

ONE WORLD, JUST A DREAM?  
EFFECTS OF THE BEIJING OLYMPIC ICON ON PERCEIVED DIFFERENCES  
BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN CULTURE

BY

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THESIS

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Beijing Olympic Games, aspiring toward “One World, One Dream,” were intended to elicit feelings of international unity. As such, once reminded of the Beijing Games, people should perceive fewer differences between cultures. Alternatively, given its competitive nature, the Beijing Games may lead people to contrast cultures and see heightened intergroup differences. Findings supported the latter process. After being primed with the Beijing Olympic icon, Chinese and American participants high in nationalism and patriotism perceived greater differences between Chinese and American cultures, compared to those low in nationalism and patriotism. Among Chinese participants who believe society is malleable, exposure to the icon increased perceived cultural differences, compared with those unexposed to the icon. Chinese participants who believe society is fixed saw similarly high levels of differentiation between the cultures, whether or not they were exposed to the icon. Implications for Sino-American relations and globalization are discussed.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;  
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,  
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!*

– Rudyard Kipling, *The Ballad of East and West*

Though Rudyard Kipling (1889) likely did not have the Olympic Games in mind when he penned *The Ballad of East and West* – indeed, modern Olympics did not even exist until seven years after the ballad's first appearance – the above quatrain is a rather fitting portrayal of how China intended the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games to play out. We may be different, but when equally able-bodied members of each respective culture meet on the same playing field, the accidents of birth no longer matter. East is no longer East and West no longer West – there is just one world, one dream.

The “One World, One Dream” slogan was a promising one, but whether or not it actually materialized is an empirical question. The goal of the present study is to examine whether the Beijing Olympic Games are associated with more or less perceived differences between the Chinese and American cultures, whether these perceptions are moderated by the perceiver's levels of nationalism and patriotism, and if these perceptions rely upon the perceiver's lay theory about the social world.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Media Influence on the Perception of the Beijing Olympic Games

If the Beijing Olympic Games actually represented “One World, One Dream,” then being reminded of them should elicit strong feelings of international unity and oneness and *intergroup similarity*. Yet, despite the slogan’s palpable intention, there remains a louder opposition. While major Chinese media outlets lauded the “One World, One Dream” slogan – *The People’s Daily* wrote that “People of different nationalities, ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds have come together under the Olympic flag for fellowship, showcasing the friendship between people from all parts of the world, and the ‘one world, one dream’ shared by all” (August 25, 2008) – media coverage of the Beijing Olympic Games in the United States often emphasized a heated East-West competition, primarily focusing on China and the U.S., two of the world’s athletic giants. On the opening day of the Games, *USA TODAY* printed a story entitled “Quest to become the world’s best pits East against West” and predicted an intense athletic competition between China and the U.S. in which China would win the gold medal count, slating the U.S. for underdog status (Michaelis, 2008). Two weeks later, *Forbes*’ Jeffrey Sonnenfeld titled his commentary “Olympics Reveal East-West Divide,” and argued that these Games were not just an exhibition of athletic competition. Rather, according to Sonnenfeld, the Games were perhaps an unintentional demonstration of competing value systems, citing how China’s flawlessness, efficiency, and manufactured uniformity in their delivery of the Games stands in stark contrast to Western versions (e.g., Athens, Atlanta) which have often been characterized by “chaos, confusion, conflict, and spontaneous joy” (Sonnenfeld, 2008).

Indeed, these media-contrived representations of the Beijing Olympic Games from both the Chinese and American perspectives are intriguing – that Chinese should most likely conceptualize the Games as their slogan intended, while Americans should see the Games as a major competitive event in which they are directly pitted against China athletically, stylistically, and perhaps even ideologically. Yet despite these more propagandistically driven differences in understanding the Beijing Olympic Games, we postulated similar psychological responses toward the Games for Chinese and Americans. Our primary goal in this research is to examine how and who among Chinese and Americans would be affected by the Beijing Olympic Games. First, we will explain the possible psychological processes underlying the reaction to being reminded of the Games. Then, we will speculate as to how this reaction could be moderated by participants' national identification and associated with implicit beliefs about the malleability of their society.

## 2.2 Priming of the Beijing Olympic Games Elicits a Cognitive Contrast Effect

By definition, and as the media has clearly encouraged, Olympic Games involve intense competition during which national identity is highly salient. Previous research on the psychology of intergroup relations has indicated that such salient group membership often accentuates intragroup similarities and *intergroup differences*, especially when groups face off in a competitive context (Tajfel, 1969; Tajfel, 1982). Yet, competition and intergroup tensions aside, we are interested in a more basic cognitive process that the Beijing Olympic Games may bring about – a process that involves the simultaneous juxtaposition of stimuli from one's own culture and that of one's most salient competitor, resulting in heightened intergroup contrast. That is, as will be hypothesized below, being

reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games should accentuate perceived intergroup differences between cultures.

To elaborate, it is possible that the Olympic Games in and of themselves would make salient a co-presence of one's own country and one's competitor. Research in marketing (Hsee, 1996; Hsee & Leclerc, 1998; Hsee, Loewenstein, Blount, & Bazerman, 1999; Hsee & Zhang, 2004) has shown that presenting two products, such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi, simultaneously side-by-side results in perceivers attending to the unique characteristics (versus the similarities) of the two products. Subsequently, the perceived differences between the two products are accentuated – an effect termed a *cognitive contrast*. By the same token, a similar pattern of findings was shown when exposing people to two cultures simultaneously side-by-side. Specifically, in comparison to participants who were shown only stimuli from one culture, Chinese and American participants who were exposed to both Chinese and American cultural icons simultaneously perceived Chinese and American values as belonging to two relatively discrete cultural systems and perceived a more impermeable boundary between Chinese and American cultures (Chiu, Mallorie, Keh, & Law, 2009). Extrapolating these findings to the present research, being reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games might simultaneously juxtapose many cultures (or, at the very least, one's own and that of one's most salient competitor) – be it through the slogan “One World, One Dream” or the felt competition between China and the United States. This juxtaposition of cultures should activate a tendency to contrast the two cultures among those who are strong in national identification and we predict moderating effects of both nationalism and patriotism. In addition, we also examine how the belief that Chinese society possesses fixed, deep

dispositions might set up a framework within which participants might infer differences between Chinese and American cultures. In short, we examined how people with varying levels of national identification and different beliefs about the fixedness of society would respond to the Beijing Olympic Games. We focused on these two variables in particular because they have been shown to predict intergroup relations and perceptions, on which we will elaborate next.

## 2.3 Variables and Hypotheses

### 2.3.1 Nationalism and Patriotism

We contend that depending upon one's level of national identification, the Olympic Games could compel a differential tendency toward contrastive thinking (i.e., to be susceptible to the cognitive contrast effect). Nationalism, one form of national identification, has been shown to be associated with intergroup differentiation, feelings of superiority, and a desire for dominance over others (Feshbach, 1994; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001). Therefore, being reminded of the Olympic Games should activate a greater tendency to engage in contrastive thinking and perceive intergroup differences for those who endorse nationalism strongly, compared with those who endorse nationalism weakly. Patriotism, the other form of national identification, is defined as a "healthy" love for one's country (Bar-Tal, 1993; Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989) and is unrelated to outgroup derogation (Brewer, 1999); however, it is positively correlated conceptually and empirically with nationalism (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989). To the extent that patriotism is a measure of high national identification, patriots should also be inclined to perceive greater differentiation between groups (Kelly, 1988; Turner, 1985; Turner, Hogg, Oakes,

Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). In short, we predict that people high in either nationalism or patriotism should display a tendency toward intergroup differentiation in response to an event that elicits a strong desire to compare one's ingroup to a salient outgroup (i.e., an event that involves competition like the Beijing Olympic Games).

Importantly, we wish to show that neither those high in nationalism and/or patriotism are haphazardly committing to their perception of intergroup differentiation. Rather, we suggest that the committed nationalists and patriots of the world need to be set off – they need an instigating event, such as the Olympic Games, compelling them to engage in a contrastive mindset that thereby gives them privilege to think of themselves and the outgroup as different. That is, when the Beijing Olympic Games are primed (versus not primed), stronger endorsement of nationalism and patriotism should be associated with greater perceived differences between the Chinese and American cultures.

*Hypothesis 1.* We predicted that being reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games would activate a contrastive mindset for those high in either nationalism or patriotism, resulting in greater perceived cultural differences between Chinese and Americans, compared with those low in nationalism or patriotism. This pattern would not occur in the control condition, when participants were not reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games. Furthermore, we expected that the effect of national identification is a basic and universal psychological process that shapes intergroup perceptions; hence, the moderating effects of both nationalism and patriotism should hold among both Chinese and American participants. Therefore, we did not predict any country effects, such that the Games

would provoke the same mindset to contrast (and thereby increase perceived cultural differences) for all high national identifiers, regardless if they are Chinese or American.

### 2.3.2 Belief in a Fixed Society

Another factor that might predict accentuated perceived intergroup differences in response to the Olympic Games is individuals' lay theory of social reality. Lay theories are systems of beliefs that people use in everyday life to interpret and evaluate their social world, and they act as a lens through which people make sense of their world. Importantly, with regards to one's society, lay people can be categorized as either entity or incremental theorists – an entity theorist would characterize their society as unalterable, fixed, and impermeable, while an incremental theorist would characterize their society as more malleable and open to change (developed from implicit theories of the world; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Chiu, Dweck, Tong, & Fu, 1997).

If one's society is believed to be fixed and unchangeable, then differences between one's society and another should be perceived to readily reflect stable, enduring, and underlying dissimilarities between those groups (cf. Dweck et al., 1995). That is, as entity theorists see their society and its members as sharing a common "essence" that gives their group fixed and immutable qualities (Yzerbyt, Rocher, & Schadron, 1997), national unity is typically defined in essentialistic terms. According to Li and Brewer (2004), this essentialistic meaning of national identity is exclusionary and associated with an intergroup focus of attention (Yuki, 2003), such that entity theorists will highlight homogeneity within groups and differentiation between them. As a result, in the minds of entity theorists, intergroup differences will never wane – whether they are reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games or not.

In contrast, for incremental theorists who believe their society to be malleable and changeable, how one's society is different from the next is not perceived to be unremitting, but rather is construed to reflect a dynamic, complex relationship that can be influenced by situational conditions and perhaps even altered – reduced or enhanced – in response to a change in the international environment (cf. Dweck et al., 1995). Therefore, those holding an incremental theory should modify their perceptions of intergroup differences according to the situation, keeping in mind how outgroups are currently related to the ingroup in a particular context (i.e., a competitive context that compels one to contrast groups versus a cooperative context where one would focus on how the ingroup and outgroup are similar). As such, if a competitive context is primed – say, via being reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games – incremental theorists should, like entity theorists, emphasize differences between their ingroup and currently threatening outgroups. However, if a contrastive mindset is not primed, incremental theorists should perceive less intergroup differences. These predicted patterns of responses are consistent with results from previous research (e.g., Hong et al., 2004), in that incremental theorists displayed more prejudice against a maligned group when they endorsed an exclusive identity than when they endorsed a common ingroup identity with the maligned group, whereas entity theorists held a rigid prejudice against the maligned group regardless of their identification.

*Hypothesis 2.* We predicted that in response to being reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games, those who believe that society is malleable (i.e., those who are low in fixedness; incremental theorists) would perceive greater cultural differences between Chinese and Americans, compared to incremental theorists who are not reminded of the

Games. By contrast, participants who believe that society is fixed (i.e., entity theorists) should have maxed out their perception of cultural differences, and therefore, regardless of whether they are reminded of the Games, should show similarly high levels of perceived cultural differences. The incremental theorist-no reminder combination should lead to the lowest amount of perceived cultural differences among the four Theory (entity vs. incremental theory) X Priming (Beijing Olympic Games reminder or no reminder) combinations.

It is worth noting that the lay belief of society pertains to the participants' own country. That is, Chinese participants respond regarding the malleability of Chinese society, and American participants respond regarding the malleability of American society. As the Beijing Olympic Games arguably have affected Chinese society more than other countries, we predicted that the degree of belief in a fixed (Chinese) society would only moderate the effects of perceived cultural differences for Chinese participants. We hypothesized that while the Beijing Olympic Games are not nearly as relevant for Americans as an agent of societal change in the United States, there should not be any particular relationship between belief in a fixed (American) society and whether one is reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games for American participants. In short, our predictions concerning the lay belief of society should only hold for Chinese participants and not American participants.

### 2.3.3 Explicit Meaning of the Beijing Olympic Games

Thus far, we have focused on how nationalism, patriotism, and belief in a fixed society would affect participants' perceived intergroup differences in response to being reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games. We derived two hypotheses based upon the

assumption that being reminded of the Games should activate the juxtaposition of the Chinese and American cultures for Chinese and American participants. However, on a more explicit level, an important question remains: when asked directly, what meaning do Chinese and Americans associate with the Beijing Olympic Games? This information could be useful in speculating the consequences of any perceived cultural differences between the two countries. As noted, the media in Mainland China focuses on promoting the “One World, One Dream” slogan, whereas the American media focuses more on how China is a rising competitor of the United States. It is possible that these differences in the media would differentially affect how Chinese and American participants perceive the Beijing Olympic Games.

*Hypothesis 3.* We predicted that Chinese participants would place “One World, One Dream,” their slogan and anticipated outcome, among their top interpretations of the Games. We also predicted that American participants, in comparison to their Chinese counterparts, perhaps feeling threatened by China as a competitor flexing its muscles by hosting the Olympic Games, would be more likely to associate “Chinese competitiveness” with the Games.

To test these three hypotheses, we recruited two samples of college students to participate in our study: one from Beijing, China, and the other from the Midwestern United States. The study was conducted in November and December of 2008 (between three to four months following the Beijing Olympic Games).

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Participants

Ninety-nine Beijing Chinese students (67% female; average age = 22.42, SD = 1.46) from several universities in Beijing and 130 White, European-American undergraduates (43% female; average age = 19.34, SD = 1.37) from a public university in the Midwestern United States were recruited to participate in the study. The students participated voluntarily for course credit. Chinese and American participants received all of their instructions and materials in Chinese and in English, respectively.

### 3.2 Beijing Olympic Games Priming

In the present study, as a means of reminding participants of the Beijing Olympic Games, we used a subtle priming method that employed the Beijing Olympic icon – a symbol that is clearly recognizable worldwide as the Beijing Olympic trademark. Specifically, in the experimental condition, the icon was presented in two ways: (1) A small black-and-white Beijing Olympic icon was discretely shown on every page of the questionnaire in the bottom right-hand corner, and (2) the experimenter wore a white t-shirt with a colorful Beijing Olympic icon centered on it. Participants were told that the study concerned their opinions on a variety of issues and that they should respond honestly and openly. Importantly, the experimenter in the experimental condition did not make any mention of the icon's presence on her shirt or on the questionnaire pages and no participant in the experimental condition in either sample was suspicious regarding the presence of the icon. In the control condition, the Beijing Olympic icon was absent from the questionnaire, and the experimenter did not wear the t-shirt with the Beijing Olympic icon.

### 3.3 Measures

#### 3.3.1 “Feeling Meters”

To examine perceived cultural differences, we first asked participants to indicate the degree of association they felt between the Chinese and American cultures and certain characteristic traits or values commonly linked with each of those cultures. These core Chinese and American values were selected based on a survey of the literature (e.g., Ho & Chiu, 1994; Schwartz, 1994; Triandis, 1993) and their validity had been demonstrated in a cultural priming study (Chao, Chen, Roisman, & Hong, 2007). The Chinese values were *obedient, modesty, collective, obligation, and harmony*. The American values were *assertive, unique, individuality, autonomy, and freedom*. Through the use of two “feeling meters,” Chinese participants were told to rate each of the ten values (presented in a randomized order) regarding the extent to which the value “feels Chinese” and “feels Western.” The term “Western” was chosen to assess Chinese participants’ general perceptions of Western culture. American participants were told to rate each of the same ten values regarding the extent to which the value “feels Asian” and “feels American.” The American participants were presented with the term “Asian” to assess their perceptions of Asian culture in general.

Participants completed the “feeling meter” value items by placing one “X” on both the Chinese [Asian] meter and the Western [American] meter for each value to indicate how much that value “felt” of the meter’s indicated culture. Participants were told to allow the meters’ endpoints, labeled “*feels not at all [culture]*” on the left and “*feels very [culture]*” on the right, to guide their choosing of the location of each individual “X.” Therefore, if they felt the given value was strongly associated with the

given culture, they would place the “X” somewhere – depending upon the intensity of association felt between the value and the culture – on the right-half portion of the meter. If they felt the given value was hardly associated with the given culture, they would place an “X” somewhere on the left-half portion of the meter. See Appendix A for the “feeling meter” instructions and examples given to participants.

In coding the participants’ responses, we measured, in centimeters, the distance of each drawn “X” from its meter’s left endpoint. Thus, the higher the “score” given for a particular culture on a particular value, the more associated the value and the culture were considered by the participant. We then created a measure of “perceived cultural difference” by first determining the absolute value of the difference between the two culture’s meter distances for each value. For instance, if a Chinese participant indicated that *autonomy* felt very Western (and had marked an “X” that measured 14 centimeters from the left endpoint on the Western meter), but not very Chinese (and had marked an “X” that measured 6 centimeters from the left endpoint on the Chinese meter), then that participant’s perceived culture difference score for that value would be 8. We computed this absolute difference of the distances for every participant, on every value. In order to test that the effects we had predicted would hold for both Chinese and American values, we created separate indices of perceived difference for the two values by averaging participants’ perceived difference between the Chinese and American cultures on the five Chinese values (*obedient, modesty, collective, obligation, and harmony*) and on the five American values (*assertive, unique, individuality, autonomy, and freedom*). The printed meters on the Chinese and American versions were equivalent in length.

### 3.3.2 Nationalism

Participants' level of nationalism, or view that their country is superior and should be dominant, was assessed via eight nationalism items from Kosterman and Feshbach's (1989) Patriotism and Nationalism Scale. On a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*), both Chinese and American participants indicated their level of agreement with statements such as "Other countries should try to make their governments as much like ours as possible" and "Generally, the more influence China [America] has on other nations, the better off they are." We used the mean rating of the eight items to form a measure of nationalism. Higher scores on the summary measure indicated a stronger degree of nationalism. Internal reliability of the measure for Chinese was moderate ( $\alpha = .66$ ), but was higher for Americans ( $\alpha = .81$ ).

### 3.3.3 Patriotism

To assess participants' degree of patriotism, or feelings of attachment to their country, we used 12 patriotism items from Kosterman and Feshbach's (1989) Patriotism and Nationalism Scale. On a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*), both Chinese and American participants indicated their level of agreement with statements such as "I love my country" and "It bothers me to see children made to pledge allegiance to the flag or sing the national anthem or otherwise induced to adopt such strong patriotic attitudes" (reverse-scored). We used the mean rating of the 12 items to form a measure of patriotism. Higher scores on the summary measure indicated a stronger degree of patriotism. Internal reliability of the measure for both Chinese and Americans was high,  $\alpha = .87$  for Chinese and  $\alpha = .93$  for Americans.

### 3.3.4 Belief in a Fixed Society

To examine whether participants see their society as malleable and open to change or as fixed and impermeable, both Chinese and American participants responded to two items regarding their belief in a fixed society that were developed from Dweck and colleagues' (1995) implicit theories of the world measure. On a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*), participants indicated their level of agreement with “Although there have been rapid changes in Chinese [American] society, the core of Chinese [American] culture will never be altered” and “When faced with new challenges and rapid development, the core of Chinese [American] culture will inevitably be altered” (reverse-scored). We used the mean rating of the two items to form a measure of belief in a fixed society. Higher scores indicated a stronger belief in the fixedness of one's society. Correlations of the two-item measure for Chinese and Americans were .55 ( $p < .05$ ) and .70 ( $p < .05$ ), respectively.

### 3.3.5 Explicit Meaning of the Beijing Olympic Icon

We directly assessed how Chinese and American participants within both the experimental and control conditions understood the meaning of the Beijing Olympic icon. Specifically, after surveying the common discourse within Chinese, American, and international media outlets, we collected 10 common associations with the Beijing Olympic Games: “Chinese people's national pride; Unfair news coverage against China from the West; One World, One Dream; Globalizing China; China becoming more Westernized; The West becoming more Chinese; Rise of China as a superpower; Chinese competitiveness; China attempting to appeal to the West; China attempting to imitate a Hollywood production.” Participants were presented with a picture of the icon and asked,

“What thoughts come to your mind when you see this icon?” They then rated each of the 10 items on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*yes, definitely*).

### 3.4 Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control condition. Participants in both conditions first completed the “feeling meters,” followed by the items regarding belief in a fixed society and the explicit meaning of the icon. The nationalism and patriotism items were the last measures in the package and were intermingled within each other as one ostensible measure. Finally, participants answered a brief demographic page and were debriefed.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations of the major variables in this study for both the Chinese and American samples. The findings show that nationalism and patriotism are significantly correlated for both Chinese and Americans.

### 4.2 Nationalism

Recall that we hypothesized that in response to the Beijing Olympic icon, those high in nationalism would perceive greater cultural differences between Chinese and Americans, compared with those low in nationalism. Also, we predicted no effect of country and no effect of value type (Chinese or American values). To test these predictions, we performed a Country (Chinese vs. American) X Priming (Beijing Olympic icon: exposed vs. not) X Nationalism (mean-centered) X Value (Chinese vs. American) GLM with the last factor as a repeated measure on the participants' perceived cultural difference scores.

The results revealed a significant Nationalism X Priming interaction,  $F(1, 220) = 6.15, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . A simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991; West, Aiken, & Krull, 1996) was performed to understand this interaction further. As shown in Figure 1, in the priming condition, those high in nationalism (those whose nationalism scores were at one standard deviation above the sample mean) gave a higher perceived cultural difference score (averaging for Chinese and American values) than did those low in nationalism (those whose nationalism scores were at one standard deviation below the sample mean),  $\beta = .69, t(1, 227) = 2.67, p < .01$ , supporting Hypothesis 1. By contrast, as predicted, the effect of nationalism was not significant in the control condition when the

Olympic icon was not primed,  $\beta = -.29$ ,  $t(1, 227) = -1.13$ , *ns*. The country main effect and interaction effects were not significant, as predicted, suggesting that the pattern is applicable to both Chinese and Americans.

#### 4.3 Patriotism

Recall that we hypothesized that in response to the Beijing Olympic icon, those high in patriotism would perceive greater cultural differences between Chinese and Americans, compared with those low in patriotism. Again, we predicted no effect of country or value type (Chinese or American values). To test these predictions, we performed a Country (Chinese vs. American) X Priming (Beijing Olympic icon: exposed vs. not) X Patriotism (mean-centered) X Value (Chinese vs. American) General Linear Model (GLM) with the last factor as a repeated measure on the participants' perceived cultural difference scores.

The results revealed a significant Patriotism X Priming interaction,  $F(1, 220) = 6.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . A simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991; West et al., 1996) was performed to understand this interaction further. As shown in Figure 2, in the priming condition, those high in patriotism (those whose patriotism scores were at one standard deviation above the sample mean) gave a higher perceived cultural difference score (averaging for Chinese and American values) than did those low in patriotism (those whose patriotism scores were at one standard deviation below the sample mean),  $\beta = .74$ ,  $t(1, 227) = 2.75$ ,  $p < .01$ , supporting Hypothesis 1. By contrast, as predicted, the effect of patriotism was not significant in the control condition when the Olympic icon was not primed,  $\beta = -.32$ ,  $t(1, 227) = -1.20$ , *ns*. Again, the country main effect and

interaction effects were not significant, as predicted, suggesting that the pattern is applicable to both Chinese and American participants.

In short, these paired findings for nationalism and patriotism on perceived cultural differences suggest that being reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games compels a heightened sense of intergroup difference for those most identified with their country.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.4 Belief in a Fixed Society

Recall that we predicted in Hypothesis 2 that in response to the Beijing Olympic icon, those who believe that society is malleable (i.e., those who are low in fixedness; incremental theorists) would perceive greater cultural differences between Chinese and Americans, compared to incremental theorists who do not see the Olympic icon. However, participants who believe that society is fixed (i.e., entity theorists), regardless of whether they see the Olympic icon, would show similarly high levels of perceived cultural differences. Additionally, we predicted that the degree of belief in a fixed society would only predict the effects of perceived cultural differences in the presence of the Olympic icon for Chinese participants.

To test these predictions, we performed a Country (Chinese vs. American) X Priming (Beijing Olympic icon: exposed vs. not) X Belief in a fixed society (mean-centered) X Value (Chinese vs. American) GLM with the last factor as a repeated measure on the participants' perceived cultural difference scores.

The results revealed a significant Country X Belief in a fixed society X Priming interaction,  $F(1, 220) = 6.50, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . We then split the dataset by country (Chinese participants vs. American participants) and performed two Priming (Beijing

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<sup>1</sup> The findings were the same when we combined nationalism and patriotism into a single variable.

Olympic icon: exposed vs. not) X Belief in a fixed society (mean-centered) X Value (Chinese vs. American) GLMs with the last factor as a repeated measure on the participants' perceived cultural difference scores for each country. While results revealed a significant Belief in a fixed society X Priming interaction for Chinese participants,  $F(1, 94) = 6.47, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .06$ , the interaction effect was not significant for the American participants,  $F(1, 126) = .81, ns$ . Neither the main effect of Belief in a fixed society nor that of Priming were significant for the American participants,  $F(1, 126) = .02, ns$  and  $F(1, 126) = .00, ns$ , respectively.

Among the Chinese participants only, a simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991; West et al., 1996) was again performed to understand the Belief in a fixed society X Priming interaction further. As shown in Figure 3, the effect of the Olympic priming was significant on the averaged perceived cultural difference score when belief in a fixed society was low – when it was centered at one standard deviation below the sample mean,  $F(1, 94) = 9.43, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .09$ . Consistent with our hypothesis, after being exposed to the Olympic icon, Chinese participants who believed Chinese society to be relatively malleable (incremental theorists) perceived greater cultural differences between Chinese and Americans. In contrast, when belief in a fixed society was high for Chinese participants – when the measure was centered at one standard deviation above the sample mean – the effect of the Olympic priming was not significant,  $F(1, 94) = .26, ns$ . As predicted, Chinese participants who believed Chinese society to be relatively fixed (entity theorists) perceived a high level of cultural differences regardless of whether they were exposed to the Olympic icon.

These results suggest that being reminded of the Beijing Olympic Games increases perceived cultural differences between Chinese and Americans for *Chinese* incremental theorists only (since the lay beliefs of American society held among American participants were arguably irrelevant in the context of the Beijing Olympic Games). In this way, the Games activated a situational condition that gave incremental theorists reason to momentarily perceive the cultures as different, much like how entity theorists respond in general.

#### 4.5 Explicit Meaning of the Beijing Olympic Icon

In terms of what participants would explicitly associate with the Beijing Olympic icon, as noted in Hypothesis 3, we predicted that Chinese participants would place “One World, One Dream” and American participants would place “Chinese competitiveness” among their top interpretations of the Olympic icon. To test these predictions, we first examined the participants’ relative ratings of the 10 items within each country.

Recall that participants were responding to the question, “What thoughts come to your mind when you see this icon?” Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and significant differences in ratings toward the 10 items within each country. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, Chinese participants gave significantly higher ratings to “One World, One Dream,” as well as “China attempting to appeal to the West,” “Chinese people’s national pride,” and “Chinese competitiveness,” compared with the other items; by contrast, American participants rated “Chinese competitiveness” significantly higher than all of the other items, including “One World, One Dream.”

Alternatively, we can compare participants’ ratings across the two countries for each of the meanings. Overall, Chinese participants gave higher ratings than did

American participants, suggesting that Chinese may attach stronger meaning to the Beijing Olympic icon in general. In detail, Chinese rated “Chinese people’s national pride,” “One World, One Dream,” “Rise of China as a superpower,” and “China attempting to appeal to the West” significantly higher than did their American counterparts (*ts* ranged from 2.47 to 6.06,  $p < .05$ ). American participants rated “China becoming more Westernized,” “The West becoming more Chinese,” and “China attempting to imitate a Hollywood production” higher than did Chinese participants (*ts* ranged from  $-2.50$  to  $-7.34$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In sum, findings show that Chinese and American participants seem to associate different explicit meanings with the Beijing Olympic icon. These differences in the conceptualization of the Olympic icon may set up differential frameworks within which Chinese and American participants respond to perceived cultural differences. We will elaborate on this speculation below.

#### 4.6 Tables and Figures

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among main variables (combining the experimental and control conditions)**

Chinese participants (N=99)				
	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived cultural differences	-			
2. Nationalism	0.05	-		
3. Patriotism	-0.09	0.22*	-	
4. Belief in a fixed society	0.12	0.06	0.09	-
Mean	6.27	3.43	5.02	3.77
SD	2.20	0.64	0.53	0.97
Observed Range	1.99-11.60	1.75-4.75	2.83-5.92	1.00-5.50
American participants (N=130)				
	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived cultural differences	-			
2. Nationalism	0.03	-		
3. Patriotism	0.10	0.46**	-	
4. Belief in a fixed society	0.01	0.19*	0.28**	-
Mean	5.66	3.02	4.58	3.54
SD	2.12	0.82	0.84	1.04
Observed Range	1.70-10.00	1.25-5.88	1.50-5.92	1.00-6.00

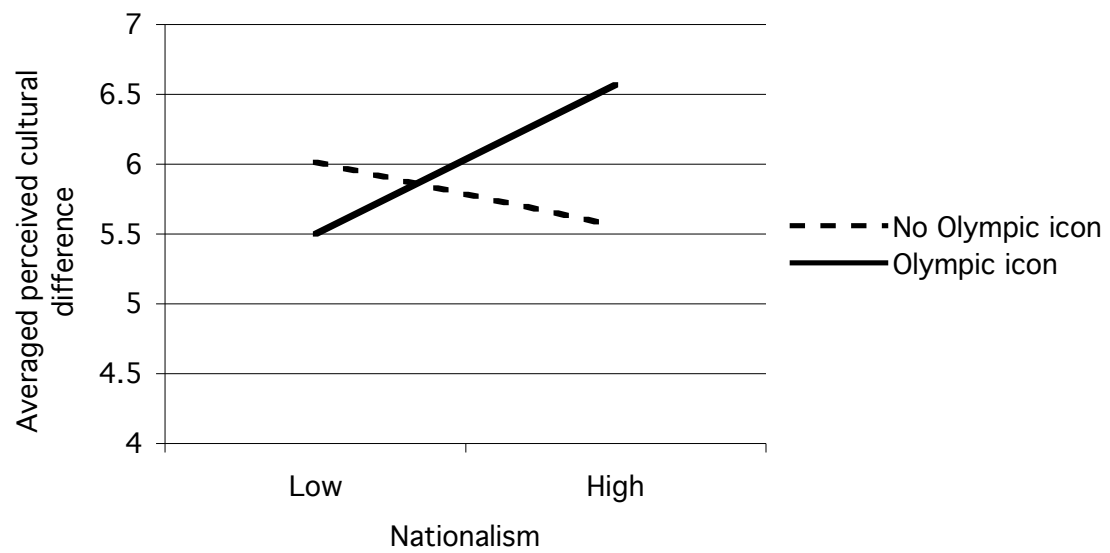
*Note.* \* denotes  $p < .05$ ; \*\* denotes  $p < .01$

**Table 2. Mean ratings and standard derivations (in parenthesis) for each of the ten meanings of the Beijing Olympic icon**

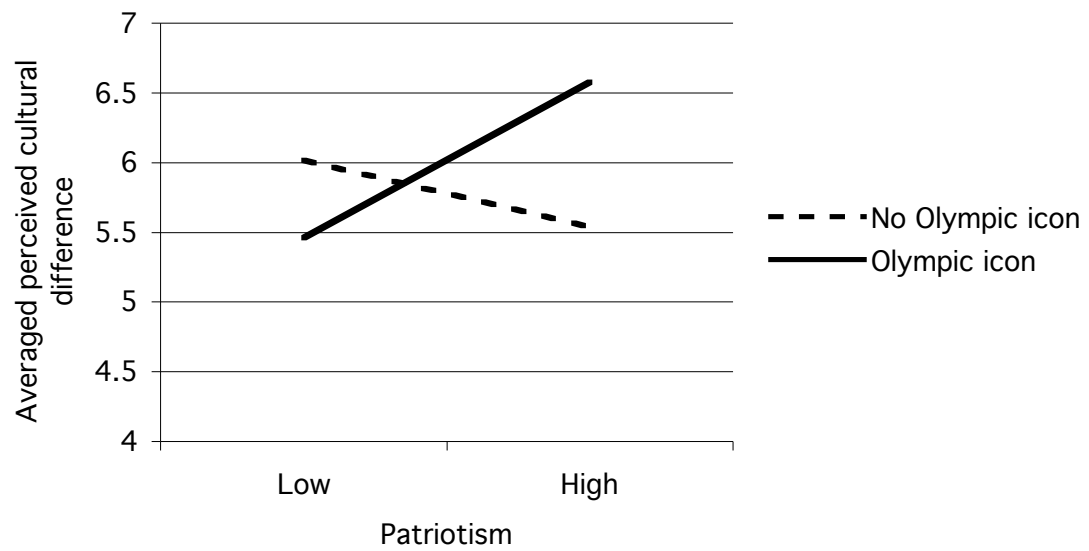
Meaning	Chinese participants	American participants
Chinese national pride	3.74 (.99) <sup>a</sup>	3.38 (1.17) <sup>a</sup>
Unfair news coverage	2.32 (1.03)	2.23 (.89) <sup>b</sup>
“One World, One Dream”	3.83 (1.06) <sup>a, b</sup>	2.88 (1.26) <sup>c</sup>
Globalizing China	3.28 (1.04)	3.04 (1.03) <sup>c, d</sup>
China becoming Western	2.14 (.89)	3.08 (1.00) <sup>c, d, e</sup>
West becoming Chinese	1.68 (.70) <sup>c</sup>	1.91 (.69)
Rise of China as superpower	3.55 (1.04) <sup>a, d</sup>	3.01 (1.11) <sup>c, d, e</sup>
Chinese competitiveness	3.64 (1.00) <sup>a, d</sup>	3.69 (1.09)
China appeal to West	4.07 (.87) <sup>b</sup>	3.34 (1.08) <sup>a</sup>
China imitate Hollywood	1.64 (.75) <sup>c</sup>	2.30 (1.05) <sup>b</sup>

*Note.* Means that are *not* significantly different from each other *within* each country (i.e., within each column) are denoted by the same superscripts.

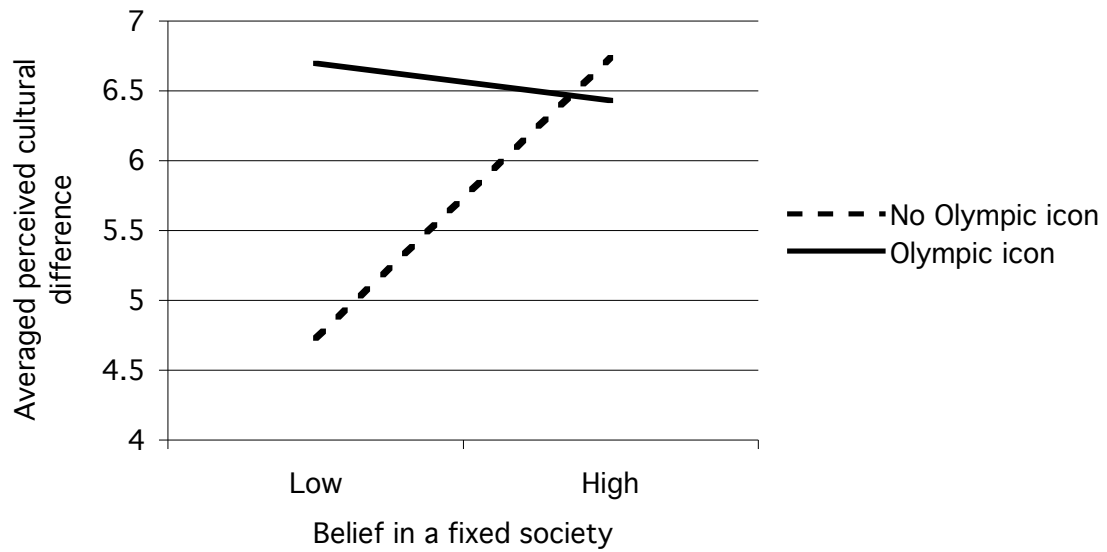
**Figure 1. Nationalism X Olympic priming (for Chinese and American participants combined)**



**Figure 2. Patriotism X Olympic priming (for Chinese and American participants combined)**



**Figure 3. Belief in a fixed society X Olympic priming for Chinese participants**



## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

We began this research with a simple question: Did the Beijing Olympic Games actually unite the world, as projected by its “One World, One Dream” slogan? Our results suggest an irony, that while such an event *should* bring the world together, uniting East and West, verifying Kipling’s (1889) ballad, the Games might have actually driven us apart – at least for those high in nationalism and patriotism, and for those who believe in the malleability of society.

To elaborate, the results revealed two major findings. The first concurs with our prediction, such that after being exposed to the Beijing Olympic icon, those highly identified with their country (those high in nationalism and/or patriotism) perceived greater intergroup differentiation between Chinese and Americans than did low identifiers (those low in nationalism and/or patriotism). Also as predicted, we found no differences between high and low identifiers when the Olympic icon was not primed. We suggest that high identifiers are, by nature, more prone to perceiving enhanced differentiation between groups following exposure to the Olympic icon because they are already inclined to perceive intergroup differentiation (Feshbach, 1994). New within our research, however, is that this perception is conditioned by a provoking event – for instance, the inherent competition of the Beijing Olympic Games. Furthermore, to the extent that the Beijing Olympic icon activated one’s own culture and that of one’s competitor simultaneously, a cognitive contrast effect (Chiu et al., 2009; Hsee, 1996; Hsee & Leclerc, 1998; Hsee, et al., 1999; Hsee & Zhang, 2004) was triggered. This contrastive mindset induced participants to concentrate on the *differences* between the two cultures. Importantly, we believe that high identifiers (compared to low identifiers)

are more vulnerable to this effect, as they more habitually hold a contrastive mindset with regards to culture. These findings were consistently shown among both Chinese and American participants, suggesting that these processes are basic and universal.

Our second finding shows that in response to the Beijing Olympic icon, Chinese participants who believe that Chinese society is more malleable (incremental theorists) perceived greater cultural differences between Chinese and Americans, compared to incremental theorists who did not see the icon. Those who believe that Chinese society is more fixed (entity theorists) perceived similarly high levels of intergroup differentiation regardless of the manipulation. We understand these effects as related to the typical characteristics of incremental and entity theorists, such that incremental theorists are not accustomed to routinely perceiving intergroup differences unless the situation demands it, while entity theorists are chronically aware of how groups differ and they believe these differences to be unwavering (Hong et al., 2004). Indeed, our findings suggest that the Beijing Olympic icon activated a contrastive mindset that oriented incremental theorists, who would otherwise be less inclined to compare and contrast cultures, to perceive differences between the ingroup and outgroup.

The present study is, to our knowledge, the first to apply a subtle priming methodology in the context of the Olympic Games. By experimentally exposing participants to the Beijing Olympic icon, we were able to make causal inferences regarding heightened perceived cultural differences due to the presence of the icon. Moreover, we tested and found moderating effects of nationalism and patriotism, and a predictive ability of beliefs about society on perceived cultural differences. Our findings overall suggest that the Beijing Olympic icon activated a contrastive mindset among both

Chinese and American participants, despite the finding that the two groups inferred different explicit meanings about the icon. As such, this implies that as long as the Olympic Games symbolize a co-presence of the two or more cultural groups simultaneously – whether the intergroup relationship is perceived to be friendly or competitive – the Games will lead to a psychological contrast between the ingroup and outgroup, and in so doing, heightened perceived cultural differences.

### 5.1 Limitations

Admittedly, one limitation of the present research is that the psychological consequences of heightened perceived cultural differences remain unexplored. We speculate, however, that these consequences might depend upon the present goal of the individual and one's interpretation of the foreign culture vis-à-vis the foreign culture's relationship with the ingroup culture. For instance, for those individuals who perceive the foreign culture as threatening and as a source of potential contamination, defending one's own culture might take priority (see Chao & Hong, 2007). Thus, these individuals might possess more competitive or hostile feelings towards the other culture and will therefore push the other culture far away psychologically as a means of maintaining distinctiveness, separateness, and even antagonism. Among those individuals who admire the foreign culture, however, perception of that culture as different might be a source of inspiration – such that these individuals might be motivated to learn from the other culture, eventually adopting parts of it and integrating it into their own culture. We realize the need to thoroughly investigate these two types of consequences. Undoubtedly, determining how the same psychological process – across cultures – might lead to effectively polar outcomes depending upon an individual's current motivation and

interpretation of the international environment should prove to be an important contribution to the study of intergroup relations. Given the cultural differences found in this research for the explicit meaning of the Beijing Olympic icon (“One World, One Dream” for Chinese participants, “Chinese competitiveness” for American participants), we speculate that Chinese and Americans should each manifest a particular consequence of perceiving heightened cultural differences. Specifically, while Americans might be more interested in maintaining distinction between the two cultures as a means of sustaining a currently advantageous status quo, Chinese might see the differences between East and West as a springboard for emulation.

## 5.2 Implications for Sino-American Relations

To elaborate, Li et al. (in press) found that, in a survey conducted in late September 2009, Chinese participants compared China to the United States most frequently, more than they compared China with Japan, South Korea, Russia, and Kenya. However, at the same time, Chinese participants did not view the United States as a hostile competitor, whereas they did view Japan and South Korea as such. In effect, Chinese see the United States as a comparative target, but do not want to compete antagonistically with Americans. This was consistent with findings from a poll conducted in China a few years ago by *Global Times* and the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (cited in Shirk, 2007). According to this poll, many Chinese like and even admire Americans and the United States: 66.1% of respondents from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, and Chongqin indicated positive attitudes toward Americans (52.9% “somewhat like” and 13.2% “like” Americans). Although approximately half of the respondents indicated that the United States was China’s rival

(49.2%) and that the United States makes attempts to control China (56.7%), an equally sizable group of respondents (47.7%) indicated that the United States is friendly, a model from which to learn, or cooperative.<sup>2</sup>

Americans view Chinese quite differently, however. According to a Thomson Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted in late October 2009 of 1,077 American adults aged 18 and older across the United States (Eckert, 2009), 34% of respondents indicated that the most important bilateral relationship the United States should have is one with China – but rather ambivalently, 56% of respondents characterized China as a foe and only 33% considered China an ally. Indeed, Gries, Crowson, and Sandel (in press) have conducted a longitudinal survey to track the attitudes of 1,135 Americans toward China during the two and a half weeks of the Beijing Olympic Games and revealed a significant increase in negative sentiment. Interestingly, the respondents held mildly positive attitudes toward China before the event and therefore it is unlikely that they were just “prejudiced” from the start. Based on findings from follow-up studies and analyses, the authors attribute the increasingly negative attitudes to both “the possibility of an ‘efficiency effect,’ whereby China’s very success in both hosting and competing in the Olympics generated increased American anxiety about China, and a ‘cheating effect,’ whereby stories about Chinese underage gymnasts and deception (e.g., lip syncing while another child actually sang

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<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that Chinese opinions toward the United States can be highly ambivalent. For example, the Chinese public can be strayed at times to endorse rather unfavorable – at times even hostile – attitudes toward the United States, especially when American actions hint at some sort of “imperialism” of China. Prominent examples include the 1999 American bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and the April 2001 event in which an American E-P3 surveillance plane and Chinese F-8 jet fighter collided over the South China Seas (cf. Gries & Peng, 2002).

during the Opening Ceremonies) diffused broadly through social networks, uniformly and negatively impacting American attitudes towards China” (Gries et al., in press).

This stark contrast between China and the United States in terms of each country’s perception of the other supports our finding regarding how the two cultures differentially conceptualize the Beijing Olympic Games when asked directly. In sum, while Chinese are aware of the differences between China and the United States, they do not necessarily associate these differences with hostility, but instead understand them as an opportunity to learn from the United States – such that the differences might be appreciated, the distance between the two cultures might be reduced, and “One World, One Dream” might eventually be realized. However, while Americans associate the Games with competition between China and the United States, their same awareness of how they are different from China might only serve to intensify any adversarial feelings.

### 5.3 Implications for Globalization

Going one step further, it is wholly possible that the “One World, One Dream” Beijing Olympic ideal was a disguised proxy for Chinese efforts toward globalization and internationalization. Indeed, China has tried to craft a favorable “national brand,” reassuring the world that an impressive China, as shown by its power in pulling off an “impeccable” mega event, is not a threatening China (Gries et al., in press; see also Berkowitz, Giermano, Gomez, & Schafer, 2007). Yet, a recurring question always remains despite our greatest efforts toward globalization: “Is it possible for people to not see themselves and others as group members but simply as human beings?” (Moghaddam, 2008, p. 5). Proponents of globalization continually argue that the international community can advantageously use the context-dependency of national and

cultural identity to catalyze feelings of interdependence – indeed, psychologists have shown that higher-order categorizations (i.e., “We are all human beings”; “We are all citizens of a globalized village”), as indicated by the common ingroup identity theory, can enhance intergroup relations and potentially bring about true feelings of interconnectedness and similarity, and identification with a global culture (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Nevertheless, with this attempt to melt away intergroup differences comes an unexpected form of reactance: the trend toward differentiation and exaggeration of intergroup differences in the form of national or ethnic revival and pride in being unique. This trend might help to further explain our findings for nationalism and patriotism – and especially for Americans. In effect, the attempt to preserve the differences between one’s home country or culture and that of another might be the only way that some high identifiers feel they can hold on to what is theirs. And while Americans affiliate the Beijing Olympic Games with Chinese competitiveness, they reaffirm their inclination to see China as an outgroup, different and potentially threatening because of its rising superpower status that could eventually redefine the current world order or, at the very least, reset the status quo. As this desire to sustain the distinctions between one’s culture and another remains prevalent, it may be the only way that some (i.e., nationalists, patriots, and particularly Americans) can reduce the fear associated with the pressing need to update their social identity and become, in a word, homogenized. In short, although globalization may appear threatening to the current superpower and its loyal and highly identified members, it presents an opportunity for everyone – to become something better, develop a greater

diversity of ideas, and ultimately attain better conditions for all of humankind via cooperation, rather than competition, between nations.

Globalization is inevitable, and as the interaction between China and the United States becomes increasingly frequent and more meaningful, the current power differential between the two nations will eventually decrease. At the same time, the two countries will become more knowledgeable about each other and the cultural differences in perception of the other as friend or foe will become readily apparent. Given this likely future, it is imperative for research to inform strategies that might, at the very least, help make both countries cognizant of how they are perceived by each other. Awareness of our differences, understanding how those differences come about and what they mean to the outgroup, and being ready to reconcile discrepant motivations are essential to preemptively assuage any potential discord caused by different expectations and different hopes for the future world order. Our present research sought to address the preliminary stages of these goals.

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## APPENDIX A

### 6.1 “Feeling Meters” Used in Chinese Sample

**Instructions:** The purpose of this survey is to determine how you associate certain key words with two cultures (the Chinese and Western cultures). Please indicate the degree of association you feel between the given key words and each of the cultures by placing a single “X” on each scale provided. The scales’ endpoints should guide your choosing of the location of each individual line. If you feel that the given word is **strongly associated** with the given culture, then you might place an “X” somewhere on the right-half portion of the line. However, if you feel that the given word is **hardly associated** with that culture, you should place an “X” on the left-half portion of the line. **There are no right or wrong answers; please follow your instincts and proceed quickly through the items.**

#### Example 1:

#### PANDA

_____X	
Feels not at all Chinese	Feels very Chinese
_____X	
Feels not at all Western	Feels very Western

#### Example 2:

#### COFFEE

_____X	
Feels not at all Chinese	Feels very Chinese
_____X	
Feels not at all Western	Feels very Western

#### Example 3:

#### RIVER

_____X	
Feels not at all Chinese	Feels very Chinese
_____X	
Feels not at all Western	Feels very Western