% of China’s imported movies were American films (UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999). In addition, American movies have been used in teaching English in universities in Mainland China. Chinese people perceive Americans to be like they are in the American movies. Tan’s (1982) study, for instance, found a strong relationship between the content of television shows in America and how students from America as well as China stereotype Americans. He identified six major themes in American television programs: violence, affluence, sex and beauty, individualism, and negative stereotyping of various ethnic groups. In the Chinese sample, television viewers who watched a lot of shows characterized Americans as “pleasure-loving” and “materialistic”; while those who watched a lot of television news perceived Americans as “aggressive and pleasure-loving.” (p.122)

In another study, Willnat, Zhou, & Hao (1997) found that foreign TV consumption was related to negative stereotypical perceptions of Americans and feelings toward Americans in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Singapore.

While the media have a tendency to focus on cases of intense and dramatic conflicts that often result in negative racial stereotypes, the availability of first-hand information with members from another race can counteract negative stereotypes (Sigelman & Welch, 1993). The next section reviews the effect of personal contact on stereotype formation.

### 1.3 Interracial Contact

The effects of media on forming stereotypes of an ethnic group are stronger among individuals with less interracial contact with that group (Armstrong, Neuendorf, & Brentar, 1992). However, with the increase of interracial contact, the effects of the media are mitigated. Mastro & Tropp (2004), for example, find that prior contact especially in close and meaningful relationships with another ethnic group can promote positive evaluations of outgroup members both in interpersonal interactions and in response to television portrayals.

According to Allport (1954), close contact between members of different races leads to positive racial attitudes, and the lack of such contact fosters prejudice. This formed the premise of the contact hypothesis, which posits that members from hostile groups will develop liking and respect for each other when they come to know each other through personal contact. However, later research found that attitudinal change did not occur in all circumstances of personal contact. Cook (1978) argues that favorable change in attitude will follow when the contact is equal in status or the contact situation requires a mutually interdependent relationship, for example achieving a joint goal. Another factor to consider in the contact hypothesis is the level of intimacy

in contact. The contact has to be frequent enough for the person to see enough details of the disliked group member to distinguish him/her as an individual rather than assuming the group characteristics (Cook, 1978). In addition, the attributes of the disliked group member must disconfirm the prevailing stereotyped beliefs about them (Cook, 1978). Rothbart & John (1985) argue that stereotype beliefs are susceptible to disconfirmation: intergroup contact may either disconfirm or corroborate existing stereotypes. For example, Americans are stereotyped as irresponsible in maintaining relationships (Tan, 1982; Willnat, Zhou & Hao, 1997). When a Chinese person comes into equal contact with an American who is very committed in marriage, the behavior disconfirms stereotypes of Americans and the Chinese might change his/her perceptions of Americans. Otherwise, negative stereotypes might be reinforced instead of being reduced.

Research in the contact hypothesis has taken two approaches in examining the effect of contact on prejudice reduction. One examines the relationship between self-reported levels of previous contact and current intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). Another uses experimental intervention to assess the relationship between positive or negative contact and evaluation of an outgroup (Cook, 1969).

In sum, previous research on Chinese stereotypes or American stereotypes has been conducted in America and the subjects used were Chinese Americans or Chinese in America, as in Tan's (1982) study. The focus has generally been on portraying ethnic minorities instead of Chinese as foreigners. Very little attention has been given to examining stereotypes of Americans held by citizens of other countries. This lack of

academic research is surprising in light of the dominant stereotypical views of Americans—views formed largely from Hollywood and other mass media representation. Thus, this thesis departs from previous studies in that it explores national stereotypes instead of stereotypes of ethnic minorities while offering a rare look at views of Americans held by Chinese in China. In light of limited previous research in China on stereotypes of Americans, focus groups were used to find out organizing themes. From these themes, research questions and hypotheses were offered. Surveys were conducted after the focus group analysis. Therefore, this study is the first in the field of mass media research to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore national stereotypes of Chinese and Americans.

The purpose of the study is to trace down the sources of negative stereotypes or prejudice and to understand the role mass media play in forming stereotypes. It has implications on international relationships, business activities and personal communication between China and America.

The next two chapters explain the methodology used in the study and present results from focus groups and surveys.



## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD-FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are part of an ethnographic approach, the purpose of which is not to reach quantitative conclusions, but to describe a culture (Spradley, 1979). Focus groups are appropriate for use when little is known about a topic and no presumptions can be reasonably formed. The rationale behind using focus groups for the current study is that, because of the aforementioned lack of research on this area, there is insufficient literature to determine existing stereotypes and formulate hypotheses about Chinese and American stereotypes. Focus groups were preferred to in-depth interviews in this study in that a focus group can create a social atmosphere for people to talk about their stereotypes and prejudices more naturally. This section describes the participants, procedure and results from focus groups.

#### 2.1 Procedure

For this study eight focus groups were conducted with college students as participants. Previous research has used similar selection methods because researchers either believe that there are minor differences held by different groups of people (Rinehart, 1963), or that the college population often plays the role of an opinion leader in social change (Maykovich, 1972). In addition, using student participants increases internal validity by eliminating alternative interpretations of the results based on socio-educational factors (Hetsroni & Tukachinsky, 2006).

American born non-Chinese-Americans were recruited from a large Southern university (AU groups), and Chinese born Chinese were recruited from a major university in Beijing (CU groups). Sixteen American participants volunteered for the study; while 18 Chinese students volunteered after learning about the research. The 16 American participants were divided into 4 focus groups. The AU groups consisted of 8 females and 8 males. There were 4 African Americans, 10 Whites and 2 Asian-Americans. The CU groups consisted of 10 females and 8 males. They were all from the Han ethnic group, the dominant ethnic group in China. According to the original design, there would be four focus groups comprised of college students who have had minimal or no contact with Chinese/Americans; and another four consisted of college students who have had previous contact with Chinese/Americans. However, most American college students had not had real and meaningful relationships with Chinese students before; while most Chinese participants had a similar level of contact with Americans—through their foreign teachers. Therefore, the original categorization was modified: focus groups were conducted based on the availability of participants' time and gender balance. Both female and male participants were sought for in each focus group. The groups were not considered big in size. Templeton (1994) argued for using smaller focus groups (from 3 to 8 people) if the purpose is to gain in-depth insights.

In AU groups, two trained moderators (one White American, one White European) were asked to host three of the focus groups and the principal researcher (Asian) hosted the last one. No major differences in the content of discussion were

found between groups moderated by the Anglo-Saxon researchers and the Asian researcher. For CU groups, a trained Chinese moderator hosted all four sessions.

Open-ended questions in both Chinese and English were prepared as a guideline for all moderators in both countries. The questions are comparable in content, but in the United States, moderators mainly asked questions about Chinese and sources of information about China; while in China, the moderator mainly asked questions about Americans and sources of information about America.

## 2.2 Themes

Each focus group was recorded with digital recorder or video camera. After each focus group, the audiotape/videotape was analyzed. The audiotapes and videotapes were transcribed with the help of moderators, and Chinese focus group audiotapes were transcribed and translated to English. Data were analyzed through identifying recurring themes. Topics or concepts across different focus groups were identified and supporting statements from different participants were put together. Topics that only occurred in one focus group are not considered as themes. Through this method, five main themes emerged and this section examines these main themes.

### *2.2.1 Social Americans vs. Quiet Chinese*

From a social perspective, AU participants generally perceived Chinese as “quiet” and Americans as “social.” All four AU focus groups described Chinese as “quiet,” “not outgoing,” and “less social.” On the other hand, AU focus groups observed that Chinese people were not so quiet within their own group. One American participant said, “They (Chinese) are mostly quiet, unless you see them in numbers.

They stand outside the (business) buildings, kind of group up. They seem to group up more than other races.”

Compared with the Chinese, American participants described Americans (the ingroup) as social and outgoing. One AU participant commented, “(Americans are) partiers. We like to have our fun.” She used the word “boring” to refer to Chinese because “they are so quiet.” The word *quiet* is a neutral word, but in this context she assigned a negative connotation to the word *quiet*.

In contrast, the distinction of “social” and “quiet” did not appear in Chinese focus group discussions. Even though some members said that some Americans they knew were accessible, they did not perceive Americans as more social than Chinese. On the contrary, two focus groups mentioned that Americans were not very social. One CU participant used a term “Americanism” to refer to some Americans who were “a little arrogant, and a little cool and distant. Maybe it’s because they think of their race as superior or something.” Another CU participant also talked about his interactions with some Americans in China who were not social. He said, “They would sit face to face with you but wouldn’t usually talk to you. They seem distant. Sometimes they have (their) Walkman with them and (they) put on their earphones. They isolate themselves. I feel that’s strange.”

Many Chinese participants used the word “open” to describe Americans and “reserved” or “traditional” to describe Chinese. All four CU groups described Americans as *open*. When the moderator asked participants to define the word *open*, participants used terms such as “uninhibited in personality,” “casual in sexual

relationship,” and “outgoing.” For example, a female participant talked about an American teacher she had in high school, “I feel that he was very open. He could talk about anything with me, including his crush for a Chinese girl. He did not have inhibitions.” Another CU participant described the difference between Chinese and Americans in dealing with relationships in the following statements:

Chinese are more reserved. Like if a Chinese has feelings for someone, he/she’s probably going to think very carefully. He’s not going to express these feelings as he wants. He would think of the consequences for him or for her and how would his expressing feelings affect his future? But Americans are probably less reserved. I like you and I want you to know my feelings and to feel in the same way, so I say it. It’s as simple as that.

According to three CU groups, Americans are also uninhibited in having sexual relationships. One Chinese participant stated:

They think that if two people like each other, they could naturally have a (sexual) relationship. They have one-night stands often... because Americans seem to always go to pubs. Maybe their work is too stressful and they think it’s a relief (to have sex with others)... I believe they might even do it (meaning extramarital affairs) after they get married. They have a different perspective. They feel it’s a need.

Many Chinese participants attributed the difference—Americans being open and Chinese being reserved—to different education, both from school and from parents. Two CU participants observed:

In China, if you have boyfriends/girlfriends at the age of 12 or 13, your parents would be really mad (at you). But American parents wouldn't be like that. They would probably be like, "Congratulations. You've grown up."

When I was in high school, teachers did not teach about sex, and we were asked to read textbook materials concerning human body by ourselves. But American schools, I heard, would have education on sex from junior high and they might even distribute condoms. American parents would openly discuss sex with their children. They do not consider sex as taboo topic.

Chinese participants also noticed a change in the younger generation in China. One member who had visited America noted that the Chinese being reserved and Americans being open might not be true among the young generation. He said that in China younger people were bold enough to openly express their intimacy; while in America, public display of affection was very rare.

### *2.2.2 Independent Americans vs. Family-Oriented Chinese*

Both AU and CU participants felt that Chinese and Americans have different family value systems. This topic occurred in 7 focus groups (four AU groups and three CU groups). Many CU participants said that Chinese were very respectful towards their parents or the elderly. CU focus group members also noted that American children do not respect their parents in the same way Chinese do. For example, one Chinese participant said, "They (Americans) would call parents by their first names." Another CU focus group member said, "Chinese would never call their parents' names. If they

do, it's not respectful, (and) not dutiful.” One CU member used a foreign teacher in her high school as an example:

Another thing about Americans is that they do not attach the same amount of importance to family and kinship. She (referring to her American teacher) would objectively say that her mother was selfish because her family had money but wouldn't buy her a car for her birthday... I think in America, people are more independent and they could make more objective judgment of their parents, but to a Chinese like me, at least I wouldn't make such harsh comment about my mom.

Among AU participants, there was agreement that Chinese are more family-oriented. Phrases such as “family-oriented” and “attach a lot of importance to family” were used to describe Chinese by all AU focus groups. For example, one AU participant said, “They really put a lot of efforts on sacrificing for the good of family, for the family honor or the family name.”

Even though focus group members from both countries agreed that Chinese people attached more importance to family than Americans did, they felt there were social and cultural contexts for different behaviors and that the Chinese family system did not necessarily work better than the American system. Focus group participants believed there was a more equal relationship between parents and children in America. AU participants noted that Chinese parents tend to be very strict and children “are not allowed to have freedom.” CU participants felt that American parents and children were more like friends and there was more “equal communication.” For example, one

Chinese participant said, “American kids wouldn’t be beaten up (by their parents).”

Another CU focus group member said,

I don’t think Chinese necessarily love children more than Americans do. It’s just different expressions of love. Chinese parents take care of their children in every way. Of course, it’s not a bad thing. It establishes a strong relationship between parents and children. American parents might not center around their children like Chinese parents do, because they have their own work and life, but children grow more independent this way.

One AU participant also commented on Chinese taking care of their parents compared with Americans not taking care of their parents:

We can take care of ourselves. Here (meaning America) we can leave our parents in the nursing home, but they (meaning Chinese) are bound to take care of them. It’s more like an obligation. For us, it’s like “well, she’ll be taken care of, she’ll have friends of her age and the house she needs...”

Another American participant observed that “taking care of parents” was more like a “trade-off” in Chinese culture.

Some AU focus groups argued that the difference in family values was due to the individualism and collectivism distinction. For example, one AU participant said, “I remember learning that America is more individual-oriented and China, or Asia, is more collective-oriented. They work for the whole, for the team.” Another AU participant said, “They are more collectivistic... They concentrate on the society as a whole rather than individual and sacrifice what they have to survive.”



In contrast, Chinese participants did not associate family with a collective group and the term “collectivism” or “collectivist society” was outdated to these college students. Two CU participants said:

I think of “collectivism” as belonging to the beginning of liberation. Since the market economy was implemented, China is moving towards an “individualist society.

The concept of “sacrificing individuals for the benefit of the group” is not realistic. It’s too radical and unnecessary.

CU participants were happy to see that more emphasis was placed on individuals in China. One CU student said that this showed the progress of Chinese society.

### *2.2.3 Lazy Americans vs. Hardworking Chinese*

According to American participants, Chinese are “hard-working” while Americans are “lazy.” The perception of Chinese being hard-working occurred in all four AU focus groups. Two AU participants also used “lazy” to describe Americans. Three AU participants said that they saw Chinese “studying all the time.” One AU participant described his friend in the following statements, “I have a Chinese friend. I asked him whether he’s got a girlfriend. He’s like, no, I have project and project and project.” One AU focus group also noticed that Chinese, or Asian-Americans worked hard to integrate into American culture. One participant from this group said:

I would agree with the hardworking part. Chinese and Asian people try harder than other immigrants to adapt to American society. It seems Asian people

attempt quicker and harder to learn to speak English...they seem to try to mesh with Americans and American culture more than other immigrants do.

However, AU participants did not necessarily perceive hardworking as valuable an attribute when it was applied to Chinese. One AU participant admitted that Americans were “lazy,” but she further explained that Americans are lazy because “We must have our fun.” She said this with certain pride. This attitude is also demonstrated by the following statements from two other AU participants:

It seems that (Chinese) people always have a mission, (and) have a goal. Something in front of them. “I have to do this, I need to do that, then I have to go to work.” In America, it seems that people are more relaxed, you have a little bit more freedom, because obviously, it’s a communist country.

They all look the same way. It’s like robots. They all go to the same factory, (wear) the same shirt... it’s not like anybody is strolling around. They are all doing something. There is not a moment that they are partying at all. They are all on a mission or something.

Focus groups conducted in America indicated that consciously or subconsciously, American participants see the hardworking Chinese as threatening. One AU participant used the word “sneaky” to describe how Chinese outsmart Americans in work. Another AU group member commented:

They are passive aggressive, kinda. They lean back, but as soon as they see something, they are turned on. It’s like a switch. They are very conscious of

their surroundings. The moment they see an opportunity to attack, capture, they just go.

This distinction of *hardworking* and *lazy* did not occur among CU focus groups. In work ethics, three CU participants mentioned Americans as “creative” and “punctual,” but not lazy.

#### *2.2.4 The Role of Mass Media in Forming Stereotypes*

Focus groups discussed the role of mass media on stereotypes. Participants used mass media to form many of their ideas about another ethnic group, from physical appearance to personality. Among AU groups, kung fu movies seem to have the biggest influence among all types of media on Americans’ perception of Chinese. One AU participant said that she used to think that all Chinese could fight. Another AU participant described the influence of kung fu movies by saying:

I would have to say kung fu movies (are the biggest influence). I know that was not how people actually are in those types of settings. Those are pretty much ridiculous, but I kind of take it from there...And then get a glimpse of this and that.

In CU focus groups, mass media also have great influence on the perception of Americans. Some CU participants mentioned that they learned about the American way of living from movies and television shows while they learn about politics from the news media. One CU member said, “I like movies about common people’s life. We say ‘art is higher than real life, but it comes from life anyway.’ Therefore, there must be some truth in the movies about America. Of course, there must be modifications and

exaggeration.” Another CU participant answered the question of “sources of information for learning about Americans” by saying,

To me, it’s mainly Hollywood movies (that have influenced me). I feel that America is using Hollywood movies to promote its image to the outside world. They advertise the American way of life. The movies are attractive and people would know more about America. Even though I don’t know how accurate they are, I am/Chinese are affected.

In AU focus groups, three movies were mentioned: *Kung Fu Hustle* (by one participant), *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon* (by two participants), *Rush Hour* (by three participants). From these kung fu movies, American participants noticed the stereotypical differences between Chinese and Americans. For example, one AU group member described Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker in *Rush Hour*, “Chris is a funny guy, and Jackie Chan is more serious...they make a good combination.”

In CU focus groups, even though Hollywood movies as a whole are important sources of information, participants did not specify names of movies. Instead, several television series were mentioned: *Friends*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Gray’s Anatomy*, and especially *Prison Break*. One CU participant specifically talked about how *Prison Break* depicted a different kind of relationship in America and helped him understand that brotherly love, father-daughter attachment, and husband-wife devotion exist in America. He believed that the television depictions were true to a certain degree. He said:

...art is abstraction of life, but art comes from life. There must be something similar (in reality with what is in television). At least it shows that American culture encourages brotherly love...previous media are misleading in saying that Americans are more confrontational and brothers are unlike Chinese brothers who are always kind to each other.

Focus groups were critical of the role mass media have on forming stereotypes. Two AU focus groups talked about how American television made fun of different ethnic groups by using stereotypes. One AU focus group discussed the potential damage television shows could do to other people. One member from this group commented,

I think a lot of what we see as making fun of is just reinforcement of stereotypes, and that's why what we see on TV is pretty consistent. It doesn't show any different views on the Chinese culture. It's always one common outlook, stereotype.

This AU focus group also pointed out that mass media failed as a source of information about other ethnic groups. One of its members said, "I think they failed in the fact that we don't know anything about their culture. We know from the movies and fictional shows, but we don't really know how they actually live."

CU focus groups also criticized Chinese mass media as an inaccurate information source and they realized that it was important to get all sources of information, especially for political issues. They understood that getting information from the Chinese media alone is not enough. For example, one CU participant said, "I

found that as to political issues, nations always defend their own positions. They sometimes only give partial information. You have to get all sources to get a fuller understanding.” Another CU participant from a different focus group said,

Hollywood movies influence my understanding of American life. In politics, it’s my father who appreciates the American system (that influences me). He feels that Chinese television programs are not very free, e.g. Chinese news would not even show the front image of the Taiwan ‘president,’ and this intentional hiding is really unnecessary.

One CU student used You Tube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) regularly for entertainment and also for learning about Americans, because she felt that “Chinese media are not very accurate.”

#### *2.2.5 Effects of Personal Contact on Stereotype Formation*

Most of AU participants’ understanding of Chinese came from observing Asian-Americans. Three AU participants specifically said that they could not distinguish Chinese(-Americans) from other Asian people. Therefore, even though many American participants talked about interacting with Chinese, it is very likely they were referring to Asian-Americans. College classrooms, Chinese restaurants, donut shops, and gas stations were cited as settings where Americans interact with Chinese or Asians, but these places do not provide an appropriate environment for prolonged social interaction. In fact, none of the AU participants had developed close relationships with Chinese or had been involved in meaningful socialization with Chinese. However, despite the limited interaction, personal contact still has a significant influence on perception of

Chinese. Results of the focus groups in both China and America reveal that people are ready to evaluate an outgroup based on their limited contact with that group.

Many AU group members supported their description of Chinese with instances of their previous contact with Asian-Americans. For example, one AU participant said, “my neighbors are Chinese. They have two or three families living together. They all worked. Very family-oriented in coming together to help each other or getting established.” Another AU participant from another focus group said, “I grew up in a small town. Chinese people in my neighborhood always owned small grocery stores, so I assumed that Chinese people were all rich.” Another AU participant felt that Chinese were ALL soft-spoken because he had a professor before (he didn’t mention whether the professor was from China or other Asian countries) and he observed, “She’s really soft-spoken. A lot of students made fun of her and laughed at her. She wouldn’t do anything.”

Participants used these insignificant anecdotes to infer characteristics of Chinese. In addition, contact with Chinese does not necessarily reduce negative stereotypes or inaccurate generalization. One AU participant who used to travel to China summarized his experience in the following statements:

I lived in Guangzhou. And basically, it’s like you are living in a communist country. You just feel that you have to stick with the tour guide. You can’t ask too many questions to the people staying there. You can’t get too involved with what’s going on. You just do the sightseeing and buy a souvenir and get in the car and go back. You can’t interact with people. It’s not like going to Europe,

you can interact with people. It's not like that at all. You just go to the Great Wall and the Square. You only interact with the tour guide. People there don't speak English at all. It's very tight. You don't get the experience as in other countries of interacting with people.

For many Chinese participants, the only exposure to Americans was through their foreign teachers, or *waijiao*—a term that has been used specifically for non-Chinese who teach English in China. One CU participant said, “The only American I had contact with was my foreign teacher in high school. I feel Americans are not shy, especially those who have the courage to come to China are not shy.” Another CU participant believed that Americans were very responsible in work and serious about maintaining social order. She said,

In my senior high I had a foreign teacher. She was always on time. The first time I was a bit late and I felt ashamed. I was never late again. Also, when they wait for buses, (they always wait on line)... they always follow rules. They are unlike Chinese who can bend the rules for acquaintances or grant favors and conveniences (to relatives and friends).

When media representations of another group are challenged by personal contact, the image from personal contact usually overrides media stereotype. For example, when CU participants talked about Americans being more casual about “sexual relationships,” one participant said,

...Of course, in *Sex and the City*, Americans are very casual, but if you talk to Americans, they would tell you that most Americans are not like that, not even



like the 'Friends' depiction. I think the reality is probably somewhere in between: Americans are more casual in sex than Chinese, but less so than depicted in the movies.

Another CU participant recalled his visit to America and how a very important politician showed up at his son's parental meeting despite his busy schedule. The participant thus concluded, "I feel that Americans do attach importance to education, unlike what I heard before (from the mass media): American parents leave (the responsibility of) educating children (to school)."

For the AU sample, even though media stereotype of Asian-Americans is quiet and not social, many American participants who had previous contact with young Asian-Americans realized that this stereotype was no longer true. One AU focus group member said, "I would say that the younger generations are free-spirited and outgoing. I wouldn't say that they are wild, but certainly they have a good time. As opposed to the older generation, they are more reserved." Another AU member said, "They are respectful, (and) more quiet, but that's the older generation. The younger generations are more like Americans. They act the American way." Another AU member observed:

Younger Chinese people sometimes like to rebel, because they've been constrained by their parents too much. So I have several Asian friends and they go wild, because they just love the freedom. (They) go out, make friends and have a good time.

Overall, the focus group analysis provides solid insight into American and Chinese stereotypes in the context of personal contact and media exposure. Based on an analysis of transcriptions of focus group discussions, a list of 17 attributes that are often used to describe Chinese or Americans was created. Among them, hardworking, quiet, obedient, shy, responsible, stingy, polite, and formal were used to describe Chinese; while creative, lazy, social, friendly, outgoing, adventurous, fun-loving, independent, and self-centered were used to describe Americans.

Eight additional attributes were added to the list based on previous literature of Americans or Asian-Americans. They are materialistic, romantic, professional, promiscuous, deceitful, aggressive, shrewd, and wasteful (Maykovich, 1972; Ding, 1999; Willnat, Zhou, & Hao, 1997; Shah, 2003). There are three more attributes that are often used to describe Americans, so three more attributes were taken from Confucius writing to increase the number of attributes that are used to describe Chinese: faithful, generous and frugal (Ornatowski, 1996). The final list consists of 28 attributes: creative, professional, hardworking, lazy, social, quiet, friendly, outgoing, shy, obedient, aggressive, adventurous, independent, self-centered, materialistic, fun-loving, promiscuous, responsible, faithful, romantic, wasteful, frugal, generous, stingy, formal, polite, and deceitful.

### 2.3 Research Questions and Hypotheses

According to previous research, stereotypes of an outgroup tend to be negative while ingroup stereotypes tend to be glorifying (Sheriff, 1962, 1966; Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Rinehart, 1963; Wetherell, 1996). An initial research question was formed to explore

differences in perceptions of Americans and Chinese from both the ingroup perspective and outgroup perspective:

RQ 1: Are there differences among Chinese and Americans in their ingroup and outgroup perceptions along the 28 attributes?

Agenda-setting theory posits that the public adopts their agenda from the mainstream news media. In the American media, the China threat perception has been covered in influential newspapers such as *Wall Street Journals* and *New York Times*. Therefore one hypothesis was formed:

Hypothesis 1a: There is a relationship between the degree of exposure to American news media or relying on American news media for information about China and perceptions of China as a competitor/threat.

Chinese news media reporting has typically followed the government's agenda. After normalization of the relationship with America, China and America have experienced a honeymoon period (Roy, 1996). But since the early 1990s, promotions of nationalism and anti-American sentiments by the Chinese government have increased (Willnat, Zhou & Hao, 1997). When America accuses China of violations of human rights, Chinese news media generally respond with harsh criticism of the American government. A common image of America is *interfering with other nations' internal affairs* or *imposing itself on others* (Wang & Lin, 1992). The *Global Times* (March 7, 2006) survey pointed out that there might be love-and-hate feelings toward America/Americans from the Chinese. Therefore, the second hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1b: There is a relationship between the degree of exposure to the Chinese news media or relying on Chinese news media for information about America and representations of America as *imposing its wishes on other countries*.

Based on cultivation research, there should be a relationship between exposure to entertainment media and construction of social reality. Since the American entertainment media use stereotypical depictions of Chinese-Americans (Lester & Ross, 2003), the next hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the degree of exposure to American entertainment media and perceptions of Chinese.

Because of the lack of research on Chinese entertainment media and stereotypes, it is difficult to form a hypothesis related to this issue. Instead, a research question is offered:

RQ 2: Is the degree of exposure to Chinese entertainment media related to perceptions of Americans?

According to the results of the focus groups study, kung fu movies have been an important source of information for Americans to learn about Chinese while Hollywood movies are important for Chinese learning about Americans. Since kung fu movies and Hollywood movies usually adopt existing stereotypes of ethnic groups, it is assumed that exposure to these genres of media will have effects on formation of stereotypes. Two hypotheses are formed based on this assumption:

Hypothesis 3a: There is a relationship between the degree of exposure to kung fu movies or relying on kung fu movies as a source of information about Chinese and perceptions of Chinese.

Hypothesis 3b: There is a relationship between the degree of exposure to Hollywood movies or relying on Hollywood movies as a source of information about Americans and perceptions of Americans.

Finally, the role of personal contacts and their interaction with media influence in forming social stereotypes are also examined in this study. In line with previous research, it is assumed that:

1) close interracial contacts have positive effects in reducing negative stereotypes (Allport, 1954; Cook, 1978);

2) close interracial contacts mitigate negative media stereotypes, and a combination of personal contact with low media exposure is the best method to eliminate negative stereotypes (Armstrong, Neuendorf, & Brentar, 1992).

Therefore, two hypotheses are formed:

Hypothesis 4a: Previous contact with members from another ethnic group is related to positive perceptions of that ethnic group.

Hypothesis 4b: Larger differences in perceiving stereotypes of another ethnic group will be found between people who rely heavily on media instead of personal contact for information versus those who rely more on personal contact instead of the media for information about the target group.

Having stated the research questions and hypotheses, the next chapter describes the survey design, procedure and results.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD-SURVEY

Based on the research questions and hypotheses, a questionnaire was designed and 400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the two universities where focus groups were conducted in the southern United States and Beijing. Responses were collected, analyzed and presented in this chapter.

#### 3.1 Survey Design

The survey was designed to test the effects of media exposure and previous contact on the specific stereotypes of another ethnic group and the valence of such stereotypes (positive; negative; neutral).

##### *3.1.1 Measurement of the Stereotypes Variable*

Previous stereotype research focuses on the attributes of ethnic groups. For example, Katz and Braly (1933) developed an inventory consisting of 84 “character traits.” The list was presented to 84 college students, and they checked five adjectives to describe whites, blacks, and other ethnic groups. Then researchers counted the frequency of these character traits. This measurement has been adopted by many researchers (Gilbert, 1951).

Buchanan (1953) used the same adjective checklist procedure for his experiment. He employed a 12-adjective list for his survey. The list was presented to a

thousand subjects in each of the eight countries: Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States. However, even though the adjective checklist method was popular for many years, it was criticized because it failed to capture the structure of stereotype (Brigham, 1971; Funk, Horowitz, Lipshitz, & Young, 1976).

Guichard & Connolly (1977) used ten traits for his study: artistic, cruel, industrious, intelligent, lazy, pugnacious, scientific, shrewd, sportsmanlike, and superstitious. Subjects were asked to evaluate five ethnic groups: Blacks, Chicanos, American Indians, Asians and Whites. Each subject was given a total number of 100 numbers which they apportioned to each of the five ethnic groups. At last, the percentage weights were added together and divided by the total number of respondents, producing an arithmetic average weight for each trait. The researchers were thus able to compare the weights the different subject groups assigned to different ethnic groups.

The survey used in this study employs a pre-defined list of 28 attributes. Willnat, Zhou, & Hao (1997) argued that the advantages of using a pre-defined list in measuring individual stereotypes far outweighed the disadvantages, because a free response methodology would yield virtually limitless responses. In this study, respondents are asked to rate statements such as “Americans are hardworking” on a 1-5 scale with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 5 representing “strongly agree.” The advantage with using a Likert-scale is that it transfers nominal attributes into meaningful numerical values and allows for T-tests and other tests of relationships. The



questionnaire is designed such that respondents would rate attributes of an outgroup before they rate attributes of their own group.

### *3.1.2 Measurement of the Media Exposure Variable*

In measuring media effects, both agenda-setting theory and cultivation theory have provided some useful insight to the current study's methodology. Agenda-setting research usually involves analyzing the mass media agenda and examining the public opinion to see whether there is a relationship between the two (McCombs, & Shaw, 1972, 1977). Cultivation analysis is a method of first defining consistent themes from television presentation and then determining how much these themes contribute to viewers' conceptions of social reality (Gerbner, 1994). The current study draws upon agenda-setting, framing and cultivation analysis research without involving an actual content analysis of mass media.

In measuring media exposure, Gerbner *et al.* (1979, 1980) used a general assessment by asking people to assess the total hour of television viewing regardless of the types of programs. Potter (1990) measured exposure to genres by asking respondents to estimate the hours they watched 12 television genres (situation comedies, action adventure, primetime soap operas, daytime soap operas, news, movies on television, sports, talk show, music on television, game shows, cartoons and other). Hawkins, Pingree & Adler (1987) asked respondents to fill out a viewing diary for all programs and the number of minutes they viewed each during the measurement period (Potter, 1994). In the current study, Potter and Gerbner's method was used by asking respondents to report the number of hours they spend on

consuming mass media. For the purpose of the study, mass media are not limited to television, and it was not necessary to divide television watching into different programs. This study attempted to determine general consumption of two types of mass media: the news media and the entertainment media. Shim (1998) referred to the entertainment media as consisting of film, drama, and other entertainment-based texts in print media and television. In this survey, the entertainment media were subcategorized into movies and situational comedies. The news media were divided into domestic news media and international news media.

### *3.1.3 Measurement of the Interracial Contact Variable*

Previous contact with Americans/Chinese is measured by the number of contacts and degrees of relationship in this study. Respondents are asked to report how many Chinese or Americans they have had contact with within the last four years. In a follow-up question respondents are asked to describe the closest relationship (if any) they've had with an American/Chinese on a 1-5 scale with 1 representing "distant relationship" and 5 representing "close relationship."

### *3.1.4 Media Reliance and Personal Contact Reliance*

In addition to measuring media exposure and previous contacts in numbers, this study also asks respondents to rate the importance of the news media, entertainment media, kung fu movies or Hollywood movies, and previous personal contact in their understanding of Chinese/Americans on a 1-5 scale with 1 representing "not important influence" and 5 representing "strong influence." The purpose was to find out whether the respondent mainly relied on mass media or personal contact in forming stereotypes.

The method provides a way to measure differences of perceptions of another group between people who have relied on personal contact and those who have relied on mass media. Dong & Murrilo (2007) used a similar measurement in their study. Subjects were asked to express their agreement with statements such as “I talk with Hispanic Americans very often” and “I learn about other races by watching TV” on Likert scales. The measurement was found effective in establishing a correlation between television viewing and negative stereotypes of Hispanic Americans.

For the American sample, previous personal contact is also divided into contact with Asian-Americans and contact with Chinese from China. The rationale behind such division is that most Americans cannot distinguish Asian-Americans from Chinese (Kawai, 2005); either type of contact could be counted as interracial contact because of the similarity of Asian cultures.

### 3.2 Survey Procedure and Results

Convenience samples of college students were drawn from AU in America and CU in Beijing. Professors from both universities helped to recruit volunteers from their students. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed in the two universities. The number of participants was deemed appropriate because previously, Tan (1982) used 180 Chinese students in America and 187 American undergraduate students as subjects for his study. In addition, recruiters in the current study tried to draw respondents from various disciplines and to obtain gender balance.

One hundred eight valid responses from the CU sample and 156 valid responses from the AU sample were collected. All data were entered into SPSS for analysis. In

the AU sample, there were 43.6% ( $N=68$ ) male participants and 56.4% females ( $N=88$ ). Sixty-four percent ( $N=100$ ) of them were Caucasians, 19.9% ( $N=31$ ) of them were African Americans, 14.1% ( $N=22$ ) of them were Hispanics, 1.9% were of other ethnic backgrounds. Thirty-five percent ( $N=55$ ) of them majored in communication studies, 32.7% ( $N=51$ ) in business, and the rest of them were from various other majors or undeclared. In the CU sample, forty percent ( $N=69$ ) were male participants and 60% ( $N=108$ ) females. The majority of Chinese participants belonged to the Han Chinese (91.7%,  $N=165$ ), the dominant ethnic group in China. Sixty-two percent of them majored in business ( $N=112$ ), 12.8% ( $N=23$ ) of them in communication, and 5% ( $N=9$ ) of them in English. The mean age for the American sample was 21.72 and the mean age for the Chinese sample was 19.81.

### *3.2.1 Ingroup and Outgroup Stereotypes*

Respondents were asked to choose from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree” that an outgroup—Chinese or Americans—possesses the following attributes: creative, professional, hardworking, lazy, social, quiet, friendly, outgoing, shy, obedient, aggressive, adventurous, independent, self-centered, materialistic, fun-loving, promiscuous, responsible, faithful, romantic, wasteful, frugal, generous, stingy, formal, polite, shrewd, and deceitful. Therefore, each attribute has a mean score from the American sample and the Chinese sample, representing how respondents from each country perceive this attribute as typical of the other ethnic group.

Results showed that American sample agreed that 4 out of 28 attributes are more typical of Chinese, as their arithmetic average scores on a 5-point scale exceeded

4, indicating stronger perceptions of these attributes. These four attributes are: hardworking ( $M=4.46$ ), formal ( $M=4.24$ ), professional ( $M=4.24$ ), and obedient ( $M=4.09$ ). In addition, 7 attributes have mean ratings ranging from 3.5 to 4, indicating moderate perceptions. They are: responsible ( $M=3.93$ ), polite ( $M=3.88$ ), faithful ( $M=3.74$ ), quiet ( $M=3.72$ ), creative ( $M=3.62$ ), friendly ( $M=3.59$ ), and shy ( $M=3.52$ )

The Chinese sample perceived the following attributes to be more stereotypical of Americans, each with an average score of more than 4 on a 5-point scale, indicating stronger perceptions of these attributes: independent ( $M=4.43$ ), social ( $M=4.26$ ), adventurous ( $M=4.22$ ), creative ( $M=4.24$ ), and outgoing ( $M=4.03$ ). In addition, six attributes have mean ratings ranging from 3.5 to 4, indicating moderate perceptions of these attributes. They are: aggressive ( $M=3.75$ ), professional ( $M=3.74$ ), romantic ( $M=3.71$ ), self-centered ( $M=3.68$ ), formal ( $M=3.67$ ), and polite ( $M=3.51$ ).

There is high level of agreement in the perceptions of attributes assigned to Chinese and Americans from both samples. For example, both the CU sample and AU sample perceived Chinese to be stereotypical of hardworking, as the typicality ratings from both samples exceeded 4 on a 5-point scale. Both the CU sample and AU sample perceived Americans to be stereotypical of social, adventurous and outgoing, because each attribute has a mean score of above 4 from both the AU sample and the CU sample.

In response to the first research question exploring differences among both Chinese and American ingroups, it was found that there were significant differences of ratings of attributes typicality between ingroup members and outgroup members. For

example, compared with the Chinese sample, the American sample perceived Americans to be more social, friendly, aggressive, self-centered, materialistic, fun-loving, promiscuous and wasteful. At the same time, Americans perceive Chinese as less sociable than Chinese perceive themselves to be. For example, compared with ratings from the Chinese sample, the American respondents rated Chinese as more quiet and shy, and less friendly and outgoing.

### *3.2.2 Reliance on Media and Personal Contact*

Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of the news media, entertainment media, *kung fu* movies or Hollywood movies, and personal contact with outgroup members—Asian-Americans/Chinese or Americans/Europeans—in their understanding of that group on a 1-5 scale with 1 representing “not important influence” and 5 representing “strong influence.” The bar graphs on the following page present ratings from both American and Chinese samples.

One can see from these graphs that the AU sample considered personal contact with Asian Americans ( $M=3.89$ ) as the most importance source of information about China/Chinese; while Hollywood movies is the most important source of information for the Chinese sample to understand America/Americans ( $M=4.03$ ).

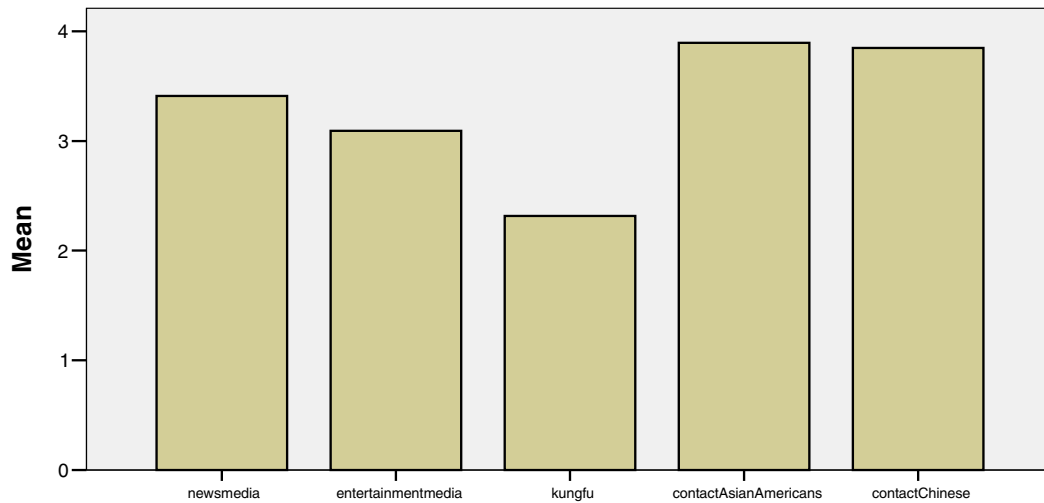


Figure 3.1 Importance of different sources for information about Chinese

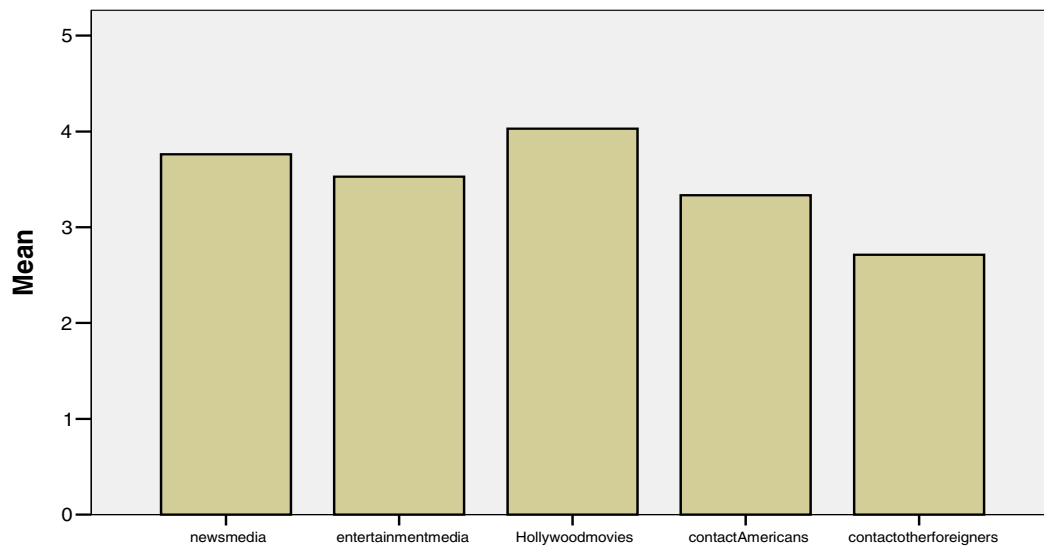


Figure 3.2 Importance of different sources for information about Americans

### 3.2.3 News Media Agenda and Public Agenda

Hypotheses 1a and 1b relate to the relationship between the news media agenda and public perceptions. Hypothesis 1a predicts that Americans who rely more heavily

on news for information about China or who consume more news media are more likely to perceive China as a competitor/threat. Three questions were constructed to measure “perceiving China as a competitor/threat.” Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree with the following three statements on a 1-5 Likert-scale: 1) China and America are competitors economically; 2) China is trying to compete with America in military strength; 3) China is an economic threat to America. Because the three questions measured different dimensions of the same concept, a new variable named *China threat* was constructed by adding responses from three questions.

Independent T-tests results showed that compared with the Chinese sample, the American sample is more likely to perceive China as a competitor/threat ( $p=.000$ ; Chinese sample mean=8.51; American sample mean=10.48; range of responses: 3-15).

No significant correlations were found between exposure to American news media (measured in “hours per week”) and perceiving China as a “threat.” In addition, an independent sample T-test reveals no significant difference in perceiving China as a “threat” between those Americans who are exposed to more than 4 hours of American news media (heavy news media consumption group) and those who are exposed to 4 or fewer than 4 hours of American news media (light news media consumption group). The mean for light news consumption group was 10.17 and the mean was 10.85 for the heavy news media consumption group. However, significant correlations were found between relying on the American news media in understanding China and perceiving China as a threat ( $r =.206, p < .05$ ). Hypothesis 1a is supported in that there is a



relationship between relying on American news media for information about China and perceiving China as a competitor/threat.

For the Chinese sample, Hypothesis 1b was tested by examining the relationship between the use of Chinese news media and perceptions of the statement “America imposes itself on other countries.” No significant correlations were found between relying on Chinese news media as a source of information and perceiving America as imposing itself; nor was there a correlation between news media consumption and perceiving America as imposing. Therefore, Hypothesis 1b is not supported. An independent sample T-test revealed that there were significant differences between the Chinese sample and American sample in perceptions of America as imposing ( $p=.01$ ; Chinese sample mean=4.37; American sample mean=4.10).

#### *3.2.4 Entertainment Media on Stereotypes*

Pearson tests showed significant negative correlations between the number of hours American respondents consumed entertainment media and perceiving Chinese as “materialistic” ( $r= -.246, p < .01$ ). Hypothesis 2 is only partially supported: entertainment media consumption is negatively related to perceptions of Chinese as materialistic.

The number of hours Chinese spend consuming entertainment media is significantly correlated to perceiving Americans as “self-centered” ( $r = -.186, p < .05$ ), and “promiscuous” ( $r = -.157, p < .05$ ). RQ 2 asks whether the degree of exposure to the Chinese entertainment media is related to perceptions of Americans. Findings from Pearson correlation test showed that there was a negative relationship between

entertainment media consumption and perceptions of Americans as self-centered and promiscuous.

### *3.2.5 Kung fu Movies and Hollywood Movies on Stereotypes*

Kung fu movies were perceived by American respondents as a relatively unimportant source of information in understanding China or Chinese. The mean score for “importance of source” is 2.39, compared with 3.39 for American news media and 3.17 for American entertainment media. No significant correlations were found between the number of hours people spend on kung fu movies per year and perceptions of Chinese. Nor were there correlations between relying on kung fu movies as information about Chinese and perceptions of Chinese. Therefore, Hypothesis 3a is not supported: there is not a relationship between the use of kung fu movies and perceptions of Chinese.

Hollywood movies seem to have the strongest influence on Chinese respondents’ understanding of America and Americans. The mean rating for relying on Hollywood movie as source of information about China/Chinese is 4.08, compared with 3.71 for Chinese news media and 3.59 for Chinese entertainment media. Significant correlations were found between the importance of Hollywood movies for information about Americans and perceptions of Americans as friendly ( $r = .199$ ,  $p < .05$ ), aggressive ( $r = -.154$ ,  $p < .05$ ), materialistic ( $r = -.151$ ,  $p < .05$ ), promiscuous ( $r = -.172$ ,  $p < .05$ ), generous ( $r = .149$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and stingy ( $r = -.151$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In addition, the number of times Chinese students watch Hollywood movies per month is related to

Chinese perceiving Americans as obedient ( $r = .201, p < .01$ ), aggressive ( $r = -.156, p < .05$ ) and shrewd ( $r = -.157, p < .05$ ). Results are presented in the following table:

Table 3.1 Correlations between Hollywood Movies Reliance or Exposure and Perceptions of Americans

	The Importance of Hollywood Movies as a Source of Information for Understanding Americans	The number of times that Hollywood movies are watched per month
friendly	.199*	.032
Obedient	.082	.201**
Aggressive	-.154*	-.156*
Materialistic	-.151*	-.044
Promiscuous	-.172*	-.023
Generous	.149*	-.031
Stingy	-.151*	.051
shrewd	-.135	-.157*

Therefore, Hypothesis 3b is supported in that there is a relationship between the use of Hollywood movies and perceptions of Americans.

### 3.2.6 Personal Interracial Contact on Stereotypes

Personal contact with people from another culture is another variable used in this study. For the American sample, personal contact with Asian-Americans or Chinese from China is the most important source of information compared with American news media and American entertainment media. Four instruments in the questionnaire are used to measure previous contact: 1) ratings of importance of relying

on personal contact with Asian-Americans for information about China/Chinese on a 1-5 scale with 1 representing “not important influence” and 5 representing “strong influence” ( $M=3.89$ ); 2) ratings of importance of relying on personal contact with Chinese for information about China/Chinese on a 1-5 scale ( $M=3.84$ ); 3) the number of Chinese in contact with within the last four years ( $M=5.06$ ); 4) definition of the closest relationship with Chinese on a 1-5 scale with 1 representing “distant relationship” while 5 representing “close relationship” ( $M=2.33$ ).

In order to determine the relationship between each variable and perception of attributes, Pearson correlations tests were used and results are presented in the following table.

Table 3.2 Pearson Correlations between Personal Contact with Asian-Americans/Chinese and Stereotypes

	Reliance on contacts with Asian-Americans	Reliance on contacts with Chinese	The number of Chinese in contact with in the last four years	The closeness of relationship with Chinese
Quiet	-.008	-.019	-.244**	-.112
Friendly	.176*	.096	.103	.062
Materialistic	.197*	.192*	-.147	-.062
Fun-loving	.204*	.167*	.054	.091
Stingy	-.055	-.119	.027	-.200
formal	.088	.080	.085	.186*
polite	.008	-.032	.088	.182*

The table reveals that the importance of personal contact with Asian-Americans for information about Chinese is positively related to perceiving Chinese as “friendly,”

“materialistic,” and “fun-loving.” The importance of personal contact with Chinese is positively related to perceptions of Chinese as “materialistic” and “fun-loving.” Negative correlations were found between the number of Chinese the American respondent has been in contact with and perceptions of Chinese as “quiet.” The closeness of relationship with Chinese was found to be positively related to perceptions of Chinese as “formal” and “polite.”

Compared with other sources of information, contact with Americans is the least important source for Chinese to understand Americans. However, personal contact with Americans seems to be a stronger indicator of perception of Americans. Previous contact with Americans is measured by three instruments: 1) ratings of importance of relying on personal contact with Americans for information about America/Americans on a 1-5 scale with 1 representing “not important influence” and 5 representing “strong influence” ( $M=3.33$ ); 2) the number of Americans one has in contact with in the last four years ( $M=2.75$ ); 3) description of the closeness of relationship ( $M=2.04$ ). One might notice that in the Chinese sample, personal contact with non-American foreigners is not considered because the focus groups discussion and survey results indicated that this is not an important variable. The following table presents findings from Pearson correlation tests.

Table 3.3 shows that at least one of the three instruments are positively related to perceptions of Americans as “hardworking,” “friendly,” “responsible,” “frugal” and “polite,” and negatively related to perceptions of Americans as “aggressive,” “adventurous,” “self-centered,” “materialistic,” “fun-loving,” “promiscuous,”

“wasteful” and “shrewd.” Therefore, Hypothesis 4a is supported: personal contact in both the Chinese and American samples is related to more positive perceptions of the other group.

Table 3.3 Pearson Correlations between Personal Contact with Americans and Stereotype

	Reliance on personal contacts with Americans	The number of Americans in contact with in the last four years	The closeness of relationship with Americans
Hardworking	.126	.222**	-.006
Friendly	.146	.101	.156*
Aggressive	-.147*	-.152*	-.152*
Adventurous	-.136	-.241**	-.200**
Self-centered	-.196*	-.148	-.134
Materialistic	-.171*	-.099	-.110
Fun-loving	-.177*	-.068	-.084
Promiscuous	-.258**	-.181*	-.197**
Responsible	.200**	-.004	.146
Romantic	.033	-.260**	-.113
Wasteful	-.225**	-.104	-.029
Frugal	.193**	.056	.068
Polite	.050	.171*	.242**
Shrewd	.042	.095	-.150*

### 3.2.7 Interaction of the Mass Media and Personal Contact

The interaction of media and personal contact with stereotypes is tested by comparing four groups on two dimensions: media influence and previous contact. Ratings from the importance of the new media and the entertainment media for sources

of information were added up to form a new variable: media influence. Respondents in the media influence variable were divided into two groups: one with low media influence and one with high media influence. Respondents who rated the importance of personal contact were divided into another two groups: low contact influence and high contact influence. In the new variable, there are four groups: those with low media influence & low contact influence (LL Group); low media influence & high contact influence (LH Group); high media influence & low contact influence (HL Group); high media influence & high contact influence (HH group). In the Chinese sample, media influence was replaced with a variable measuring the influence of Hollywood movies because this variable had the strongest influence in understanding Americans among the Chinese sample.

An ANOVA analysis on the American sample shows that there are significant differences between LL and HH in perceiving Chinese as “deceitful” (LL mean=2.33; HH mean=1.77) and “independent,” (LL mean=3.13; HH mean=3.85) but there are no differences in perceptions of Chinese between LH and HL groups.

An ANOVA analysis reveals significant differences among the Chinese sample in perceptions of Americans as “friendly,” “self-centered,” “promiscuous,” “responsible” and “formal” among the four groups. Independent sample T-test between groups yielded interesting findings: no significant differences were found between LH and HL group except for perceptions of Americans as lazy (LH group mean=2.52; HL group mean=2.90) and responsible (LH group mean=2.94; HL group mean=2.57), but significant differences were found between LL and HH group in perceptions of

Americans as “friendly,” “aggressive,” “materialistic,” “self-centered,” “promiscuous,” “responsible,” “polite,” and “formal.” These differences are captured with the following table:

Table 3.4 Differences of Independent Sample T-Test between HH and LL Groups among the Chinese Sample

	Significance Level	High Media Influence & High Contact Influence	Low Media Influence & Low Contact Influence
Friendly	.002	3.67	3.13
Aggressive	.047	3.56	3.93
Materialistic	.017	3.21	3.61
self-centered	.034	3.38	3.85
Promiscuous	.003	2.69	3.26
Responsible	.041	2.87	2.52
Polite	.001	3.82	3.38
Formal	.019	4.08	3.41

Compared with LL group, HH group perceive Americans as more friendly, less aggressive, less materialistic, less self-centered, less promiscuous, more responsible, more polite and more formal.

Therefore, Hypothesis 4b is not supported. The biggest differences in ethnic perceptions were not found between high media influence & low contact group and low media influence & high contact group. Instead, larger differences in perceptions were



found between low media influence & low contact influence group and high media influence & high contact influence group.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

Focus groups analysis and the survey based on focus group results yielded many interesting findings, some consistent with previous research while others were not. In this section, these findings will be discussed.

#### 4.1 Chinese and American Stereotypes

The current study supports the notion that stereotypes exist for both Americans and Chinese. Both groups have high consensus as to the attributes that are typical of Chinese and Americans. The 28 attributes included in the current study are based on previous literature and focus group discussion in both America and China. It is not surprising that both the Chinese sample and American sample agree on the typicality of attributes used to describe each group. In sum, perceptions of Chinese as hardworking and Americans as social, adventurous and outgoing are strong from both the AU sample and the CU sample. The current study suggests that Chinese and Americans are not only aware of the stereotypes of another ethnic group, but they also accept the stereotypes ascribed to their own group.

This study employs Hampson's (1987) social desirability (SDY) values of 573 personality terms and Anderson's (1968) likableness ratings of 555 personality trait words to discuss the valence of attributes. The Hampson SDY (social desirability) ratings were taken from Norman (1967) on a scale from 1 (extremely undesirable) to 9

(extremely desirable). The Anderson likableness ratings ranged from 0 to 6, with 0 being defined as “least favorable or desirable” and 6 as “most favorable or desirable.” The Hampson study used 50 adult raters from Britain and Anderson used 100 American raters. Both rating systems are used in this study because neither one covers all the 28 attributes.

According to Hampson & Anderson, adventurous, creative, faithful, friendly, fun-loving, generous, independent, obedient, outgoing, polite, responsible, romantic, social and shrewd are positive attributes (SDY or likableness values exceeding the median value). Eight attributes are perceived to be negative. They are: deceitful, formal, lazy, materialistic, stingy, shy, self-centered, and wasteful. *Quiet* is rated as a neutral trait. *Aggressive* is considered as a negative attribute according to Hampson SDY but as a positive attribute according to Anderson likableness value. The rest of the attributes—hardworking, frugal, professional and promiscuous—are not covered by Hampson & Anderson.

Based on the positive-negative continuum, this study found that the American sample did not display ingroup favoritism and outgroup denigration. Top attributes that American respondents ascribed to Chinese are all positive words, but two attributes the AU respondents strongly agreed that Americans possessed—materialistic and self-centered—are negative traits according to Anderson likableness indices. One possible explanation is that the AU sample has been more influenced by the media depictions of Americans and adopted these *stereotypical* perceptions. The average hours of media consumption, including domestic news, international news, entertainment news, sports,

movies, and situational comedies, are 25.14 for the AU sample and 16.36 for the CU sample. This difference is significant at  $p=.002$ . Previous research has found Anglo Americans are stereotyped as *materialistic* and *individualistic* by the mass media (Ding, 1999; Maykovich, 1972; Tan, 1982). While the AU sample is exposed to these stereotypical perceptions of Americans, the CU sample might not be aware of these depictions.

The Chinese sample demonstrated ingroup favorism and outgroup denigration. All the attributes that CU respondents perceived to be typical of Chinese people have positive connotations, while they perceived Americans to be typical of aggressive (CU sample  $M=3.75$ ) and self-centered (CU sample  $M=3.68$ ), both of which are negative attributes according to Hampson SDY indices.

The design of attribute list might have something to do with the demonstrated difference in ingroup favorism between American sample and the Chinese sample. Among the 28 attributes that are used by either focus groups or previous research to describe Chinese, only three attributes are negative: shy, stingy and deceitful. In contrast, five attributes that are used to describe Americans are negative (according to Hampson SDY values): aggressive, lazy, self-centered, materialistic, and wasteful. In addition, promiscuous has negative connotation and it has been used to describe Americans.

Another explanation of this difference is that Chinese respondents in the study have stronger group identity than American respondents. According to Tajfel (1972), individuals derive their identity from their ingroup and the need to maintain self-worth

or self-esteem leads to favoring the ingroup. Therefore, when individuals have stronger group identity, they are more likely to develop ingroup favoritism. Chinese and Americans might have different sense of group membership due to their difference in Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions. According to the collectivism/individualism dimension, in collectivist cultures such as the Chinese culture, individuals consider themselves as parts of one or more groups while in individualistic cultures such as the American culture, individuals view themselves as independent of groups (Triandis, 1995). Therefore, when Chinese respondents evaluated Americans or Chinese, they had more invested interest as their self-worth was at stake. American respondents were more likely to consider themselves as independent of their ingroup, and their evaluations of the ingroup were therefore more critical.

#### 4.2 Model Minority vs. Social Animals

The study confirms Rinehart's (1963) assertion about the mutual exclusiveness of stereotypic depictions of groups. While Chinese were perceived by the AU sample as more typical of being hardworking, formal, professional and obedient, the Americans were perceived by the CU sample as more typical of independent, social, adventurous, creative and outgoing.

All the attributes that received strongest perceptions of Chinese from the AU sample are related to work habits and portrayed Chinese as good employees. Perceptions of Chinese fall into stereotypes of Asian-Americans—*Model Minority*. Asian-Americans have been stereotyped as *hardworking* in previous research (Maykovich, 1972; Kitano, 1981; Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998). Results from

this study suggest that Americans do not distinguish Chinese from Asian Americans, which is consistent with research from Kawai (2005) who said, “Racial stereotypes of the yellow race do not distinguish yellows here from yellows there—Asian Americans from Asians, Chinese from Japanese, or Koreans from Vietnamese.” (p.111) American focus groups also mentioned the difficulty to distinguish one Asian from another. Therefore, the Model Minority image of Asian-Americans also applies to Chinese in China.

However, while the Model Minority image is positive regarding work ethics, the negative side of this image is that Asian-Americans may be perceived as less sociable and workaholics (Lee & Joo, 2005). Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin (1998) argue that model minority is accompanied with silent minority: Asian-Americans conform to the norms and values of the majority group and are under its control. The current study found that *obedient* (strong perception of Chinese) and *quiet* (moderate perceptions of Chinese) are stereotypes of Chinese from the AU sample, which contribute to the image of the model and silent minority.

AU focus groups have used “boring,” “studying all the time,” “they are like robots,” and “they seem to be always on a mission” to describe Chinese. AU focus groups seemed to indicate that hardworking is not as desirable as sociable. They talked about their ingroup: “we are more relaxed” or “we like to have our fun.” These descriptions portrayed Chinese as workaholics who do not know how to have fun, in contrast to Americans who are social and outgoing.

The CU sample had high agreement that Americans were social and outgoing. These are positive attributes. However, basing understanding of another ethnic group on stereotypical attributes is always a dangerous behavior and may have negative consequences in cross-cultural communication. Stereotypes of Americans as social and outgoing lead to expectations of Americans as social animals and if an American is not social, he may be perceived as unfriendly. For example, one CU focus group member described her formal American teacher as unfriendly and possessing a sense of superiority over Chinese because she did not interact with Chinese students. Chinese focus group members could tolerate Chinese faculty who do not interact with students, but they would criticize Americans who behave in the same way.

#### 4.3 China Threat and American Imposition

The current study suggests that *China threat* perception exists among the AU sample. The image of China threat reflects the dialectics of Yellow Peril and Model Minority. The Yellow Peril stereotype was rooted deep in a fear that Chinese immigrants were competing for farm land with white farmers and for low-paying jobs with unskilled poor whites in early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Shim, 1998; Rice, Shafer, & Freedman, 2005; Shah, 2003). Currently, the Yellow Peril image coexists with the Model Minority image because of the complexity of China-U.S. relationship. On the one hand, the two countries depend on each other for business and trade; on the other hand, China's exceptional economic growth and rising military power are considered as a threat to America (Roy, 1996; Lee, 2002).

Okimoto (1994) argued that the yellow peril and model minority were not opposite poles. “Moving in one direction along the circle, the model minority mitigates the alleged danger of the yellow peril, whereas reversing direction, the model minorities, if taken too far, can become the yellow peril.” (p.142) Asian-Americans or Chinese in America work hard and succeed, they do not pose threat when they are *obedient* (Paek & Shah, 2003; Kawai, 2005), but when the country poses a threat to America, the Yellow Peril stereotype becomes salient. .

The study found that the *China threat* perception is related to use of American news media. Even though this study was not preceded by an extensive content analysis of news media frames in America about China, media discourse of China as the US’s imagined enemy—an economic and military competitor—has been discussed in other studies (Pan, 2004; Mann, 1997; Lee, 2002). For example, Butler (2005) described China as America’s closest competitor in defense spending, even though U.S. defense spending was seven times that of China in 2005. In economic terms, *New York Times* articles such as “Emerging Markets, Emerging Giant”, “China Economy Rising at Pace to Rival U.S” and “Staring into the Mouth of the Trade Deficit” focused on the U.S.-China competition instead of cooperation. There are many aspects of China that the U.S. media could cover, but the *competitiveness* aspect is given more salience. This process is what Entman (1993) called framing—making certain aspects of reality more salient, mainly through “selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (Tankard, 1991, p.3). According to Entman (1993), potential outcomes of framing include defining problems, identifying causes, making moral judgment and suggesting



solutions. Therefore, mass media's framing of China as a competitor/threat might lead to the public's identifying competition from China as one of the causes of economic problems that the U.S. faces.

Use of Chinese news media does not have a significant correlation with perceiving America as imposing. This finding is contrary to the 2006 *Global Times* survey conducted in China, which found that respondents perceived America as hegemonic, and they reported that their perception was influenced by the mass media.

The difference in findings between this study and the *Global Times* survey might be in the methodology. The *Global Times* survey is not academic research and the results are presented in basic descriptive information. In that survey, no correlation tests or tests of difference were used to conclude that people's perception was the result of mass media consumption. Another explanation of difference is due to the samples used in these two studies. In this study, a sample of college students instead of household owners was used. College students are more exposed to the Western influence and culture, and they are able to access different sources of media. Some Chinese focus group members mentioned that the media in China are propaganda serving the interest of the government. Therefore, the population that this sample represented might be more informed and less susceptible to the Chinese media agenda. This supports the agenda melding concept developed by Shaw, McCombs, Weaver & Hamm (1999). Agenda melding theory argues that individuals move towards or away from groups by joining agendas and the press is a form of community in a sense.

Therefore, the Chinese college participants might have chosen not to join the Chinese media agenda.

Even though this study does not establish a relationship between perceptions of America as imposing and use of the Chinese news media, the study indicates that the perception of America as imposing exists among the Chinese sample, because the mean value in agreeing with the statement that America imposes itself on other countries among the CU sample is 4.37, which is high on a 1-5 scale. This value is significantly different from that of the American sample, which is 4.10 ( $p=.010$ ). Therefore, despite the no-correlation results, the Chinese news media may be a contributing factor for perceptions of America as imposing. The results indicate that the *American imposition* image has been so pervasively framed by the Chinese mass media that the amount of media consumption does not make a difference in the degree of perception of America as imposing. Just as Gerbner and Gross (1994) argue, in a relatively stable social structure, cultivation implies a commonality of outlooks. In this study, the commonality of outlooks is perceiving America as imposing. The study suggests that in China, when there is no competing agenda against the mainstream media agenda, media effects cannot be measured by differences in perceptions between heavy vs. light media users. Instead, a better indicator of media effects is examining the correlations between dominant and repetitive media message and the public's perceptions.

#### 4.4 Entertainment Media and Perceptions of Chinese and Americans

Entertainment media consumption has different effects on the CU sample and the AU sample in perceptions of the other group. Even though AU focus groups

discussed the negative portrayal of Asian-Americans by the mass media, entertainment media exposure among the AU sample is not related to perceptions of Chinese. It might be due to the insignificant role that the media play in stereotyping Chinese. It is possible that Asian-Americans are not covered by the media enough to cultivate people's perception. For example, Lee & Joo (2005) noticed that even though the frequency of Asian Americans representation in magazine ads was higher than its actual percentage, these ads more frequently appeared in technology and business product categories.

The study found that exposure to the entertainment media among the CU sample is related to less stereotypical perceptions of Americans. While previous research found Americans to be stereotyped as *individualistic* and *promiscuous* (Tan, 1982; Willnat, Zhou & Hao, 1997), this study found that exposure to the entertainment media is related to Americans being perceived as less *self-centered* and *promiscuous*. Since *self-centered* and *promiscuous* are negative attributes, the Chinese media might be responsible for positive evaluations of Americans. This can be explained by the Chinese media's positive portrayals of Americans. American characters appears as main characters in the popular TV soap dramas such as *Beijingers in New York* (1993, directed by Zheng, Xiaolong), *Foreign Babes in Beijing* (1996, directed by Wang, Binglin, & Li, Jianxin), and *Foreign Wife & Local Man* (2000, directed by Xu, Zhibin). Except for David in *Beijingers in New York*, most American characters in Chinese popular TV dramas are portrayed in a positive light. Therefore, a Chinese audience

who has been exposed to the entertainment media might be influenced by the television portrayals of Americans with positive stereotypes.

#### 4.5 Hollywood Movies and Perceptions of Americans

Watching Hollywood movies is the most important source of information for the Chinese sample in understanding America and Americans, but watching Hollywood movies is not related to perceiving Americans more negatively. This contradicts Willnat, Zhou & Hao's (1997) finding, which says that foreign media consumption in Shenzhen (China) is related to negative stereotypical perceptions of Americans. It also does not follow from previous literature which indicates that Hollywood movies portray American society as affluent and violent (Espo, 1999a, b) and describe Americans as aggressive, self-centered and promiscuous (Tan, 1982; Willnat, Zhou & Hao, 1997). Therefore, people who rely more on Hollywood movies instead of personal contact for information about Americans would perceive Americans as more aggressive and more promiscuous. However, respondents in this study negated these assumptions. There is negative association between Hollywood movies consumption and perceiving Americans as *aggressive* and *self-centered*.

There are three possible explanations. First, even though Hollywood movies might be the only source of information for some Chinese respondents to learn about America, the amount of Hollywood movies viewing is not enough for cultivation to take effect. Among the 180 Chinese respondents, only 8 responded watching more than 5 Hollywood movies a month. Over 95% of respondents watch no more than 5 Hollywood movies a month.

The second explanation has to do with Hollywood depiction of Americans. The predominant characters in Hollywood movies are Anglo Americans, and whiteness is not usually negatively stereotyped in Hollywood movies (Part, et al., 2006). Some researchers even argue that Hollywood movies reinforce hegemonic ideas of racial and cultural superiority of whiteness (Tierney, 2006), or view cultural flow from America to the less developed countries as cultural imperialism that promotes Western values. May (1980), for example, argues that the distribution of Hollywood films has facilitated the reception and “utopian aspirations of American life.” (p.198) In China, imported movies are supervised and censored by the China Film Bureau and only movies with progressive themes are selected and movies with overly violent and sexually explicit scenes are screened out (Su, 2004). This might contribute to the perceptions of Americans as less aggressive and promiscuous among the Chinese sample than the perceptions of Americans among American sample.

The third explanation is that Chinese viewers who watch Hollywood movies might have special interest to American culture or might be more receptive of American way of life and American values. Zhang & Harwood (2002), for example, have found that watching imported movies negatively predicted endorsement of traditional Chinese values. Therefore, watching Hollywood movies may not be a cause of development of positive feelings, but might be reflective of Chinese viewers’ *American favoritism*. The last explanation seems to find support in the interaction of media influence and personal contact influence. In the Chinese sample, significant differences were found between people who rated both Hollywood movies and personal contact as high in information

source (HH Group) and people who rated both sources as low (LL Group). The HH group was found to have more positive perceptions of Americans compared the with LL group.

#### 4.6 Personal Contact and Stereotypes

Personal contact in both samples is the biggest predictor of positive stereotypes of another ethnic group. Previous personal contact with Asian-Americans among the AU sample is related to perceptions of Chinese as more professional, hardworking, social, adventurous, fun-loving, formal, materialistic and polite. The contact is important because Chinese are not perceived to be social, adventurous and fun-loving, and that is the reason why many Americans are disinclined to socialize with Chinese internationals. Therefore, personal contact is not only important in reducing overt stereotypes, but also in reducing implicit biases. One such bias is related to stereotypes of Chinese as being “quiet” and “not social,” as mentioned by focus groups in America. Even though “quiet” is a neutral trait according to Hampson SDY and Anderson likableness indices, many Americans have assigned negative connotations to it, presumably due to the fact that being social is a highly valued attribute in America.

For the Chinese sample, personal contact with Americans is found to have a significant relationship with reducing derogatory attributes assigned to Americans. There are negative correlations between personal contact with Americans and perceptions of Americans as aggressive, adventurous, self-centered, materialistic, fun-loving, promiscuous and wasteful.

This is consistent with previous literature which found that personal contact predicts a stronger tendency to form generalizations about the group compared with other forms of contact (Biernat, 1990). Cook's (1978) experiment shows that personal contact on a smaller scale promotes generalization to "larger ethnic entities." (p.107)

For the American sample, the nature of interracial contact is a better predictor of positive perceptions of Chinese compared with the number of contacts one had previously had. This finding is consistent with the contact hypothesis, which argues that previous contact has to be meaningful and frequent for favorable attitudinal change to take place (Cook, 1978; Rothbart & John, 1985; Mastro & Tropp, 2004; Mucchifaina, Costarelli, & Romoli, 2001; Sigelman & Welch, 1993). Negative interracial contact may magnify unfavorable stereotypes. For example, an AU participant who had much contact with Chinese during his visit to China developed negative evaluations of Chinese because of his unpleasant experience in China.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This study has increased the general knowledge of national stereotypes of Chinese and Americans. The study confirmed the existence of these national stereotypes: distinctive perceptions of Americans and Chinese were found in this survey. Stereotypes of Chinese construct an image of “good employee” (hardworking, obedient and responsible), but on the other hand, Chinese are perceived as having poor social ability (quiet). In contrast, Americans make good friends or partners in life, because they are stereotyped as *social* (strong perception), *outgoing* (strong perception), and *romantic* (moderate perception). While national stereotypes seem benign, the simplified images might set undue expectations during cross-cultural communication, hinder true understanding or even cause harm. For example, an aggressive Chinese runs counter to the stereotype of *obedient Chinese* and might be viewed more negatively than an aggressive American. A shy American might be seen as unfriendly or hostile as it is not consistent with the *social Americans* image. Since stereotypes are so closely connected to prejudice and discrimination (Dong & Murrilo, 2007), efforts need to be made to reduce stereotypes.

This study suggests that the theoretical perspectives of agenda-setting role of mass media and framing help understand the formation of national stereotypes. Americans’ perception of China as a competitor/threat is related to the news media



frame. The consequences of this frame, however, might go beyond the salience. The perception of competitor might lead to feelings of resentment. Previously, Japan was framed as the Asian competitor. According to a 1982 national survey, 40% of Americans blamed the country's economic woes "almost completely" or "very much" on competition from Japanese corporations (Espiritu, 1992, p.138). In the current study, the public's perception of China as a competitor/threat might also result in anti-China sentiment. Suri (2006), for example, argues that *China threat* has been employed by lobbyists for anti-China purposes. The finding from this study confirms the role of news media in forming the perception of *China threat*. It also implies the crucial potential effect mass media have in changing bilateral relationship between the two nations.

This study suggests that the higher vs. lower media consumption in China might not cause differences in perceptions. However, it does mean that mass media have little effect in China. On the contrary, it indicates that propaganda role of Chinese mass media is so strong that commonality of outlooks is formed among the Chinese people. Therefore, when conducting media effects study in China, the agenda-setting role of the news media or the cultivation effects of the entertainment media can be determined by comparing media discourse with the public's beliefs or attitude, rather than comparing differences of beliefs between heavy vs. light media users.

The study indicates that watching Hollywood movies might be related to positive perceptions of Americans. The finding is surprising, considering previous research has concluded that the opposite is true (Tan, 1982; Willnat, Zhou, & Hao,

1997). It indicates that the young generation, especially college students, in China might have adopted different values from their parents and become receptive of American culture. Watching Hollywood movies might be a reflection of their endorsement of American values.

Consistent with previous research, interracial contact was found to have significant relationship with reducing negative stereotypes. The nature of contact is a better indicator of positive stereotypes than the number of contacts. Frequency of interracial alone does not necessarily leads to favorable attitudinal changes. This finding suggests that that close interracial contact should be encouraged in order to effect favorable attitude change. Therefore, long-term cultural exchange programs between America and China should be developed so that close contact could take place.

Overall, the study supports that the mass media play a role in forming national stereotypes. The mass media create, reinforce, or refute national stereotypes. Even though the study did not establish direct correlations between media consumption and prejudice, there is reason to be concerned because overall perceptions of Americans are more negative than those of Chinese, and the differences may be due to media representations of Americans.

There are limitations and weaknesses in this study. The first weakness has to do with sampling. This study employed convenience samples. Only one university from each country was approached for recruitment of participants. The findings might be different had more universities of various locations from each country been used. In addition, this study is limited by the sample size. A total of 381 valid responses were

gathered from both countries. In the future, larger representative samples could be used to increase the power of the statistical procedures used in this study.

Secondly, the survey tests stereotypical perceptions, media consumption, and personal contact at the same time, and participants might be self-conscious of the purpose of the survey and give inaccurate estimations. Separating the measurement of stereotypes and media consumption would eliminate this problem. But this study was limited by time constraints and did not separately test stereotypes and media consumption. In America, a large number of participants (35.4% of the total respondents) were from the communication departments; these participants might be familiar with media effect research and overestimate the role of personal contact when answering questions. It would be more ideal if participants that are more comparable in constitution from both countries could be obtained.

Thirdly, the questionnaire asks respondents to report the importance of different sources in their understanding of another culture on a Likert-scale. The self-reporting is highly subjective. A person who rates personal contact as “5” might be less influenced by personal contact than another person who rates personal contact as “3.” Additionally, all the questions are rated on 1-5 scale, which has the possibility of driving a number of undecided respondents to choose the middle value—3—and skewing the study results.

Another weakness with the design of the survey is that the perception of “entertainment media” is different in different countries, and even in the same country

huge variance might exist. Even though examples of movies and situational comedies were given, many respondents might still understand the terms differently.

Finally, despite efforts to achieve a perfect translation, the English version of the survey and the Chinese version do not exactly match. The meanings of some terms do not transfer to other cultures, especially for terms with special cultural denotation. For example, the attribute of “fun-loving” is a positive word to Americans, but it does not have the same positive denotation in Chinese.

Future research should be carried out in different universities in different states in America and different provinces in China. A two-stage experiment can be conducted so that participants do not associate the measurement of stereotypes with that of media consumption and personal contact. Different instruments can be used to measure the importance of different sources for understanding of a foreign culture to improve the overall validity.

Future research can be conducted to examine whether watching Hollywood movies is the cause of positive perceptions of Americans in China. The current study found a relationship between the two, but it is not clear whether positive perception of Americans leads to heavy consumption of Hollywood movies or vice versa. This unresolved question directs future research to be conducted in understanding the exact cause of positive perceptions of Americans in China, which has implication for relationship between the two nations.

It would also be interesting to examine media effects on other populations than college students, because college students are usually less influenced by the

entertainment media than other demographic groups. Findings might be different if high school students or middle-aged viewers are used for the same study.

In addition, future research can be done on the consequences of national stereotypes of Chinese and Americans. Stereotypes have been found to influence both judgment and behavior in a variety of ways (Kinder, 1998). The current research sets the basis for future study of attitudes resulting from specific stereotypes. For example, studies can be conducted on whether Americans are affected by the *China threat* stereotype in their treatment of Chinese nationals.

The current study should be replicated in the future, in different places and among different samples. The interest in national stereotypes research will help identify the source of their formation and raise awareness of the media industry to be more responsible and committed to reducing negative stereotypes and prejudice.

APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUPS GUIDELINE

1. Could you please describe a typical Chinese/American?
2. Is the Chinese diet different from American diet? How?
3. What are some characteristics of Chinese/American concerning their behavior and personality?
4. How did you get your ideas about Chinese/Americans? From the Internet, TV, books, school, or parents or friends?
5. Are Chinese different from Americans? In what ways are they different or similar? Please give me some examples.
6. Are American culture and Chinese culture different/similar? In what ways? Please use examples.
7. You have a friend who's going to China/America. What advice would you give him/her concerning interacting with the Chinese?
8. If you have to use five words or phrases or sentences to sum up Chinese/American characteristics, what are they?

APPENDIX B  
SURVEY



## Survey

(The purpose of this survey is to find out how Americans view the Chinese culture and the Chinese people. It will take you about 10 minutes to complete. Please answer all the questions HONESTLY.)

**1. What is your major? (please check one)**

- Business  
 Communication  
 Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**2. What is your gender? (Please check one)**  Male  Female

**3. What is your ethnicity? (please check one)**

- Caucasian  African American  Hispanic  
 Asian American  International students  Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**4. What is your year of birth? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Questions 5 to 10 discuss the attributes of Chinese people from different aspects. Please indicate whether you agree with the listed attributes.**

**5. In their working habits, Chinese are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
creative	1	2	3	4	5
professional	1	2	3	4	5
hard-working	1	2	3	4	5
lazy	1	2	3	4	5

**6. In social areas, Chinese are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
social	1	2	3	4	5
quiet	1	2	3	4	5
friendly	1	2	3	4	5
outgoing	1	2	3	4	5
shy	1	2	3	4	5

**7. The personality of Chinese can be described as:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
obedient	1	2	3	4	5
aggressive	1	2	3	4	5
adventurous	1	2	3	4	5
independent	1	2	3	4	5
self-centered	1	2	3	4	5
materialistic	1	2	3	4	5

fun-loving	1	2	3	4	5
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**8. Concerning personal relationships, Chinese are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
promiscuous	1	2	3	4	5
responsible	1	2	3	4	5
faithful	1	2	3	4	5
romantic	1	2	3	4	5

**9. The spending habits of Chinese are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
wasteful	1	2	3	4	5
frugal	1	2	3	4	5
generous	1	2	3	4	5
stingy	1	2	3	4	5

**10. Chinese businessmen are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
formal	1	2	3	4	5
polite	1	2	3	4	5
shrewd	1	2	3	4	5
deceitful	1	2	3	4	5

**Questions 11 to 16 discuss the attributes of Americans from different aspects. Please indicate whether you agree with the listed attributes.**

**11. In their working habits, Americans are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
creative	1	2	3	4	5
professional	1	2	3	4	5
hard-working	1	2	3	4	5
lazy	1	2	3	4	5

**12. In social areas, Americans are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
social	1	2	3	4	5
quiet	1	2	3	4	5

friendly	1	2	3	4	5
outgoing	1	2	3	4	5
shy	1	2	3	4	5

**13. The personality of Americans can be described as:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
obedient	1	2	3	4	5
aggressive	1	2	3	4	5
adventurous	1	2	3	4	5
independent	1	2	3	4	5
self-centered	1	2	3	4	5
materialistic	1	2	3	4	5
fun-loving	1	2	3	4	5

**14. Concerning personal relationships, Americans are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
promiscuous	1	2	3	4	5
responsible	1	2	3	4	5
faithful	1	2	3	4	5
romantic	1	2	3	4	5

**15. The spending habit of Americans are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
wasteful	1	2	3	4	5
frugal	1	2	3	4	5
generous	1	2	3	4	5
stingy	1	2	3	4	5

**16. American businessmen are:**

	strongly disagree				strongly agree
formal	1	2	3	4	5
polite	1	2	3	4	5
shrewd	1	2	3	4	5
deceitful	1	2	3	4	5

**17. Please respond to the following statements using a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 5 representing “strongly agree.”**

	strongly disagree					strongly agree
China and America are competitors economically.	1	2	3	4		5
China is trying to compete with America in military strength.	1	2	3	4		5
China is an economic threat to America.	1	2	3	4		5
America imposes its presence in other countries.	1	2	3	4		5

**18. Please indicate how important the following sources have been to you in forming opinions on Chinese culture or Chinese people?**

	not important					very important
American news media	1	2	3	4		5
American popular media (e.g. situational comedy, entertainment magazine)	1	2	3	4		5
Kung fu movies	1	2	3	4		5
Personal contact with Asian-Americans	1	2	3	4		5
Personal contact with Chinese or other Asians	1	2	3	4		5

**19. On average, how many hours do you consume the following types of media in a week?**

Domestic news	Hour(s)
International news	Hour(s)
Entertainment news	Hour(s)
sports	Hour(s)
movies	Hour(s)
Situational comedy	Hour(s)

**20. How many times have you watched Chinese *Kung fu* movies in the last year? \_\_\_\_\_**

**21. How many Chinese from China have you been in contact with over the past 4 years?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**22. Among the Chinese you have had contact with, the closest relationship can be described as (1 represents “distant” relationship and 5 represents “very close contact”)**

distant					Close
1	2	3	4	5	

APPENDIX C  
SURVEY RESULTS—AMERICAN SAMPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF CHINESE

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hardworking	4.46	.676
Formal	4.24	.815
Professional	4.24	.763
Obedient	4.09	.860
Responsible	3.93	.774
Polite	3.88	.976
Faithful	3.74	.806
Quiet	3.72	1.021
Creative	3.62	.940
Friendly	3.59	.963
Shy	3.52	1.019
Independent	3.39	1.069
Frugal	3.36	1.025
Fun-loving	3.01	.815
Generous	2.99	.810
Shrewd	2.97	1.072
Stingy	2.92	1.044
Romantic	2.82	.785
Social	2.71	.972
Adventurous	2.71	.836

Outgoing	2.65	.906
Materialistic	2.51	1.087
Promiscuous	2.29	.926
Deceitful	2.24	.853
Self-centered	2.24	1.068
Aggressive	2.21	1.016
Wasteful	1.90	.910
Lazy	1.65	.893



APPENDIX D  
SURVEY RESULTS—CHINESE SAMPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF AMERICANS

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Independent	4.43	.718
Social	4.26	.718
Creative	4.24	.774
Adventurous	4.22	.754
Outgoing	4.03	.668
Aggressive	3.75	.939
Professional	3.74	.946
Romantic	3.71	.850
Self-centered	3.68	.960
Formal	3.67	1.002
Polite	3.51	.868
Materialistic	3.47	.942
Friendly	3.37	.852
Shrewd	3.17	.989
Generous	3.09	.889
Wasteful	3.04	1.032
Fun-loving	3.01	.815
Frugal	2.93	.963
Faithful	2.88	.737
Stingy	2.82	.936

Lazy	2.73	.858
Responsible	2.72	.812
Deceitful	2.60	.913
Hardworking	2.70	.832
Promiscuous	2.29	.926
Shy	1.87	.709
Quiet	1.82	.771
Obedient	1.74	.702

APPENDIX E  
HAMPSON SDY AND ANDERSON LIKABLENESS INDICES OF 28  
ATTRIBUTES

Attributes	Hampson SDY	Anderson Likableness (AL)
adventurous	6.68	4.41
aggressive	2.72	3.04
creative	7.42	4.62
deceitful	1.62	0.62
faithful	7.57	----
formal	4.89	----
friendly	7.91	5.19
frugal	----	----
fun-loving	6.87	----
generous	7.64	----
hardworking	----	----
independent	7.09	4.55
lazy	2.40	1.26
materialistic	----	2.60
obedient	----	3.73
outgoing	6.74	4.12
polite	7.19	4.89
professional	----	----
promiscuous	----	----
quiet	5.06	3.11

responsible	7.87	5.05
romantic	6.81	4.39
self-centered	2.83	0.96
shrewd	6.25	3.28
shy	4.23	2.91
social	----	3.98
stingy	2.19	1.43
wasteful	----	1.6

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The author is a graduate student from the communication department at the University of Texas at Arlington. Prior to getting a degree in communication, she obtained a Master's degree in linguistics. She is committed to becoming a university professor and is planning to get a Ph.D in the field of communication. Her research interest involves media effects studies, and she plans to work on more projects that help in international relationships and cross-cultural communication.