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HOW AMERICAN STUDENT JOURNALISTS AT A COLLEGE NEWSPAPER CONSUME, PERCEIVE, AND DISSEMINATE NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT CHINA

by

XIAOHUA WANG

B.S. Wuhan University, 2001

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Nicholson School of Communication
in the College of Sciences
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ABSTRACT

With the increase of cooperation between America and China, the average person's perception of the other country could be an important factor that influences the development of the relationship between these countries. This study was designed to explore how Americans student journalists view China and how these student journalists select the news for a campus newspaper that might influence their readers' perceptions of China. Student journalists not only represent American youth but also act as connectors and filters between a huge flow of information outside and students on campus. A convenience census sample of student journalists at a campus newspaper were surveyed and interviewed.

The results showed that although Americans student journalists know more about China than before, Orientalism is still alive in their perceptions and representations of China. They have both strange "Other" and romantic images about China. They view China as a communist evil with less democracy; yet at the same time think of China as a romantic mystery with a fabulous history and colorful culture. In the process of American student journalists constructing their perceptions about China, mass media play a role of agenda-setter. Subjects depended on mass media to get to know China, and their perceptions of China mirror the orientation of the government's policy and mass media's coverage.

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Thanks to my little son, David. His birth brings so much fun and meaning to my life.

Thanks to my grandpa, who supported me to study abroad but left the world without seeing me at the last minute.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES vii
LIST OF TABLES viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 7
Influencing International News Flow 7
How News Coverage of Foreign Countries Is Determined 9
How Coverage of Foreign Counties Affects Public Opinion 11
CHAPTER 3: THEORY 13
Orientalism 14
News Making 16
Gate Keeping Theory 18
Agenda-Setting Theory 19
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY 22
Surveys 23
In-Depth Interviews 23
The Progress 24
The Participants 25
Data Collection and Analysis 27
CHAPTER 5: DATA 30
News and Information Consumption 30
Survey results 30
Where they got their news about China 31
News Selection and Dissemination 34
Influence of hierarchy of editors 34
Personal preferences: cultural ties 35
Personal preferences: ethnic identification 36
Elements of news as factors in news judgment 38
Timeliness 38
Conflict. 38
News service as a factor in news judgment 38
International News and News About China 40
Perceived importance of international news 40
Knowledge and perceptions of China 42
Politics 43
Economy 44
Culture 45
Military 45
Trade 46
International relations 48
Why they tended to exclude news about China 49
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION 53
Student journalists as Orientalists 53
Student Journalists Constructed Reality in the Press 57
Student Journalists as Gatekeepers 59

The college newspaper sets students' agenda 61
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION 64
APPENDIX A: CITI COMPLETION REPORT 66
APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL FORM 68
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 70
APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE 73
APPENDIX E: WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT 76
REFERENCES 78

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: U.S. Trade with China 2
Figure 2: Conceptual Model 19

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:Mass media use of participants. 33

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis constitutes a qualitative cultural study conducted through the textual analysis of long interviews of selected American college student journalists about their perceptions of China and the way they, in turn, disseminate news and information about China. In order to understand their media influences and the perceptions they hold and how, in turn, these student journalists judge, select, and report news in their campus newspaper about China, this thesis includes a discussion of the findings to identify emergent themes among their self-reported media use, perceptions, and communication concerning China.

The United States and China have recently become closer than at any other time in history, in terms of their political, military, trade, and global relations. The exchange visits of national leaders between the U.S. and China have increased sharply. During the period 1972-89, U.S. and Chinese top leaders visited each other's country seven times (The relationship, 2007). During the period 1997-2006, however, the countries' leaders visited each other nine times. This change indicates that the U.S. and China are trying to improve their political relationship. Also, the U.S. and China are building a military-to-military relationship; military officials from the two countries have begun visiting each other more frequently and they are planning a joint military exercise (The memo, 2007).

The U.S. and China are also major trade partners. The U.S. is China's second most important trade partner; since 2004, China has been the third most important trade partner of the U.S. (Figure 1: U.S. Trade with China). The U.S. and China are also cooperating on global issues, such as the handling of the North Korean nuclear threat and the fight against terrorism.

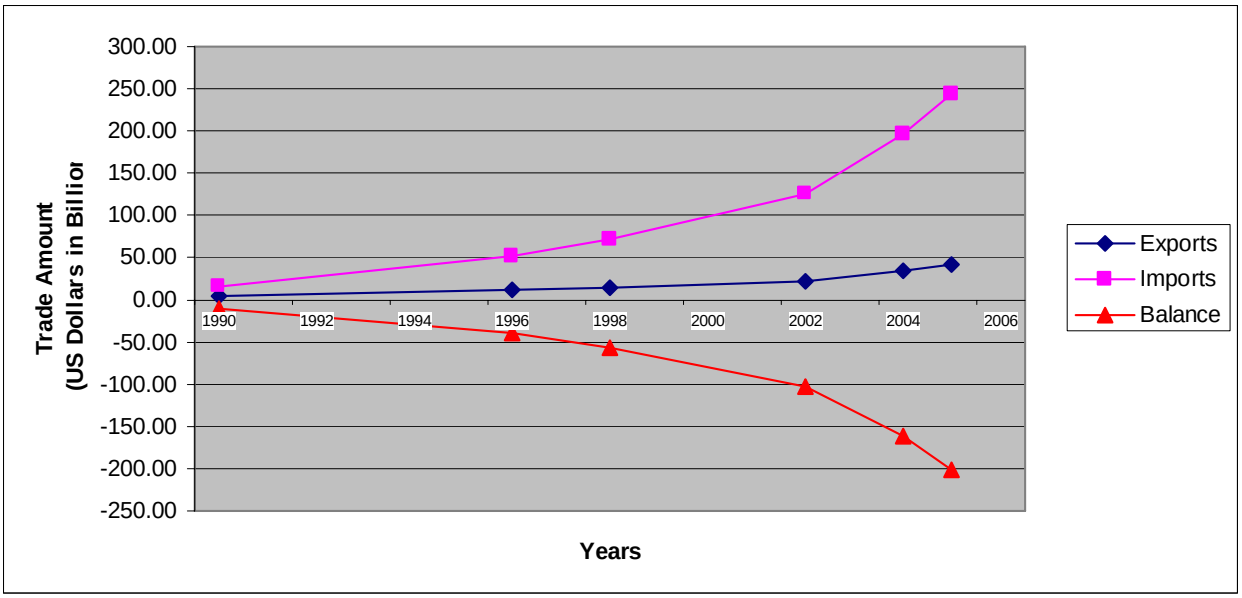


Figure 1: U.S. Trade with China

Friendly relations are important for both countries, but especially for China, which suffered through wars for 100 years (1848-1949), became impoverished, and fell behind other countries in development. Moreover, from 1949 to 1978, internal political conflicts, including the Cultural Revolution, stymied China's development. By 1979, when China opened itself up to the world and began improving communication with the outside, it was already developmentally backward in such aspects as the economy, the military, and technology. Today, however, the economic, military, and technology environments both inside and outside China are more peaceful and friendly. Today's China is the most rapidly developing country in the world, with a Gross Domestic Product that has increased by 10 percent annually in some recent years (GDP, 2007).

The U.S., of course, is the most highly developed country and plays a crucial role in every conceivable international issue. It also has the most advanced technologies and abundant economic expertise. A strong relationship between China and the U.S. obviously would aid in continuing China's economic development.

Some conflicts do arise occasionally between the U.S. and China and at least temporarily jeopardize their relationship. For example, in 2007, the U.S. filed two complaints against China with the World Trade Organization, including one accusing the country of being lax on enforcing copyright and thus harming the profits of U.S. companies in China (Gross, 2007). China countered with criticism that the U.S. government had ignored how hard China was working to improve the protection of intellectual property rights. China also claimed that the U.S. lawsuit would jeopardize relations that had been established in the area of market access to publications. The Chinese government stated that, in accordance with the relevant rules to respond actively, it would oppose the U.S. in this matter (Wang, 2007). This case arose to some degree because of misconceptions the U.S. has about China. Although China is, in fact developing rapidly, compared to the U.S., China's legislation of trade is neither as mature nor as sophisticated as that in the U.S. To attain that level will take more time.

Cultural misunderstandings between the countries exist at more basic levels, too. Americans still imagine the China of several decades earlier: that, for example, Chinese people by and large are poor, conservative, and autocratic (Goldstein, Israel, & Conroy, 1991). Moreover, despite ever-increasing relations between the countries, Americans still seem to view China warily as an enemy, rather than a partner or friend. This perception may be influenced by news media accounts. For example, stories have indicated or noted directly that U.S. economic problems, such as the increase in oil prices, unemployment rates, and the trade deficit are due, in part, to China's economic growth and its effect on the global economy (Hutton, 2006).

Conflicts and misinterpretation between the U.S. and China may derive from Americans viewing China as a potential threat. In 2005, the Committee of 100, a national, non-partisan organization composed of prominent American citizens of Chinese descent, announced the preliminary results of the first of a two-phase survey on American attitudes toward China, conducted by Zogby International (American attitudes, 2005). The results showed that China was viewed as a potential military threat by 67% of American opinion leaders and by 51% of the American public. But China was viewed as an even greater economic threat than military threat. More than 60% of both American opinion leaders and the American public viewed China as a serious or potential economic threat. New Tang Dynasty Television reported that:

> The United States views China as a potential enemy and a stronger potential competitor. Some American politicians oppose China's unrestrained development, claiming it is creating unemployment in America, even though many American companies and factories in market services and technology fields have moved to India, which has cost more American jobs. India is never criticized by American politicians, though. Experts say this might be because America does not view India as a threat. On the other hand, many Americans know little about China (trans. from The review of economy, 2006).

Such misconceptions jeopardize relations between the U.S. and China. U.S. Senators Lindsey Graham and Charles Schummer acknowledged that they were laboring under misconceptions when they once thought that the Yuan was undervalued by 40% against the dollar (Dean, 2006). To counter the U.S. trade deficit with China, the two senators announced in 2005 that they would co-sponsor a bipartisan bill that would

impose a 27.5% tariff on all imports from China. If passed, such legislation would have resulted in a severe decrease in Chinese exports to the U.S., causing Chinese trade to suffer and depriving American consumers of low-priced Chinese imported goods. Senators Graham and Schummer changed their minds altogether, however, after they visited China in 2006 and spoke with Chinese officials after seeing the situation first-hand. The senators explained that they got a "real feeling" that China was working diligently to correct the trade imbalance (Liu, 2006b). Dr. Liu Baocheng, the dean of the Sino-America School of International Management in the University of International Business and Economics, noted that support for the proposed Graham-Schummer bill arose out of ignorance and misapprehension about China in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives–a powerful hegemony that influenced the American public (Liu, 2006a).

Americans are relatively free to travel to China to see for themselves; most, of course, will never visit China. As Golan and Wanta (2003) noted, few Americans experience world news events first-hand. Instead, they tend to get their information about important events around the world mainly by news media. Therefore, mass media may contribute to people's understanding—or misunderstanding—of other countries. Public opinion about a foreign country is an influential factor in policymaking (Holsti, 1996).

Based on the importance of views that Americans hold about China and in the framework and limitation of previous studies, this thesis examines how some Americans view China and what role news media play in forming those perceptions. Specifically, this study targeted college journalists who composed the staff of a campus newspaper dominant in circulation and dissemination of information among the local population.

This thesis, then, represents an attempt to identify, in small part, how perceptions—mistaken or correct—about China are communicated through press accounts.

The structure of this thesis follows an outline of: reviewing related research to provide context for this study; explaining which mass communication theories were applied to this study, and how; describing and justifying the methodology used; revealing the findings; and interpreting and discussing them by applying the relevant theories. The final chapter comprises conclusions derived from the research, along with discussion of limitations and the future of such research.

This thesis attempts to answer two research questions:

RQ1: What are American student journalists' perceptions of China and how are they formed?

RQ2: How do American student journalists influence other college students' perceptions about China through the college newspaper?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the 1950s, the topic of international news coverage has attracted increasing attention in the mass communication research field. By the early 1980s, the literature in this area of inquiry had reached "almost landslide proportions" (Hur, 1982, p. 531). The main research topics in the international news research area that are closely related to this thesis include the influence of international news flow, news coverage of foreign countries, and how news coverage may affect public opinion.

About 30 previous studies focused on American news media coverage of foreign countries. Some studies mentioned the condition of China as described in American news media. Wanta, Golan, & Lee (2003) found in a study of CNN, NBC, CBS, and NBC during a period in 1998 that the amount of coverage devoted to China ranked third, after Russia and the United Kingdom. The number of stories considered to be positive about China, however, was zero. Golan (2003) found that, the next year, China ranked third, after Yugoslavia and Russia. The reason for China's extensive coverage: It had recently become a new important economic power and crucial trade partner of America. These researchers collected data in the 1990s and presented a snapshot of that point in history, but their work cannot be considered relevant in the context of international news coverage today. These studies are limited surveys, based on numbers; they lack vivid and detailed data that can be derived from in-depth interviews.

Influencing International News Flow

Schramm's *One Day in the World's Press* (1959) is considered the first investigation of news coverage around the world. He reviewed fourteen selected papers that conveyed remarkably different pictures to their respective readers on November 2,

1956. The world covered in the press, he found, was not proportionate to either the population or geographic size of countries.

In covering developing countries, Galtung and Vincent (1992) found that the Western media focused on disasters, corruption, and crises, thereby producing exotic images of these developing countries antithetical to America. The researchers concluded that U.S. media emphasized foreign topics directly related to the crucial economic and strategic interests of the U.S. overseas.

Chang (1998) analyzed Reuters' coverage of countries that sent representatives to the World Trade Organization conference in 1996. He noted that countries in the core zone of the world system had a greater chance of being in the news than others. He used factors such as trade and monetary policy to classify the countries as core, semi-peripheral and peripheral.

Wu's (1998) research supported the notion that two moderate factors influence international news flow: population and geographic distance. His findings also suggested that trade remained the predominant determinant for news coverage; and that far-reaching, disruptive incidents and conflicts also co-determined prominence on the world's news agenda.

Golan (2003) measured and analyzed the nature of international news coverage through a content analysis of every evening network news program on CNN, ABC, CBS, and NBC in 1999. Golan's study was consistent with previous studies that found deviance from and relevance to U.S. to be key determinants of international news coverage. In addition, large populations, powerful economies and large militaries also made a nation newsworthy.

When Golan and Wanta (2003) examined factors that could predict coverage of international elections on U.S. newscasts, however, they found that a significant predictor for coverage about international elections was the potential threat to America as well as conflicts and instability in the region. Cultural and economic ties were negative predictors of media coverage in times of international elections. Geographic proximity and trade relationships with America did not affect coverage. They investigated the network news coverage on CNN, ABC, CBS, and NBC. All 138 elections held between January 1, 1998, and May 1, 2000, were included in the analysis.

From these previous studies, it can be determined that the main factors that influence one country's newsworthiness include trade, powerful economy, potential threat, large militaries, conflicts and instability, population, deviance and relevance, culture ties and geographic distance. However, these studies did not agree on which factors are more important than others.

How News Coverage of Foreign Countries Is Determined

Galtung and Ruge (1965) identified factors that predispose foreign events to become news including elite nations, negative events, unexpectedness-within-predictability, and cultural proximity. Lee and Yang (1995) found that national interest may outweigh the importance of socio-psychological factors to play a central role in defining media accounts of the political world. As a result, the media "rally around the flag" reproducing the definitions, agendas, and even language of the government-business nexus of their own countries. After they analyzed stories in U.S. news media coverage of the Tiananmen Square event, the authors argued that national interest in the

dominant ideology may powerfully shape the "journalistic paradigms" of international media.

Xu and Parsons (1997**)** analyzed the news coverage of China in the *New York Times, Washington Post*, and *Christian Science Monitor* from January 1 through June 30, 1993. They found that U.S. news coverage placed greater proportional emphasis on Chinese sensationalism. Some 89% of American news stories in the sensationalism category were almost evenly divided between human rights, discrimination, crime, violence, and trials. U.S. newspapers emphasized the trade relationship between the U.S. and China, but were least likely to report on Chinese science/technology. Furthermore, the coverage of China in the U.S. consisted of long, issue-oriented stories, noticeable for their lack of official sourcing.

When they analyzed news coverage about Hong Kong's handover in 1997 in different countries newspapers, Lee, Chan, Pan, and So (2000) found that the difference of the news reports about this event in various nations reflected their dominant ideology as defined by power structures, cultural repertoires, and political-economic interests. For example, they noticed that U.S. had taken over Britain's guardian role and viewed itself as "a righter of wrong around the world, in pursuit of tyranny, in defense of freedom no matter the place or cost." This new guardian role was obviously based on ideological grounds. CBS News cast Hong Kong's handover as part of a big story about China striving to be a world superpower.

Ren (2000) compared Chinese and U.S. coverage of *Falun Gong*, a quasi-religious group banned by the Chinese government. *China Daily* and the *New York Times* were selected for comparison. The author found that Chinese news coverage constructed

an image of *Falun Gong* as an evil cult group. On the contrary, U.S. coverage portrayed it as a benevolent spiritual movement and viewed the ban as an example of China's human rights abuse. Culbertson & Chen (1996) also found that a nation's ideology, government policies, journalistic practices, and overall culture had great influence on news judgment.

These previous studies showed that the process of newsmaking involved the political, economic, and social system in which the media organization operated and the ideology of the ruling class. These factors influenced international news coverage.

How Coverage of Foreign Counties Affects Public Opinion

Cohen (1963) listed three major roles of news coverage of foreign policy: observer of foreign policy news, participant in the foreign policy process, and catalyst of foreign news. The final role might be the most central to the press and its agenda of influencing the public agenda.

Agenda-setting theory supported the idea that news media could affect public opinion. Wanta and Hu (1993) examined the agenda-setting influence of international news and found a strong agenda-setting impact of international news stories on U.S. public opinion, especially on conflict-related stories and concrete presentations. McNelly and Izcaray (1986) noted that since the 1920s, international communication was presumed to contribute to people's understanding or misunderstanding of each other's countries. McNelly and Izcaray found that news exposure significantly related to positive feelings toward countries and to images of those countries as successful.

Many scholars explored the "images" of a country in another country's public opinion through analysis of the portrayals that are prominent in the news media. Johnson (1997) and the Mexican Cultural Institute of New York (2000) examined Mexico in U.S.

news media. Nnaemeka and Richstad (1980) investigated structured relations and foreign news flow in the Pacific region, and Ishii (1996**)** examined America in the Japanese press.

All of this research abstractively disclosed Americans' perceptions about China. The idiographic images about China that American people hold have never been studied. For a very long period, China attracted little attention of the international news in foreign countries and in the work of the scholars in the international news field. Until the end of the 1990s, with its economy developing, China was mentioned sporadically in some international communication studies (Golan, 2003; Wanta, et al., 2003). And these studies collected data in 1999, 1998, or earlier. China has changed in many aspects, especially in economy and technology, and has played a more important role in the world in recent years.

The position of China in international news coverage today should reflect these changes and be different than many years ago. Thus, to learn the perception of today's China in America, these studies are outdated. All of these researchers conducted content analysis of news coverage and surveys. Audiences' perceptions about foreign countries have been learned from surveys instead of interviews, and they could not provide rich details of Americans' real perceptions of China. Another way to determine these perceptions is through extensive random interviews. However limited by resources and time, this thesis seeks to fill a gap in the research by studying student journalists as a convenience sample.

CHAPTER 3: THEORY

Four theories—Orientalism (Said, 1978), news making (Tuchman, 1978), gatekeeping (Manning White, 1948), and agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972)—informed the research conducted for this thesis, particularly in the design of the interview questions and analysis of the data. In this chapter, each of the four theories is introduced briefly then discussed at greater length.

Orientalism provides a critical theoretical explanation of why some Westerners, including Americans, view China in a certain way. In first articulating Orientalism, Edward Said (1978) pointed out that Westerners who thought their culture was superior assumed a certain freedom of interpretation as their privilege. They viewed themselves "above" the East and believed that with this superiority, they could penetrate, wrestle with, and give shape and meaning to the East. In controlling it this way, the West tended to romanticize the East, thereby weakening its self-identity and its integrity. This one-sided view of the East deviated from reality. However, Orientalism alone cannot fully explain why China or the Chinese are reported from particular angles and with different attitudes in Western news coverage.

In building a theory of news making, Gaye Tuchman (1978) described the sociology of work routines of the mass media and provided evidence and analysis to validate that news was a constructed reality. Tuchman noted that news stories not only lent occurrences their existence as public events but also imparted character to them. News reports helped to shape the public definition of happenings by selectively attributing to them specific details or particulars. News people made these selected details accessible to news consumers and tended to ignore other facts. By limiting the news

made accessible and limiting or eliminating contrarian, dissenting or deviant perspectives, the status quo was maintained and legitimized.

David Manning White (1948) pointed out that before news stories were published, they went through a process of selection by different gatekeepers, such as reporters, editors, and chief editors. During the process of news making, thousands of news items were filtered "from one 'gate keeper' after another in the chain of communications." White found that to some degree, news selection was influenced by a gate keeper's experiences, attitudes and expectations, and even his personal prejudices and favor. Therefore, "objective" news coverage, in fact, was the result of a biased selectivity.

Agenda-setting theory, proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972), disclosed the significant influence of the news agenda on the public agenda and the important roles news media play in forming perceptions of the public. Agenda-setting theory explained that through salience transfer, the mass media were able to transfer the importance of items or issues on their agendas to public agendas. In other words, mass media made the public think about certain issues by emphasizing them in important positions or context. At the same time, by selectively disclosing some details, the mass media may have influenced perceptions or attitudes of the public to this issue.

Following is a more thorough explanation of each of the four theories.

Orientalism

Orientalism is a Western ideological mechanism for dominating, restructuring, and assuming authority over the East, Middle East, Asia and other non-western countries. Edward Said (1978), a Palestinian-American literary theorist and outspoken Palestinian activist, first articulated this idea at length. Said pointed out that the hidden discourse

devised by the West gives privilege and power to the West over the East: “The Oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks.” Westerners penetrate, wrestle with, and give shape and meaning to the “great Asiatic mystery.” According to Said, the West has created a dichotomy between the reality of the East and the romantic notion of the “Orient.” The West has created a culture, history, and future promise for the East. Said noted that the Orientals are described by the West as creatures who were irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike; however, the West is rational, virtuous, mature, “normal,” and advanced. On the other hand, the West romanticizes and idealizes the East and views it as mythical, with “differences.” The West dehumanizes the East and creates images of the East that deviate from the reality. The West does not want to consider the possibility that the non-West might be more advanced and take control of the world from the West.

Orientalism continues to prevail, according to scholars. For instance, Dexheimer (2002) pointed out that in light of the current situation in the Middle East and the terrorist destruction in the U.S on September 11, Said’s theory is particularly illuminating. U.S. attention is on the Islamic people of the Middle East, and the understanding of the mainstream seems to be that these Arabs are “other” people, people not like Americans, people who have strange values and beliefs. And, it goes without saying that “the society of strange people is inferior.”

It is obvious from the popular news media that Orientalism is still very much alive. China is misunderstood and misrepresented when the prejudicial opinions of the past are not challenged. Some Americans still view China as a sleeping giant: a closed culture lacking the ability of self-revolution (Wickham, 2004). China is viewed by some Americans as a terrible country that developed rapidly and threatens the position of the

U.S. as No. 1 in the world and even the safety of the Americans (Smith, 2002). In these articles, China is described as "other," different from the U.S., a threat or not, instead of a country with humanized characteristics.

Awareness of this Orientalism is an important step to understand the news coverage about China. Since Orientalism is an influential factor, and college newspapers are written by college students who are influenced by government propaganda, political and economic interests of the nation and ideology of the country, college newspapers are likely to be influenced by Orientalism as well.

News Making

In her 1978 book *Making news: A study in the construction of reality,* Gaye Tuchman described and analyzed the work routines of the news media, providing evidence to validate the view of news as a constructed reality. News does not mirror society but rather is constructed at several levels. Tuchman advanced an "interpretive" sociology, the principal theme of which is that news is a socially constructed product built by news people. For instance, newsworthiness is not defined by social norms but rather by news workers and news organizations. In the process of describing an event, news defines and shapes that event. Tuchman noted that news stories not only lend occurrences their existence as public events, but also impart character to them, for news reports help to shape the public definition of happenings by selectively attributing to them specific details or particulars. They make these selected details accessible to news consumers.

News is made through territorial, institutional, and topical chains of command. In order to fill the space in a given newspaper or in a news broadcast, news agencies expect

and allow their reporters to work at sites where sensational news is deemed most likely to occur, such as police headquarters, the courthouse, or city hall. News that occurs in these kinds of locations can easily be captured by reporters; however, other cases may be missed by reporters because of geography. This means that sometimes journalists report certain news not because it is important but because reporters are in place to catch or notice it.

News is also sometimes the result of competition or negotiation between editors or reporters. Reporters compete with one another for assignments. Editors compete with each other to get assignments for their reporters and then negotiate to get their reporters' stories in the paper or on the air. Thus, editors may publish news out of self-interest, rather than produce news for their audience. Since mass media have different topical specialties, such as local, state, and international news, or finance, sports, family, education, and culture, these different topical specialties compete with one another every day for page space or air time. Also, chief decision-making editors may choose news stories to publish or broadcast based on not only newsworthiness but also the perceived need to balance the choice of topics.

The notion of journalists as free agents in a democracy is true in appearance only. In fact, they are on an ideological leash. Most journalists are educated into a world view that supports rather than opposes the existing corporate system. Objectivity of reporting means do not report anything about how news corporations interlock the conflict of interests of directors' judgments regarding news selection and selection of editors, manager, and reporters. News reporting is controlled by publishers, advertisers, and powerful political and business interests, such as the news organization itself represents.

Media owners are eager allies rather than independent critics of most other civic and institutional powers. The networks, wire services, and major dailies tell the public generally what the state and its extensions want them to hear.

Gate Keeping Theory

The gate keeper in journalism is any person who decides what should pass through a filter of news, but the term, as used in the study of systems, originated in sociology. The term was first used this way by Kurt Lewin (1947), a pioneer of social psychology. He said that gates are governed by important roles or by "gate keepers," which might be an individual or group.

In 1948, David Manning White was the first to use this term in a study of journalism. White found that during the process of news making by a wire service, thousands of possible items are filtrated "from one 'gate keeper' after another in the chain of communications." The first gate keeper is the news reporter, who writes the news according to his own perceptual frameworks. Next are the rewrite man, the bureau chief, and the state filing editor; the last gate keeper is the wire editor. This is a process of choosing and discarding. Through his study of how a wire editor at a newspaper selected and edited the national and international news that would be used on the front pages during one week, White found that to some degree news selection was influenced by this gate keeper's personal prejudices and favor. This gate keeper discerned whether news stories were subjective based on his own experiences, attitudes, and expectations.

Gate keepers have the ability to control what and how much the public learns about actual events by letting some stories pass through the system and keeping others out. Their choices subsequently affect people's understanding of what is happening in the

world around them. If the gate keeper's selections are biased, the reader's understanding will therefore be biased.

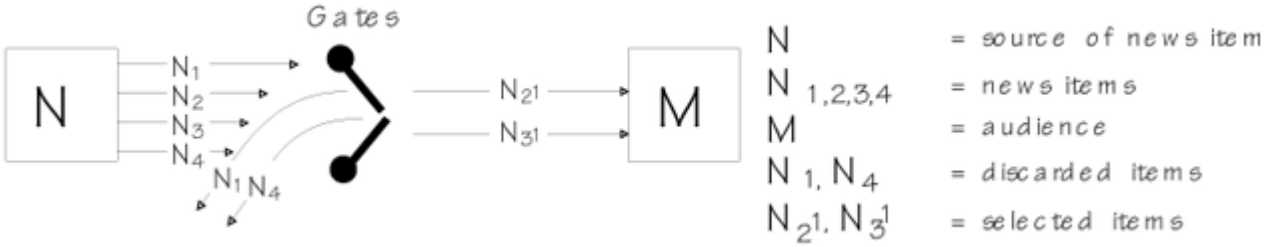


Figure 2: Conceptual Model
Source: David Manning White (1964)

Student reporters and editors are the gate keepers at college newspapers and are vital in planning and reporting news stories. Their experiences, attitudes, and expectations about China, for instance, would have a profound impact on news selection. A campus newspaper's readers' understanding of the world, including China, could be influenced by student journalists' choices.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) describes the possible influence of mass media on the public. The central axiom is salience transfer; the mass media have the ability to transfer the importance of items or issues on their agendas to public agendas. In other words, agenda-setting theory offers an explanation of the phenomena that news media not only affect what the public thinks but also how it thinks about it.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) compared voter attitudes and news coverage in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, during the 1968 presidential campaign. They found that the prominent issues in the news became prominent among the public. They pointed out that news media influenced the public on what issues to think about. They explained that in

choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. They concluded that mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of the public's attitudes toward political issues. Since the theory was conceived, more than 350 studies have tested it (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). These further studies have provided evidence for the cause-and-effect chain of mass media and have extended agenda-setting theory from political news stories to other types, such as crime news, business news, and international news.

Agenda-setting has two levels. On the first level, the media use particular objects or issues to influence the public. By emphasizing specific topics through a certain amount of coverage about them, mass media influence the public into thinking about these issues as important and into ignoring others that may have been reported more infrequently or not at all. On the second level, the media focus on specific characteristics of issues and ignore others. In this way, mass media suggest how people should think about these issues. There are two types of attributes: cognitive, such as sustentative or topics; and affective, such as evaluative, or positive, negative, or neutral. For instance, in March 2000, National Geographic published an article titled *Beijing: new face for the ancient capital*. This title implied that the magazine would introduce a new Beijing to readers; however, the article instead presented a dim view of Beijing: traffic clogs, pollution, unemployment, and corruption. Correspondingly, most photographs reflected the chaos of Beijing and depicted its people as scavengers. The backs of many people are shown, but few faces. A Western reader would reasonably infer only negative aspects of Beijing.

Similarly, agenda-setting theory supports the idea that news coverage of China in a U.S. college newspaper could influence students' perceptions of China. Even the amount of coverage of China could influence students' opinion of whether China was considered important in global affairs and in its relation to the U.S. The orientation of China's coverage could directly influence the students' evaluations and attitudes to it.

These four theories—Orientalism, news making, gate keeping, and agenda-setting—were considered during the design of the interview questions (see appendix) and for the analysis of the resulting data (see Chapter Five). This thesis brings these theories together to bear on an analysis of how the subjects of this study consume and perceive news and make their own decisions about what news is or should be for others. News-making theory and gate keeping theory suggest that journalists' decisions about news coverage and presentation are influenced by reporters' and editors' personal interests as well as their ideology: for instance, Orientalism. News-making and gate keeping theories suggest that when—as in the case of this study—certain American student journalists select news for publication in their campus newspaper, they may choose stories or details in certain stories that match an Orientalist ideology; similarly, the students may ignore or delete stories or details that conflict with it. In the context of this study, in the stories selected by the student journalists, China represents the "Other": a country with a romanticized—*Orientalized*—culture; a country that, by its "Otherness," conflicts with and therefore threatens the U.S. What might be the effect of such news coverage and story selection on audiences? Agenda-setting theory could provide some insight because it asserts that mass media to some degree influence audiences' perceptions of foreign countries.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This thesis was conducted as a two-part sequential study involving quantitative and qualitative methods. Since the research was designed, in part, to investigate the media habits and influences of student journalists, a college newspaper was selected. A convenience sample of staff members of one college newspaper (hereafter, the pseudonym *The Progress* will be used to identify it) at a large southeastern university (hereafter the pseudonym "The University" will be used) was chosen. The choice of this newspaper is meaningful also because of its dominance among newspapers available on campus of The University. In expanding its publication from two times a week to three times a week and increasing its newshole—the amount of space dedicated to non-advertising material—by as much as 15 percent a week, the publisher and general manager issued an oral directive that the staff would be expected to increase the amount of "news service" news included each week. That strategy was twofold: (1) to maximize use of what was deemed a costly service; and (2) to maximize the value of the newspaper as a fuller, richer source of news in competition with other local and national newspapers available to students on campus.

For richness of data and potential diversity of responses, a census sample of the staff was identified and recruited for this study. Participants (hereafter identified by pseudonyms) were first surveyed by paper questionnaire for the purpose of providing the researcher with adequate background for conducting one-on-one, face-to-face, in-depth interviews. To further prepare the researcher to ask participants about their news selection, the archives of *The Progress* were explored, and all references to "China" and

"Chinese" over a one-year period were noted. The questionnaire and interviews were conducted in summer 2007.

Surveys

A questionnaire distributed to and filled out by all recruited participants was used to obtain sufficient background information about the participants to help the researcher conduct interviews. The surveys were also designed for learning about possible connections between participants' international background—such as travel experience, ethnic heritage, neighborhoods where they had lived—and their worldview and perceptions of China. For example, a student who grew up in a mixed-ethnic environment or had a mixed-ethnic makeup or who had traveled outside the country or who spoke multiple languages could reasonably have been expected to assume a worldview broader than her/his peers and to have more interest in or knowledge of foreign nations, such as China. A student with little or no international exposure and who knew little or nothing about China except through Western media accounts could reasonably have been expected to hold an Orientalist view of China.

In-Depth Interviews

Little detailed information exists about how Americans view China and how mass media influence Americans' perceptions about China. Most of the available data are based on surveys. Rogers (1997) noted that surveys were useful only when researchers were looking for breadth rather than depth, and the survey was unable to get at the complexities of a situation. Additionally, Seidman (1998) noted "in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience." Marshall and Rossman (1989) observed that the in-depth interview

could be thought of as "a conversation with a purpose." Marshall and Rossman pointed out these three strengths of in-depth interviews: the ability of the researcher to get a larger amount of data quickly; the ability of the researcher to immediately ask follow-up questions for clarification or to probe for additional information; and, when more than one person was interviewed, the ability of the researcher to gather a wide variety of information from a number of people. The in-depth interview is an underused method to investigate Americans' perceptions about and dissemination of news of foreign countries. It also was deemed appropriate for this thesis because it allowed the researcher to explore attitudes, values, and perceptions of subjects in a way that provides "texture and context" (Poindexter & McCombs, 2000, p. 271).

The Progress

This study includes interviews of nine college student journalists and two non-students—the adviser and the publisher—who worked at *The Progress*, the campus newspaper of The University. *The Progress* has been publishing for almost four decades and has been independent of The University for more than fifteen years. During the research period, more than 15,000 free copies of the newspaper were distributed on campus and nearby every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. "Pass-around" circulation rates assume that, on average, about 2.5 people read each copy of the paper. Therefore, the paper, when it is fully distributed, is estimated to reach more than 35,000 readers in The University community.

The Progress was an award-winning college newspaper for several consecutive years previous to this study. Staff members had earned prestigious college journalism awards and internships on a national scale. Each issue of *The Progress* comprised 16-24

pages of about 50% news and 50% advertisements. It regularly ran columns of news items grouped together under the labels of campus, local, state, nation, world, variety, and sports news, as well as opinion matter such as editorials, columns, and letters. The "Nation & World" digest of news appeared regularly on Page A4 along with "Local & State" news. Commonly, "Nation & World" news (roughly 1,800-2,000 words per issue) occupied one third of A4 and usually included 3-6 news stories and one picture. The space devoted to "Nation & World" news remained consistent no matter how many pages the newspaper contained or how much newshole, or space, there was for other news.

Compared with the main local daily newspaper and the national newspapers with which it competed for readers' time and attention, *The Progress*'s space for international news was limited despite the recent increased emphasis on it. Student staffers had at their disposal a huge volume of international news stories provided by subscription services to choose from, along with the freedom, as independent journalists, to select international news they thought important. Their news decisions—their gate keeping and news making, influenced as they were by the students' relatively Orientalist view of China—set the student-reader audience's agenda. Therefore, this research was designed to investigate the habits, perceptions, views, and news judgment—selection and dissemination—of these student journalists regarding China.

The Participants

Criteria for participation in this study was involvement as a journalist at any level involved in decision-making or selecting news for publication in *The Progress* within the previous two years and willingness to participate in the study. All eligible participants were willing and cooperated fully.

Eight of the participants were college students: three successive chief editors, four copy editors, and one news editor. The chief editor was in charge of the whole paper except advertising. He/she ultimately decided what was published and which viewpoint the newspaper took on any issue. The copy editors scanned the subscription news services and decided which individual stories run. They would decide, for example, whether news about China should be included. The news editors worked almost exclusively in assigning stories to be written about The University. The opinions editors were free to write about any topic. Sometimes, they wrote about world affairs.

The other participants were The Publisher, who had owned *The Progress* for eight years, and Jacob, a new adviser, who had been affiliated with *The Progress* for more than four years. The Publisher focused on the advertising and the management of the whole newspaper and had little to do with news making and news selection other than his directive to include more news-service news and make the paper of broader interest to readers. Thus, the interview with The Publisher was helpful to the researcher mainly to obtain knowledge of *The Progress*'s history and current situation; other data from his interview were excluded in the analysis for this study. Interviews took place in the study room of the library at The University or in the offices of *The Progress*.

By chance, five males and five females were participants. Eight of them were aged from 20 to 23 years old and were college seniors or recently graduated. The Publisher and Jacob were also less than 30 years old. So this group of participants was young, meaning that they might collectively express opinions and shed light on the thinking of a young generation of American journalists. All participants except for The Publisher were or had been journalism majors, and some had a second major in political

science. All participants had worked for *The Progress* for at least two semesters. Following the newspaper's tradition, all of them (except The Publisher) had worked as a reporter before becoming an editor of any kind. The paper was published whenever classes were in session, meaning these student journalists worked for *The Progress* between 15 and 30 hours per week around their class schedules.

Furthermore, all of the participants had at least some experience as an intern with either a daily metropolitan newspaper or a weekly business newspaper. Therefore, all participants had obtained not only some measure of journalism education in the classroom but also some initial professional work experience. They were familiar with news organizations' routinized work, about how to make news, and about how to filter news by deciding which news was more important than other news.

Participants list

Pseudonym	Staff Position(s)
Christopher	Former Editor in Chief (graduated in May 2007)
Madison	Former editor in chief and Opinions Editor (graduated in December 2006)
Daniel	Editor in Chief Former News Editor and former Opinions Editor
Sophia	Former News Editor
Samantha	Former Copy Editor and Opinions Editor
Olivia	Former Copy Editor
Michael	Copy Editor
Jacob	Current Adviser
The Publisher	Former Publisher
Hannah	Copy Editor

Data Collection and Analysis

Following return of a survey questionnaire from each participant regarding her or his background—demographic information, ethnic heritage, makeup of neighborhoods in which they had lived, international travel, and news consumption habits—semi-structured

interviews were conducted to address the research questions. The researcher used a list of prepared questions but also asked follow-up questions appropriate for each interview. The same researcher conducted all of the interviews, ensuring consistency in approach. To minimize the intrusion of researcher bias and probability that participants were potentially seeking to please the interviewer, the real research goal was not disclosed before or during the interviews.

Each interview began with several open-ended questions that guided participants to talk generally about their work, such as "How long have you been working for *The Progress*?" And "What topics of news do you think are important for students?" Afterward, several open-ended questions about international news stories were asked, such as "How do you view international news in the college newspaper? How important is it?" Near the end of each interview, connecting with the identity of the researcher, the participants were asked informally about their perceptions of China: "I am Chinese. I am curious to know what you think about China."

Based on four interrelated theories discussed in Chapter 3, the interviews integrated at least four aspects: the process of news making, gate keeping, orientation (Orientalism), and agenda setting. During this process, the perception of the participants about foreign countries, including China, and how they informed the students about China came more clearly into focus. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. All were audiotaped and then transcribed. Two interviews were conducted by e-mail.
A second researcher independently examined the transcripts of the interviews for instances of language, descriptions of content, particular uses of text, and units of information to provide critical feedback. Using several constant comparison methods,

commonalities and polar differences were examined individually and sorted into sets. The researcher used the data sets to construct themes that emerged from the interviews.

CHAPTER 5: DATA

This section of the thesis presents the data collected through, first, survey questionnaires about study participants' background relevant to the goals of the thesis research and, second, follow-up in-depth interviews with the participants, who constituted a census sample of college student journalists and their publisher and adviser, all of whom were involved to some degree in the news decision-making at a large campus newspaper, *The Progress*, at a large southeastern university, The University.

This chapter at first categorizes the findings in two sections, according to the data collected via the two methods (survey and interview): (1) news and information consumption and (2) news selection and dissemination. The third and final section of this chapter presents data from responses to questions narrowly tailored to the topics of international news and news about China.

News and Information Consumption

The questionnaires revealed the existence and extent of participants' previous international experience, as well as their regular media consumption for news about international affairs. The results illustrate their limited exposure—mainly academic—to international news in general and to information about China in particular.

Survey results

A questionnaire was used to learn about participants' international background, such as ethnic heritage, the makeup of neighborhoods where they had lived, and travel experiences. The researcher looked for any relationship between participation and their international background, worldview, and perceptions of China.

Only two participants' ethnic identity was other than American Caucasian. Two participants had lived in mixed ethnic neighborhoods before attending UCF. Only one participant, Olivia, had always lived in a mixed ethnic neighborhood. Most participants had lived only in almost exclusively Caucasian neighborhoods.

Jacob had traveled to nine countries, mostly in Europe, but also in the Middle East. Olivia had traveled to seven European countries. Both Christopher and Madison had traveled to three countries. Christopher had been to Europe and the Honduras; Madison had been to France and Poland, but also to Israel. Daniel and Samantha had traveled to Canada and the Bahamas, respectively. The others had not traveled internationally.

The surveys revealed no obvious evidence that participants' background influenced their worldview or their perceptions of China. For example, Olivia had lived in a mixed ethic neighborhood since she was very young. She had also traveled to seven countries. She said, however, that she cared only about news that happened near to her and which affected her, her family, and her friends. She said, "If it in some way touches me or touches people around me, it makes it more interesting." She said she knew little about China.

Christopher had traveled only to Canada and Honduras and had always lived in almost exclusively Caucasian neighborhoods. But he expressed more interest in international news in general and in Asian culture than did any of his peers. He also had conducted research about China to satisfy his own curiosity.

Where they got their news about China

None of the participants had traveled to China or consumed Chinese news media reports directly. (Some may have, knowingly or not, read news-service reports derived

from Xinhua News Agency or other state-run Chinese media.) Hannah was the only participant who learned about China from someone who had been there: "My uncle sometimes traveled there, and when he came back, he would always bring a bag full of DVDs, fake DVDs. That's pretty much all I know is from what he's told me."

The other participants gained knowledge of China through academic classes and Western news media reports. Samantha said:

> "History classes, documentaries, novels, national news when China is in the news, as it recently was with the pet food scare. I don't know anyone who was born in China, and the Chinese people I do know are 3rd- and 4th- generation Americans, and they have adopted American culture so fully, they know little of their heritage."

Sophia spoke of the news about China she received through Western media:

> "Interestingly, I think most of the news I hear about China comes from national broadcast shows like the CBS Evening News with Katie Couric—I watch this show most often—or CNN. I can't remember the last time I read anything about China in the newspaper, except for stories related to pet food recalls or avian flu. I don't recall ever learning a significant amount about China in history or government classes, except for in discussions about Communism, past wars, or conflicts about Tibet and Hong Kong."

Participants cited these Western media outlets as their usual sources for world news: the local daily metropolitan newspaper (including its Web site), *The New York Times* (including its Web site), the *Washington Post* (including its Web site), NBC-TV, ABC-TV, CNN, CNN.com, the google.com news page, and the Drudge Report online.

Table 1: Mass media use by participants.

Name	newspaper	Magazine	Television	Radio	Internet
Samantha	Local newspaper	Time	NBC news	N/A	Google news, yahoo news
Daniel	Local paper, New York Times, Chronicle of Higher Education	Stuff, Maxim, Wizard, Playboy, Newsweek, Times	The Daily Show, Local stations	Local radio news	University news and information, Google Blog Search
Hannah	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Olivia	The Progress, Local paper	N/A	Local stations	N/A	Yahoo! News, [TheProgress].com, [LocalPaper].com's midday update
Madison	Local paper, Wall Street Journal	The New Yorker, National Geographic	CNN	NPR	nytimes.com, washinttonposot.com, wired.com, slate.com
Michael	Local paper	N/A	Local stations	N/A	Local TV News Web site
Christopher	Local paper, St. Petersburg Times	N/A	Local stations	N/A	Associated Press, Reuters
Sophia	Local paper, USA Today	Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report	Local stations	N/A	For research only
Jacob	Local paper	U.S. News & World Report		National Public Radio	Drudge Report, CNN
The Publisher	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

News Selection and Dissemination

During the interviews, students spoke primarily about elements of news such as *timeliness* and *conflict* (Fedler, 2008); about cultural and ethnic values of the news; and about the tensions in choosing between stories from news services and staff-written stories. Findings derived from analysis of interview transcripts are presented in this section under headings that group responses by factors or themes. These findings as presented follow a particular logic, moving from newsroom hierarchy and journalists' personal preferences to the use and influence of subscription news services.

Influence of hierarchy of editors

The chief editor of *The Progress* traditionally decides most news selection and holds the most power in news making. Her or his personal characteristics, background, ideas about what's news, and news values decide the orientation of the whole paper. If the chief editor thinks balance is the most important factor in world news coverage, he/she tried to provide news from a range of different countries.

Madison, a chief editor who was more worldly than her peers, according to her questionnaire, said she promoted balance:

> "I like to get mixed [stories]. I try to give mixed stories from different parts of the world. I like to include bad stories and good stories. I include stories about Iraq. Yeah, Israel. I personally think it should be more balanced. Middle East [stories] are important to U.S. but not the entire planet. We have a lot ties with them. I like to cover Iraq or Afghanistan, but I also like to cover some other stories, like economic or environmental stories."

Christopher said he strived to provide stories he thought were most accurate:

> "I just want to make sure I give them the clearest picture. I do not want to run just bad things happening because I know there are some good things happening too. But I want to make sure that it is covered accurately."

But, he said, there was no telling whether a story was accurate; he had to rely on his own intelligence or feelings:

> "Yeah, a lot of times it just comes down to how I feel about that. What I see, what I know, just kind of what I feel. Sometime, I think, 'OK, we will run this.' Sometimes, I think that something is wrong. … I do not know why. But I know what I am doing right for some reason."

Daniel was keenly interested in some subjects and said the newspaper reflected his interests when he was chief editor:

> "I like to find 'underdog' kind of stories. Somebody protests something. I find it interesting. I guess a lot of times I look for conflict. Somebody is fighting with somebody in someway."

Personal preferences: cultural ties

Regarding what kind of international news they thought was most important, all participants asserted that they were most interested in stories that connected them to other cultures and nations. Daniel said that he thought war was the most important international news for student-readers not only because of his own ethnic heritage as an Arab-American, but also because the U.S. had troops deployed to the Middle East.

Otherwise, participants said they thought news from Europe, mostly Britain and France, was most important because those countries were closer to America or were

allies. Madison said: “We have a close relationship with England, a close relationship with Australia. We do not have a closer relationship with Australia, but England has. Obviously, every issue we cover Iraq and Afghanistan because there is a tie to them.”

Sophia, a news editor, said she thought Americans were more interested in knowing about Western countries because they had more influence in the United States:

> “When selecting international news, chances are we’d want to choose news about Western countries since that’s what more Americans seem to be interested in. As to why they’re more interested in them, I’d speculate it’s because more Americans will actually visit those places or know someone who lives there, and they believe we trade more with Western countries, even if that’s not necessarily true. In short, they believe the actions of Western countries have more of an effect on American life. I believe distance and similarities between cultures have a lot to do with this view.”

Personal preferences: ethnic identification

In *The Progress*, some news decision-making by staffers appeared to have been influenced by the ethnic identity of those who select the news. Caucasian student journalists were inclined to favor news from Westernized nations, such as European countries. Editors who were ethnic minorities favored stories about the countries or regions of their origin or ancestry. For example, Daniel, a chief editor native to the United States but whose family came from Middle East, pushed for more coverage of Iraq, Afghanistan, or anything coming out of the Middle East:

> “A lot of times I do feel like, if allowed to, I would probably run something about Iraq or Afghanistan on the front page on every issue. That’s just me. People will

get sick of it. It's my personal opinion that that is the most important thing going on right now."

Asked whether this prejudice about news related to his Middle East identity, he answered, "Yes."

Christopher, another chief editor, mentioned a similar example of a former staffer from Iraq who frequently selected international news items about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan:

> "The person who was gathering the news for awhile, he is actually from Iraq. He moved from Iraq when he was really young. … So he thought it was the most important thing. And I actually told him, like, 'We put it every day as the top story. OK, one person died, it is important, but other things are going on around the world. And I thought maybe a lot of people get tired just seeing news about wars, and they may not even read it. That's terrible for dozens of people.' So we had a little argument. He changed a little bit."

Personal beliefs beyond the ethnic identity of journalists also affected what kind news the paper provided its readers. Madison, a chief editor, said she often tried to please her journalism professors by selecting certain stories: "Sometimes I would think, 'That one story, [a former adviser] would put on the front page,' so I put it on the front page."

Olivia, a copy editor, said story selection depended on who was selecting the news:

> "I think it [putting which news on the paper] depends on the person who put them there. What he/she thinks is important; he/she will put it in there. Since last semester, we have had a new girl coming in doing the 'Nation & World.' I do not

know who did that before. It [the focus] will change depending on what she thinks is important. So it is kind of subjective."

Elements of news as factors in news judgment

Timeliness

All of the student journalists agreed that their news decisions were based on *timeliness* above all other considerations. Madison's outlook was succinct and typical: "We want inform to people immediately."

Conflict.

Most students mentioned *conflict* when they talked about what kind of news they liked to cover. Daniel said that he looked for conflict everywhere: "If one country invades another country, it would not be the most concern to us. It would not be direct tie, exactly. We cover Israel because our Middle East politics right now; we have hard issue over there. So that reflects a lot of conflicts." Christopher said: "I think students sometimes want to hear sensational stories most. Like, conflicts stories … just the conflict between countries."

News service as a factor in news judgment

All of the international news that appeared in *The Progress* was selected from a single electronically distributed international news collective headquartered in New York City, the Associated Press (AP). The student journalists usually selected the international news stories from among the top stories that the AP listed. So the international news they thought was important enough to carry actually was the news that AP viewed important, too. In effect, AP was setting the agenda that the students were, in turn, setting for their readers. Olivia said: "Mostly we take a look at all of them, but a lot of stories we choose are from top stories. Just depends on what they have."

Daniel said that to some degree, journalists put certain international stories in the paper just because it was easiest to locate them most easily in the news service directory: "I would say a lot of time it is more convenience than anything else. Either, topics we know interest people, or we have covered … They're usually, I can show you the top stories [news services] right now: Iraq, Afghanistan. So a lot of stories in AP are dealing with these topics. These stories directly affect politics right now. So partly because it is convenient, it is easy."

Madison also said:

> "I can see why people put war or conflicts in international news stories there. A lot of the time it is because it is easier to pick them up from news services. Because these kinds of stories are always the top stories of news services. All of these stories … come from news services. Obviously, we have no reporter there."

News selection in *The Progress* was influenced by national newspapers, too. Jacob noted that national newspapers covered few stories about China and that this was reflected in the exclusion of China in news pages of *The Progress*:

> "It reflects the amount of stories of the AP service. We pull a lot of stories from AP, and because some editors of the AP say average people don't care about China, they don't put it on the wire service, which means we cannot even get what we want to have. China would not be more important to the big newspapers like the *New York Times* if it was not important to the average person in the U.S. If the *New York Times* pays attention to them, then we should pay attention to them because the *New York Times* has very good news judgment. If China was

more influential around the globe, then it would influence everybody's daily life more. So we would have to care."

International News and News About China

Through the course of each interview, the researcher brought the conversation topic around to international news in general and finally to news about China in particular. The findings from participants' responses on those subjects follow.

Perceived importance of international news

All participants said they thought international news was important for students to read. Madison said she once hired an international student from The University to write stories for *The Progress* about global issues to give them their due prominence:

> "She did an international piece a week. … She would write about how international news impacts the UCF community. It was not directly international news. She could not cover today what happened in Afghanistan because she was not there, she would not know. But I think that is a definitely good thing."

Madison also thought, however, that moderation was important: "I think that international news is important. But I do not think the college newspaper is the proper place for a lot of international news stories."

All but one participant said they thought the school newspaper was not the place for students to get all of their international news. At best, they said, international news in *The Progress* was intended as an appetizer; that students should explore international news in other sources. A college paper, they all agreed, was supposed to cover the college's news. They ranked international news lower in importance than campus news, regional and state news, and national news.

Jacob said: “If there are some people who really care about international news, they need to go CNN, or CNN’s website, the *New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. Even the local paper … does more international coverage. Just like a convenience store cannot sell your cars just because that is not practical.”

Sophia was the only participant who said she thought *The Progress* should provide a broader view of the news. She said she thought *The Progress* was not comprehensive enough:

> “I’ve heard the view that a college newspaper should focus only on college news, and I don’t really agree. There’s no telling whether the average [*Progress*] reader is going to watch CNN, pick up another paper, or watch *The Daily Show* that day. In order to be professional, I think we need to cast our nets far beyond the college campus. Obviously, we don’t have enough resources to cover all the news that the [local paper] or CNN can, but it doesn’t take much effort to throw some wire stories into the paper, and I think that sends the message to the college reader that, ‘Hey, if we only have room for a few wires stories and we chose this one, it’s pretty significant.’ “

Most of the participants, however, said they thought American students did not care enough about international issues. Christopher said, “I think that students don’t like politics a lot. Students don’t care about the outside world, don’t read news really often. They don’t try to notice what happens around them.”

Madison said she, herself, exemplified that:

> “I try to educate myself to care about affective factors. … But I am comfortable, I feel safe that I have a job. My pay is certainly good, and I can pay my bills. I do

not feel threatened. I feel safe. It is hard for me to feel deep connection [with international issues]."

Knowledge and perceptions of China

Asked during the interviews what they knew about China, some participants demonstrated that they knew a lot. Christopher understood well several of the conflicts between China and the U.S.; the one-child policy; restrictions on information; the complex relationships among China, Taiwan, and the U.S.; and the economic revolution.

Five participants said they had only the slightest knowledge of China or else held romanticized notions about it. Daniel said that when he thought of China, he thought of Asian martial arts, to which he had been exposed through Hollywood feature films. Olivia said she had no ideas about China and showed no interest in it: "I am not very knowledgeable about China … I don't read news stories about China."

Michael spoke at length about China's history, which he said made it a great country:

> "That has always been my favorite thing. I remember when I was taking my history classes in middle school or high school, we had a China section. I was fascinated by it because China has a laidback attitude, they [Chinese] did not need to go out to trade because people always wanted to go there. Everybody was crazy about going to China, from my textbooks, the Europeans, especially, during that time period. They were crazy try to get there. I have always had this nice image of China."

Hannah said that China made her think of large, colorful lanterns. She said: "I went to Chinatown in New York City, everything is red. There are a lot of red and black. … China, it just seems like a big city, like New York City, to me."

Jacob possessed a broad knowledge of China. He recognized China's flag and voluntarily pointed it out on a world map. (Participants were not asked to do this.) He was the only participant who mentioned the 2008 Olympics, which were going to be held in Beijing:

> "I am seeing that they want to make sure things are as good as possible while the Olympics are going on. Because this is China's chance, they want to part of the modernized world, to show, 'We are just as good as England, we are just as good as France, the U.S. Any other big name countries. We [Chinese] deserve the same level respect.' "

Politics

All participants knew that China was a communist country. But they had different views about what that meant. Daniel said he imagined China was "crazily controlled by the government, with the government involved in everything." Sophia said China was "quickly growing into a major world power." She also spoke of China's conflicts with Tibet and Hong Kong. Christopher said he was confused about Chinese communism:

> "Is there economic equality in China? Does everyone have the same money, or are there rich people and poor people, middle class? I mean, I try to think: If there is not economical equality, there are poor people and rich people. Then how is this called communism? … Because, to me, communism is an ideal, every one is equal. No one is rich, or poor. And if there are poor, how could it be called communism?"

Christopher and Madison talked about Taiwan. Christopher said he thought the relationship between China and America was affected by Taiwan: “I heard that China is not very happy because America sells weapons to Taiwan right now.” Madison said Americans preferred Taiwan to China:

> “Sometimes, Americans think that the current relationship between China and Taiwan has lasted for so long. I think that a lot of people think Taiwan is more Western, more familiar than China. And they [Taiwanese] are more open to the Western style, more democratic. And they [Americans] would like China to be that way, as well. I think that a lot of people [Americans] would like China to be more like Taiwan.”

Economy

Seven of the nine interview participants were aware of the rapid growth of the Chinese economy and its global power. They described China as “beginning to put its mark on the global economy”; “probably one of the most industrialized nations.”

Jacob had further thoughts about the Chinese economy. He thought China is adopting having more democratic economic policies, is less like a communist country, is more like a country in the western world. It has a competitive economy, and competitive economic practices. Jacob said he thought China presented both global pressures and global opportunities:

> “They are putting a lot of pressure on the rest of the world, with the import of cement and concrete because of the rapid growth of construction going on … Because China has a growing economy, they have need for professionals, for young graduates who are looking for work in business-related fields … being a

> simple business manager, or being an engineer, or being an architect … If you're able to work in the United States, then you can work in China."

Sophia said China remained poor: "The first thing I think of is poverty. I know that China has more people than it can support."

Culture

Samantha's ideas about Chinese culture represented the perceptions of most participants:

> "I also think of bright, colorful celebrations. I think that's the image most people have—of Chinese New Year parades you see on TV with red and yellow dragons dancing down the street. … I know that there is something like six-to-ten boys for every one girl. Families would rather have sons than daughters."

Madison said that part of Chinese culture made her uncomfortable:

> "Sometimes I wonder why the families care so much whether they have male children or female children. Is it still this way? I heard that that's because the daughter will go to another family some day. If you have a son, you will get another girl some day to come into your family and work. China has its own culture. But I don't think this is a good thing, though. I don't think people should be viewed and treated differently by their families because of gender. I have a brother. We are viewed equally in my family."

Military

Both Jacob and Michael mentioned the Chinese military. Jacob said, "The Chinese government, they have almost as significant weapons as we do," whereas Michael estimated that China has "more militants than any democratic society."

Restrictions.

All participants knew that in China a couple can have only one child, but they chose not to comment on that policy. They did show more interest in other governmental restrictions, regarding both academic research and the press. Daniel said: “In one story I read about what some researchers are doing just because there are a lot of limitations on research there. They get a lot of funding here [in America]. I think there are still a lot of restrictions … People get in trouble for publishing something.”

Michael said the press in China was not as free as it is in the U.S. Christopher said he understood that the Chinese government restricted information: “Google had come to agreement with the government about the information they would allow to be seen, something like that …”

Madison was the only participant who expressed concern about Chinese workers: “I have more images about Chinese workers. They do not have rights, or what I would consider as the ideal work environment. I personally think that China is a hard-working country. Everybody has to be. A large country. A lot of people.”

Trade

Madison and Christopher spoke of trade between the U.S. and China. Madison said: “China and America have a strong trade relationship. They have interests between them. It should be an interesting [news] topic.” Christopher said China might be a threat to the United States, but that the two countries should not go to war:

> “If China decides to threaten the U.S., I think it could happen. And we Americans will be in trouble because it is so big a country. But I can’t see that China has reasons to do that. Now all the people are focused on nuclear weapons and the Middle East. They forget China has not done anything … So if China wants to be

a threat to the U.S., it could be. But … I do not think China wants to threaten the U.S. Yeah, they have no reason to. We also have no reason to go to China."

Jacob thought that the two countries were not getting along because China's rapid growth made Americans feel unsafe:

"The governments are pretty hostile to each other now, there are plenty reasons why. The U.S. is competing to dominate the world, and China is doing the same thing. China has a lot of people, has a great, organized government and, as the economy continues to grow, more and more influence in the world. And the U.S. feels threatened by that."

Samantha said she thought Americans were scared of China:

"We feel that we are the most powerful country in the world and, many of us think, the biggest. But in the grand scheme of things, China could cripple our economy easily. I think the government sees this and is afraid that China might decide to one day flex those muscles against us. I'm not saying I think that, because I think the U.S. is just as important to China as they are to us, but many are ignorant of these things and don't really understand the complex relationship between the two countries. I once heard someone say that China could build a bridge of people across the Pacific and still have enough people to march across the bridge and invade America. That statement shows how little most people know about the country."

Madison also said many Americans conceived of China as an economic threat:

"I think we do not consider China as a military threat. We consider China as an economic threat. A lot of Americans have been affected because a lot of factories

moved to China and they (Americans) lost their jobs. I can tell you just that the main relationship between China and America is not military, it is economical."

Madison said that she, herself, did not think that China was a threat:

> "China is a threat because of its size. But I don't think it has done anything. They do not go around threatening America. Somebody thinks China is a threat. I don't think so. I think that the U.S. should not move so many companies there because I want keep them in the U.S."

Participants had positive and negative perceptions about the trade in Chinese products. Jacob said China was good at keeping costs and prices low and also had well-developed industries. Based on his romanticized image of China, Michael supposed that it had more natural resources, meaning that most countries would want to trade with it, and that China did not need to import food from other countries because it could produce enough itself. But then, Michael said, he had read bad news about China in the press: "[I heard] about unsafe toothpaste from China, or seafood including something that could cause cancer, from China. The pet food has something wrong with it, which terrified me. I have a dog, and I don't want him to die."

Sophia said she also recalled news about pet food recalls and avian flu. At the same time she thought the American press paid more attention to smaller problems of other countries than to its own domestic problems: "But Americans sometimes care more about smaller concerns—trace amounts of illegal chemicals in Chinese fish—than we do the important questions faced by our society."

International relations

Participants expressed concerns about relations among China, North Korea, and Japan. Both Jacob and Christopher said they thought that China played an important role

in the North Korean nuclear weapon issue. Jacob said he thought that friendly relations between China and North Korea scared Americans:

> "China has a lot more neighbors who exert a lot more influence over the continent. China gets along better with North Korea than with Japan. Japan is afraid North Korea has nuclear weapons. China kind of moderates this dispute between North Korea and basically the rest of the world. … Since China gets along with North Korea, we consider North Korea an evil country. Naturally, since China is friendly toward them—at least they are not enemies—we have to suspect China's motive."

Christopher said he thought China should exert more influence on North Korea: "People were saying that the only thing we need in help from China is to put more pressure on North Korea because North Korea relies on China for things like resources."

Jacob described his understanding of relations between China and Japan:

> "The Chinese and the Japanese do not get along because of historical disagreement. Of course, China and Japan had fought each other often. Most recently, in World War II, Japan tried to invade China just as it done before, and that still hurts the Chinese. There was a story just last month about sex crimes the Japanese army committed against Chinese women."

Why they tended to exclude news about China

Madison and Christopher said they were sure that under their editorship, *The Progress* had included some economic news about China. Christopher said, "It is an extremely powerful country. In 20 years time, the U.S. might be the supreme power of the world. But in the future … China will become more powerful."

The other participants said they did could not remember *The Progress* ever including news about China. Participants expounded at length about why news from or about China did not receive much coverage in their paper. To them, China's distance, its strangeness, its different language, and the lack of any major conflict were reason not to publish news about China. Jacob said he thought Chinese issues were unfamiliar to most Americans and did not influence their daily lives:

> "China is not a familiar country for most of the people. You are going to know a lot of people who do not know the difference between China and Japan, or China and any other Oriental countries, China and any other East Asian cultures because there is a cultural divide between us. Just like the difference between Americans' knowledge of Congo and Americans' knowledge of Zimbabwe, most Americans would not know the difference between them because there is a different culture from the European-central culture. They [China] are not next door, not like Cuba. So people can ignore them because the difference between knowing and not knowing is not great. It is not going to change how much money you get paid … At least it does not change average people's income. It does not change so much how much you pay for gas. … So the average person will not bother. That reflects the sorts of the stories we have in our newspaper. It is not proper that we give a story about China because the average person does not think that way."

Christopher said he thought that although Americans use a lot of Chinese products, they don't care about China itself: "Pretty much everything you see says, 'Made in China.' … I think that most students would not be interested in anything about China. You know

they think, ‘That doesn’t happen around me and will not affect me.’ “ He said he also thought many Americans were hostile to China because of communism:

> “A lot of tensions between China and the U.S. are about cultural things. I think that there are still a lot of people in government who grew up with the saying that ‘We are the good side. Communist society is evil.’ … So I think that thought still exists among a lot of people, which may be the reason for the tension between China and the U.S. I think a lot of conflicts are cultural.”

Hannah and Madison said they thought that the lack of any war or major conflict involving China was the reason *The Progress* did not publish more stories about China. Hannah said, “Everything in international news is about immigration, the wars. I guess if China has a war, I am sure we will cover that. It seems not much is going on in China right now.” Madison also said: “We do not always hear about it. It is quiet.”

Samantha said she thought that if China were more relevant in her life, she would be inclined to publish more stories about it:

> “I would choose stories about China if they in some way affected my life. For example, the pet food scare. Or China just donated 30 pandas to American zoos. I wouldn’t choose a message to send, I would just report the news. Say Chinese scientists discovered a cure for cancer—then I would report that. Say China decided to commit genocide on any immigrants in the country—then I would report that. It would depend on the story the message it sent.”

Michael said he thought the space for news in *The Progress* was too limited to provide more stories about China since readers could get that from other media:

"I think the thing is that China is going to be in competition with every other nation in the world. In a small paper like [*The Progress*], which has limited space for international news, news from China must be considered alongside news from every other country in the world. We have space for only about five short stories, so which do we choose? As far as recent news about China, that didn't get into [*The Progress*] probably because you can get it anywhere."

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Advanced technologies have made it possible to transmit news and information from throughout the global village immediately and in real time; hence, the West today can know more about the East more immediately and more comprehensively than ever before. The participants in this study reflected that; several spoke knowingly about China, for example, despite their (and others' perceived) limited interest or active consumption of news about China. Christopher said confidently, "There are a lot of things I know about China" and proceeded to demonstrate such. Although Madison said that she knew little about China, the information she recited about China demonstrated a better-than-expected understanding of it. Jacob knew the most about China; he identified the flag and could point out China on a nearby map. He also knew about China's role in the 2008 Olympic Games, which was a less salient news item when the interview took place, more than a year before the Games. For the most part, however, other participants said they knew little about China or knew only what they had learned through Western media reports or through their own Western academic coursework.

Student journalists as Orientalists

This study provided evidence that Orientalism (Said, 1978) was at play in the minds and practices of student journalists at *The Progress*. According to Said, since Westerners believe they are superior to Easterners, they tend to explain the East based on their own values and frameworks. Westerners imagine and interpret Easterners as irrational and different "Others" and the East itself as a romantic mystery. The perceptions the participants expressed in this study provided vivid evidence of both claims.

First, one perception of these participants was that China is a *communist* country and therefore *evil*. All participants referred to China as a communist country; one added that it was the most powerful communist country in this planet, which has "a more military than democratic society." They used the communist country to draw the first line between "us" [the participants, as Americans] and the Other [the Chinese]. *Communist* is not a neutral word to Americans. The Western press often constructs a negative Other stereotype (i.e. violent, bizarre and confrontational) of many developing and (post) communist countries (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1984). Christopher also mentioned that many Americans grew up believing a communist society was evil. Jacob said that since China got along with North Korea, a country viewed as evil by Americans, "we have to suspect China's motive." This indicated that since China is the ally of evil, Americans would consider China, too, as evil.

No participant talked about China as an important equal trade partner of the U.S. or about the level of cooperation between the countries. Most participants focused only on the differences and the imbalance of trade. These differences showed an irrational, depraved, and "different" China. In the participants' thinking (as they expressed it), China is a place where "the government crazily controlled the country"; "there are a lot of limitations on research"; "most people's access to information is restricted"; "Chinese workers do not have rights"; and "females and males are unequal." By comparison, America was rational, virtuous, mature, and "normal": researchers could get "a lot of funding here"; the press was freer in the U.S.; it had ideal working environments; and men and women were equal in the U.S.

Second, participants romanticized China as having a “fabulous history” and great culture. In the past, “everybody got crazy about China”; now “China has more natural resources” and most countries aspired to engage in trade with it; and “China does not need food from other countries because they can produce themselves.” In fact, China has the world’s largest population and imports a great deal of food each year. China has a 5,000-year history and commensurate cultural complexity. But the participants described only China’s superficial image and symbolized Chinese culture as “bright, colorful celebrations” and Chinese New Year parades with red and yellow dragons dancing down the street.

Although some images these participants held and expressed may be true as individual puzzle pieces, if they use these pieces to tell, to understand, to interpret, and to create the whole picture of China without knowing and expressing other facts, the China they construct is not the real China. As Said (1978) pointed out, the West commodifies and objectifies the East by creating an imagined East that deviates from reality and turns reality in objects to be commodified. Participants’ perceptions of China, whether positive or negative, reflected that Americans created images of China based on their own values and frameworks.

Other cultural judgments expressed by participants reflected Western superiority and dependence on their own values and frameworks. For example, Madison judged the custom of China preferring sons unfavorably, using an American standard. Although Hannah said she had an uncle who had been to China and who had taught her about China, she still oversimplified and devalued China, conjuring an image of a colorful

lantern or just one huge city like New York. Hannah's images ignored the cultural and geographic complexities of China.

Said (1978) noted that Westerners penetrate, wrestle with, and give shape and meaning to the "Great Asiatic mystery." Several participants confused Asian cultures and blended them together. When Daniel thought about China, he said, always thought of Asian martial arts or *Memories of a Geisha,* a popular Western late-1990s novel by an American and 2005 Hollywood feature film. Although Daniel said he knew the novel and movie purported to be about Japan, he said he still thought it represented Chinese culture because it was so similar to Japanese culture. Both martial arts and *Geisha* helped Daniel construct in his mind mystic images of Asia. Hannah also said she could not differentiate between Chinese and Japanese cultures.

Ethnocentrism—American exceptionalism, really—was evident in participants' expressed judgments about other Asian countries, too. North Korea was viewed as evil because it is communist and possesses nuclear weapons, even though its military might and weapons are far less than that of the U.S. Japan was viewed as isolationist, "defensive … as far as their cultural place in the world, [with] a fear about outsiders, foreigners." These and other perceptions of the participants' express pride in America being the strongest nation in the world; but they were uncomfortable with China's growth. The U.S. need not cooperate with China: "The only thing we need is for China to put more pressure on North Korea." And participants, by and large, said they did not think often about countries such as China because it didn't influence their daily lives, though they acknowledged often wearing clothes "Made in China": "Pretty much everything you see says made in China;" "if you counted the products in each home in

[The University's hometown] that came from China, it would be a significant number." China exists only to provided the U.S. and the rest of the world with cheap products.

Orientalism leads the West to misunderstand China, and these participants often expressed a misunderstanding of China. For example, Christopher and Madison called China a threat to the U.S. because of China's size. Samantha said Americans worry China could invade because of its population. History shows, however, that the size of a country is not a factor in deciding whether it is a threat. The United Kingdom, for example, once colonized 20% of all land, including America and had been called the Empire on which the sun never sets. Germany, Italy and Japan, all small countries, enkindled World War II. On the other hand, Canada is a vast country adjacent to America, but Americans show little nervousness about Canada's proximity.

Student Journalists Constructed Reality in the Press

Tuchman (1978) theorized that news does not mirror society but rather is only a reality constructed by the press. The study for the current thesis found evidence of that. Influenced by their personality, worldview, and ideology, student journalists construct reality through *The Progress*'s news coverage.

Tuchman (1978) pointed out that sometimes journalists report certain news because they are personally interested in those stories, not because they think their organizations or audiences are interested. In *The Progress*, news story selection was influenced by journalists' personal cultural and ethnic preferences. For instance, Daniel said he viewed stories about the Middle East and about underprivileged people as most interesting, so he published more of this news in the paper when he could. Madison said she liked a mix of stories and tried to maintain a balance of bad and good news and of

news from different parts of the world. Different editors expressed different opinions about which kinds of stories were important, so they sought to publish news based on their opinions.

Choosing news stories was also done sometimes to please a professor or someone else. Two editors said they did that. It is worth noting that just after the interviews for this study were completed, a news photograph from China was published in *The Progress*. Daniel, then the chief editor, said he had instructed a copy editor to run a news item about China to compensate for the previous dearth of such news and to please the researcher.

Most participants mentioned conflict as an important element of newsworthiness. Not only students think this way; news services obviously also view conflict as very important. Participants pointed out that stories of conflicts, such as war, always lead the list of stories offered by news services, and so *The Progress* publishes those stories. This news value is transmitted simultaneously to student journalists through the journalism curriculum at The University. *Conflict* is listed, along with *timeliness*, *impact*, *prominence*, *proximity*, and *singularity*, as a common characteristic of news valued when journalists decide what to publish (see, e.g. Fedler, Bender, Davenport, & Drager, 2006). Journalists are educated in classrooms and indoctrinated in newsrooms into believing that news of conflict is important, so they seek news, in part, by looking for conflict. Therefore, it is not surprising that Daniel said he was looking for conflict everywhere or that Jacob said he thought people wanted to read about conflict. Because at the time research was conducted for this thesis so little news of conflict came out of China, it received little attention from the news services or in *The Progress*.

Tuchman (1978) described journalists as supposed free agents who are democratic only in appearance. In fact, they are on an ideological leash, she argued, and the news they make may often be biased; or, as this chapter has previously presented, Orientalist in their perceptions and expressions. For example, a story written by a University student and published in *The Progress* previous to the period during which this study was undertaken, titled "Movie screening opens eyes to tragedies over *Falun Gong*" (Goss, 2005), reflected an Orientalist's weakening and romanticizing of China. The story depicted the Chinese as human rights abusers—irrational and different "Others"—because police arrested lawbreaking *Falun Gong* practitioners. The article also equated the practice of *Falun Gong* with Tai Chi, a quintessence of China; the writer employed romantic and mystic expressions, such as "[Tai Chi] includes five gentle exercises and is based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Forbearance." All of the information used in the story, however, came from *Falun Gong* practitioners. There was no explanation of why the Chinese government prosecuted *Falun Gong*. Tuchman noted that in the process of describing an event, news reports helped shape public definition of happenings by selectively attributing to them specific details or particulars. In the one-sided *Falun Gong* story, the image of China was distorted.

Student Journalists as Gatekeepers

Before news stories are made accessible to readers, they go through a filtering process known as gate keeping (Manning White, 1948). Student journalists are the gate keepers at *The Progress*. International news was selected by chief editors, news reporters, news editors, or copy editors. Although all of the participants said they thought international issues were important, they said they did not think the college newspaper

was the best place for students to access this news. They said that college students should mainly cover campus news and that if student-readers wanted to know about international events they could go to other local or national newspapers directly. *The Progress* construed political news to mean issues or events in the school administration or Student Government Association rather than local, regional, state, national, or international politics. For example, on February 11, 2008, there were seven full news stories in *The Progress.* Among them, six were about the university administration or SGA; one was about a national issue and was published on Page A6. On Page A4, the "Nation & World" column comprised only four brief news items: two national and two international. The student journalists in this way allowed through (disseminated) news of only local concern and filtered out (rejected) all but the four most important national and international issues. Such gate keeping has the potential effect of leading student-readers to isolationism: caring only about campus issues and ignoring the rest of the world.

The same dynamic is evident when *The Progress* considered coverage of China. Although Chinese products are everywhere and China is the third-most important trade partner and largest creditor of the U.S., the gate keepers at *The Progress* still demonstrated that they believed China had little influence on Americans' lives and was therefore not newsworthy. In the "National & World" section of *The Progress,* only three stories mentioned China in 2006, and only six did so in 2007. In one month in 2007, *The Progress* published twelve news articles about Iraq, where the U.S. was at war. Stories about Iraq obviously satisfied the traditional news value of *impact*. Cuba, which routinely received coverage in *The Progress*, is nearby the U.S. (satisfying the news value of *proximity*), as Jacob pointed out; and Darfur, which has received even more coverage

than Cuba in *The Progress*, exudes *conflict* (another news value). China received very little attention in *The Progress* due to the gate keepers' conservation of traditional news values, which reject distance and lack of conflict. As Manning White (1948) pointed out, gate keepers control knowledge of actual events by letting some stories pass through the system and keeping others out. The gate-keeping choices that journalists at *The Progress* made subsequently created an understanding of what was happening around the world.

The college newspaper sets students' agenda

Most participants said they thought that a college newspaper was not the best place for students to get international information. Students could go to other news sources for international stories. Michael said that since local and national newspapers covered more international news, college newspapers did not need to do the same thing; international news was everywhere, but campus news was to be found only in college newspapers. Madison also said that since, on any given day, there were only several little pieces of international stories, they likely had little impact on students. Only Christopher clearly understood that some students read only the college newspaper.

In 2006, an online publisher of college newspapers around the country conducted a readership survey of the interests and behavior of college newspapers' readers. Among 7,500 completed surveys, 39% were submitted by undergraduate students, 9% by graduate students, and the rest were by were alumni, parents, or "others." The surveys showed that 77% of undergraduates reported reading the print version of their campus newspapers at least once a month and that 44% of undergraduates read it two or more times per week. Fifty-seven percent of undergraduates read their online campus

newspaper at least once a month, and 24% undergraduates visited the newspapers' Web sites two or more times per week.

Compared with the readership of college students of national news sources, these numbers were significant higher. Among a total 2,925 undergraduate respondents, about 2,200 (75%) have never read the *Washington Post*; 1,850 (63%) have never read *The Wall Street Journal*, 1,400 (48%) have never read *USA Today*; and 1,250 (42%) have never read *The New York Times*. These statistics revealed that campus newspapers were the main news source for most college students. What kind of international news college papers provided and what opinions they held would impact students directly and deeply. College newspapers are indeed the main agenda-setters for college students.

According to agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), mass media have the ability to transfer the importance of items or issues on their agendas to the public agenda. By emphasizing specific topics using a certain amount of coverage the media influence the public to think about some issues. In *The Progress*, the rank on its agenda is: campus news, local news, and national news. International news would follow as the least important category. Presentation of news, or how the content is arranged, in *The Progress* clearly signaled students that the most important news was what happenened nearest to them on their campus and in their community and that international news was not important to think about. Such parochialism potentially leads to a narrow, even isolationist, view of the world.

Agenda-setting theory asserts that mass media not only transfer salience to influence issues that an audience will think is important but also affect how an audience defines the issue and thinks about it by framing attributes of these issues, such as the

properties, qualities, and characteristics that describe objects or people in the news and the tone of those attributes. In *The Progress,* two salient points about China emerged. The first one was that China was not important. The total number of stories about China published in *The Progress* in 2006-07 was nine, less than the coverage of Iraq in a single month during that period. Among those nine stories, one-third were about Taiwan, a province of China. Because there was conflict between Taiwan and the central government of China, Taiwan received more coverage than anything else about China. The second salient point was the negative image of China. Except for two stories about Taiwanese separation from China, the other stories were about pollution, human rights, or tensions between China and the U.S. Excluding Chinese briefs published in the "Nation & World" section, two full-length, staff-bylined stories about China appeared in the past three years. One was the *Falun Gong* story previously discussed. The other article, titled "Former prisoner speaks out for Chinese reform," published July 9, 2007, was about human-rights issues in China. Such a low-priority ranking on the news agenda of *The Progress* can only lead student-readers to a limited and poor understanding of China.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

News making in the college newspaper is a truly subjective process. In the process of American students—in this case, college journalists at one elite campus newspaper—subjectively constructing their perceptions of China, a theoretical chain is created that directly influences the final images they have. It goes like this: Western-oriented political, cultural, and economic values influence news coverage of China in both local and national mass media that student journalists consume; that coverage influences those student journalists' perceptions of China; those student journalists, in turn, select and disseminate news about China that fits within that worldview; and finally, that news, in turn, informs the perceptions of student-readers of those college newspapers.

As a crucial link in this theoretical chain that connects mass media representations to typical college students, American student journalists' perceptions about China are worthy of study. They may be not only mirroring Western mass media's institutional and government-influenced orientation toward international issues but also constructing images that other college students may adopt. The images of China that *The Progress* provided could have a direct and deep influence on students at The University. Subjectively biased reporting, compounding limited or misleading (Orientalized) information about China would likely lead student-readers to misunderstand China.

The limitation of this study is that it examined only one college newspaper and only nine students involved in it. It should be acknowledged that such a small sample might have skewed the results, but at the same time the results are the total sum of thought and belief and practice of the decision-makers at the paper. And the results of this

study may well reflect some characteristics of many or most student journalists and college newspapers across the U.S. But considering certain regional and cultural difference, this study could not possibly represent all U.S. student journalists and college newspapers. For example, in California, there are more Chinese, so student journalists there may have more opportunities to learn about the Chinese in a multitude of contexts; consequentially, students' knowledge and perceptions of China may differ greatly between California and Florida or Maine. The results of this study also cannot be applied to local or national newspapers, which have different political or economic considerations, and whose journalists may have more well-developed perceptions of China than do college student journalists.

Another limitation is that the researcher's identity could have influenced the responses of participants despite pre-emptive steps and a considered procedure. Since the researcher is Chinese, when the participants discussed China with her face to face, they may not have wanted to offend her and may have self-censored their words.

For future study, broader data could be gathered to see what differences there are in perceptions of China among American student journalists at different colleges and in different states. What might explain any differences? What other factors, perhaps not considered for this thesis, influence student journalists' perceptions to China or to any foreign countries? It also would be interesting to explore the perceptions of journalists about China in regional or national news agencies. Comparing the difference of perceptions before Americans visit China for the first time and the perceptions about China after they come back would provide stronger evidence that American mass media might be misleading audiences of international news reporting**.**

APPENDIX A: CITI COMPLETION REPORT

CITI Course in The Protection of Human Research Subjects

Human Research Curriculum Completion Report
Printed on Tuesday, July 17, 2007

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Group 2.: Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 01/31/07 (Ref # 870387)

Required Modules	Date completed
Introduction	01/31/07
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	01/31/07
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	01/31/07
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	01/31/07
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	01/31/07
Informed Consent - SBR	01/31/07
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR	01/31/07
Research with Prisoners - SBR	01/31/07
Research with Children - SBR	01/31/07
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBR	01/31/07
International Research - SBR	01/31/07
Internet Research - SBR	01/31/07
HIPAA and Human Subjects Research	01/31/07
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	01/31/07
UCF	01/31/07

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL FORM

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901, 407-882-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Notice of Expedited Initial Review and Approval

From : **UCF Institutional Review Board**
FWA00000351, Exp. 5/07/10, IRB00001138

To : **Xiaohua Wang**

Date : **August 17, 2007**

IRB Number: **SBE-07-05093**

Study Title: **How American Student Journalists View China:A case study**

Dear Researcher:

Your research protocol noted above was approved by **expedited** review by the UCF IRB Vice-chair on 8/16/2007. **The expiration date is 8/15/2008.** Your study was determined to be minimal risk for human subjects and expeditable per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.110. The categories for which this study qualifies as expeditable research are as follows:

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The IRB has approved a **consent procedure which requires participants to sign consent forms.** Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Subjects or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

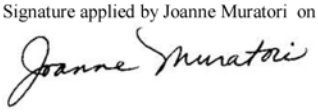
All data, which may include signed consent form documents, must be retained in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of three years past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained on a password-protected computer if electronic information is used. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

To continue this research beyond the expiration date, a Continuing Review Form must be submitted 2 – 4 weeks prior to the expiration date. Advise the IRB if you receive a subpoena for the release of this information, or if a breach of confidentiality occurs. Also report any unanticipated problems or serious adverse events (within 5 working days). Do not make changes to the protocol methodology or consent form before obtaining IRB approval. Changes can be submitted for IRB review using the Addendum/Modification Request Form. An Addendum/Modification Request Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at http://iris.research.ucf.edu .

Failure to provide a continuing review report could lead to study suspension, a loss of funding and/or publication possibilities, or reporting of noncompliance to sponsors or funding agencies. The IRB maintains the authority under 45 CFR 46.110(e) to observe or have a third party observe the consent process and the research.

On behalf of Tracy Dietz, Ph.D., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 08/17/2007 09:16:13 AM EDT



APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions are for regular editors:

Research Question II: How do American student journalists try to influence the college students' perceptions about China through college newspapers?

News Making and Gate keeping

Could you explain to me your regular work in [*The Progress*]?

How much time do you spend selecting wire news?

What topics of news do you think are important for students? Why?

What topics of news do you think students would like to read?

What topics of news do you personally favor/ dislike? Why?

What topics of international news do you think are important? Example?

How much space does [*The Progress*] have for international news?

How do you decide what to include and exclude?

What coursework or training has influenced the way you do your job in news selection?

What news were you unable to include because of space or other constraints that you thought were important?

How do you view international news in the college newspaper? How important is it? Some students said that mostly they depend on college newspapers to get college news. They would like to get international news from national news agency, such as CNN. Some students depend on comedy shows. What do you think about that?

Agenda-setting

What particular point or message did you want selected news stories to convey?

What particular point or message did you wanted selected international stories to convey?

What impact do you think the stories you chose had on the audiences? Did you get any specific feedback from readers?

Research Question I**:** How do American student journalists view China now?

I am Chinese. I am curious to know what you think about China. How much do you know about China?

Please give me three images you have about China.

What are your news media and other sources of news about China? What have you learned about China in classes or from word of mouth?

What is the difference between China and Japan, or China and Singapore?

How would you choose news stories about China? Did you choose this kind of news? If yes, could you give me an example? What message did you want them to convey? What image of China did you want readers to have through your selected stories?

If you have never chosen a story about China, could you tell me why?

I have searched for news stories about China on the Web site of [*The Progress*] and have found few. Could you explain to me why this happens? What is the principle by which you choose international news?

What do you think about the relationship between China and America?

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name: _____
2. Gender: ( )

   A. Male B. Female
3. Age: _____
4. Major: _____
5. Education: ( )

   A. Freshman B. Sophomore C. Junior D. Senior E. Other: _____
6. Ethnic identity: ( )

   A. Caucasian B. African-American C. Hispanic
   D. Asian/Pacific Islander E. Middle Eastern F. Native American
   G. Other: _____
7. What position(s) do/did you hold at [*The Progress*]: _____
8. What are your news sources (please list all):

   Newspaper: _____
   Magazine: _____
   Television: _____
   Radio: _____
Internet: _____
9. How have your news sources changed since you began attending [The University]?

   Newspaper: _____
   Magazine: _____
   Television: _____
   Radio: _____
Internet: _____
10. How have your news sources changed since you started working for [*The Progress*]?

    Newspaper: _____
    Magazine: _____
    Television: _____
    Radio: _____
    Internet: _____
11. What is your ethnic/religious background?

12. What is the ethnic make-up of your neighborhood before attending [The University]?

A. Caucasian B. African-American C. Hispanic
D. Asian/Pacific Islander E. Middle Eastern F. Native American
G: Mixed ethnic neighborhood H. Other: _____

13. What is the ethnic make-up of your neighborhood now?

A. Caucasian B. African-American C. Hispanic
D. Asian/Pacific Islander E. Middle Eastern F. Native American
G: Mixed ethnic neighborhood H. Other: _____

14. How many times did you travel internationally?

A. One B. Two C. Three D. Four E. None F. Other: _____

15. What countries did you travel to?

16. What language(s) do you speak/read?

17. What class(es) did you take that related to international issues?

18. What foreign born professor(s) did you take class(es) from?

APPENDIX E: WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Project title: "How American Student Journalists View China"

Purpose of the survey: The purpose of this study is to understand how American student journalists view China.

What you will be asked to do in the study: Survey participants will be asked about their background in this short survey.

Time required: 2 minutes.

Risks: There are no known risks.

Benefits / Compensation: There is no compensation or other direct benefit to you for participation.

Confidentiality: Identities will be kept confidential. Your real name will not be used in any report. The responses of the survey will be stored in researcher's computer with password protected and after the researcher finished the thesis these data will be destroyed. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this survey is voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study: Xiaohua Wang, Graduate Student, Nicholson School of Communication, 4000 Central Florida Blvd., Orlando, FL 32816; (407) 823-4867. Dr. Rick Kenney, Faculty Supervisor, Nicholson School of Communication. The telephone number is: (407) 823-4867.

Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions or concerns about research participants please contact with the UCF IRB office, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246, or by campus mail 32816-0150. The hours of operation are 8:00 am until 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday except on University of Central Florida official holidays. The telephone numbers are (407) 882-2276 and (407) 823-2901.

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey, with your permission I would like to invite you to participate in an interview. This interview will be conducted by Xiaohua Wang and will last 60 minutes.

Thank you very much.

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