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Factors Shaping the Effects of Visual Media Texts on Viewer Understandings

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Abstract

This project seeks to clarify the mechanisms through which the media contribute to audiences' understandings of social groups. It encompasses two inter-linked studies. One study identifies two dimensions through which audiences evaluate the realism of media characters. It then investigates how one of these dimensions, character representativeness, is associated with the audience's level of familiarity with the society portrayed in the media text and with their sense of the variability of the represented society. Participants from two different societies, the US and Greater China, evaluated the characters in two film segments, one from a culture with which they were familiar and one from a society with which they were unfamiliar. They then evaluated the homogeneity of the films' societies. I assessed the participants' perceptions of the characters' representativeness through two measures. One measure supported the initial hypotheses of the study. Characters from socially distant societies were seen as significantly more representative than those from socially near ones. The other measure did not provide any support for this hypothesis. There was no consistent evidence that the perceived variability of a film's society moderates perceptions of the representativeness of the film's characters. iv The second study investigates whether viewers' perceptions of the representativeness of a text's characters shape the strength of the text's effect on viewers' perceptions. It also sought to determine whether the activation of particular category structures or viewer attributions of character behavior influenced effects. Volunteers saw a film clip and then completed a questionnaire about the representativeness of the characters and their perceptions of the source society. Before seeing the film clip, half the participants were primed with publication materials designed to activate the category structure of society membership. Neither the representativeness of the characters nor the variability of the film society is associated with the application of the characters' attributes to the viewers' perceptions. There are no consistent differences between the priming and control groups on any of the outcome measures. There is no consistent evidence that audience members' attributions shape the media representations' effect. Possible reasons for the studies' failure as well as implications for future research are discussed.

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Alice Elizabeth Hall

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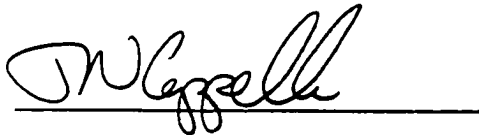Communications

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ABSTRACT

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Alice Elizabeth Hall

Advisor: Joseph Cappella

This project seeks to clarify the mechanisms through which the media contribute to audiences' understandings of social groups. It encompasses two inter-linked studies.

One study identifies two dimensions through which audiences evaluate the realism of media characters. It then investigates how one of these dimensions, character representativeness, is associated with the audience's level of familiarity with the society portrayed in the media text and with their sense of the variability of the represented society. Participants from two different societies, the US and Greater China, evaluated the characters in two film segments, one from a culture with which they were familiar and one from a society with which they were unfamiliar. They then evaluated the homogeneity of the films' societies. I assessed the participants' perceptions of the characters' representativeness through two measures. One measure supported the initial hypotheses of the study. Characters from socially distant societies were seen as significantly more representative than those from socially near ones. The other measure did not provide any support for this hypothesis. There was no consistent evidence that the perceived variability of a film's society moderates perceptions of the representativeness of the film's characters.

The second study investigates whether viewers' perceptions of the representativeness of a text's characters shape the strength of the text's effect on viewers' perceptions. It also sought to determine whether the activation of particular category structures or viewer attributions of character behavior influenced effects. Volunteers saw a film clip and then completed a questionnaire about the representativeness of the characters and their perceptions of the source society. Before seeing the film clip, half the participants were primed with publication materials designed to activate the category structure of society membership. Neither the representativeness of the characters nor the variability of the film society is associated with the application of the characters' attributes to the viewers' perceptions. There are no consistent differences between the priming and control groups on any of the outcome measures. There is no consistent evidence that audience members' attributions shape the media representations' effect.

Possible reasons for the studies' failure as well as implications for future research are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The mass media's greatest potential and their greatest threat is their ability to show viewers parts of the world they cannot directly experience. They can be a means of providing information and knowledge that allows viewers to expand their horizons and to gain an understanding of their relationship to a larger community than the one they interact with directly. However, the media's function as a window on the world can also have negative implications. The constraints of the industry, the lack of diversity among media producers, the power structures of media-producing societies, and a variety of other factors insure that the images the media produce are not and cannot be a veridical representation of the world, or even a random sample of possible representations of the world. Much of the available material tends to reinforce existing perceptions of social groups, which often serves to maintain existing power relations. Nor are audiences a blank slate. The way audiences' interpret media texts is influenced by their own preconceptions and biases. When added to conservative tendencies in the audiences' interpretation patterns, the media have the potential to help maintain or to strengthen oversimplified or biased perceptions of other groups.

A greater understanding of how media shape viewers' perceptions of others would allow for the establishment of criteria for evaluating media content and could help audiences learn to be more critical and aware. The work described here is intended to contribute to our knowledge of these processes. It investigates some of the factors that may affect the mechanisms through which media content can shape audiences'

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perceptions of the real world.

This project works from a broad definition of a social group. A social group is any collection of people who believe themselves and are believed by others to have distinct identities, histories, and traditions. Therefore, it includes societies defined by nationality, as well as communities and cultures within nations, such as racial and ethnic minorities within the US.

In establishing this working definition, I acknowledge that individuals are multidimensional. Everyone belongs to more than one social group and each person's sense of identification with their groups will vary across time and circumstances. Furthermore, many groups are social constructions, whose definition and significance have more to do with sociological and historical factors than any clear, objective standard of intergroup similarity. However, despite this subjectivity, social groups such as those defined by nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and occupation are meaningful. Socially defined categories can shape the way individuals are perceived and treated. They can also affect the way individuals think of themselves. Social categories that shape the expectations and perceptions of individuals within a society have real consequences, regardless of any objectively measurable validity. This study focuses on large-scale communities defined by national or society membership, but the theory it seeks to explore could also apply to groups defined in other ways.

This dissertation draws from previous work in cross-cultural communication and media representation. A common assumption within each of these fields is that viewers' beliefs about the characteristics of particular social groups can be shaped by how they see

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these groups portrayed in the media. These beliefs, in turn, are thought to shape the way group members are treated at both an individual and a policy level. Both cross-cultural research and investigations of media representations provide evidence of the ability of media texts to influence viewer perceptions.

<center>Previous Work on Cross-cultural Communication</center>

In the area of cross-cultural communication, most of the work investigating the impact of media content on audience understandings of portrayed groups deals with the effect of exported US television programming on perceptions of the United States. A long series of studies across a wide variety of locations has found an association between exposure to US shows and perceptions of the United States that comport with the content of US programming. Tan, Li, and Simpson (1986), for example, found viewership of Dallas and Dynasty to be associated with perceptions of people of the US as materialistic among Taiwanese viewers. In Mexico, viewership of Dynasty was related to perceptions of people of the US as individualistic and pleasure loving, while viewing Dallas was associated with understandings of people of the US as aggressive and cruel. Tan and Suarchavarat (1988), found a similar pattern of results in Thailand, as did Pingree and Hawkins (1981) in Australia, Weimann (1984) in Israel, Willnat, He, and Hao (1996) in Hong Kong, China, and Singapore, Saito (1996) in Japan, and Citipitioglu and Elasmar (1996) in Turkey.

<center>Previous Work on Media Representation</center>

The impact of media representation patterns on audience members' beliefs about real-world members of the portrayed groups has been a subject of investigation for many

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years. The theories surrounding media stereotypes are also based on the assumption that images seen in the media can shape perceptions of what the real-world members of a portrayed group are like. Much of this work is based on either socialization or cultivation theories of media effects, which suggest that, when viewers lack previous real-world experience, media portrayals can become models that teach viewers the attributes and appropriate roles of members of different groups. Researchers have suggested at least three types of effects of media content on real-world groups. Portrayal patterns in television, film, news, and other media may shape audiences' perceptions of groups to which they do not belong, audiences' perceptions of their own groups, and the policy goals and initiatives that audiences' support.

Effects on Viewers' Perceptions of Portrayed Groups

Media that consistently represent members of certain social groups in specific ways are thought to contribute to viewers' beliefs that the attributes common in the media portrayals accurately characterize members of the group in the real world. Viewers are thought to construct generalizations of the category from media representations just as they would from real-world experiences. Influences of this type have been investigated through experiments that test associations between exposure to media portrayals and acceptance of attitudes and images that are consistent with the way members of a particular group are portrayed. Most experimental investigations into media stereotypes have focused on the effect of portrayals of racial or ethnic minorities or of women. For example, Armstrong, Neuendorf, and Brentar (1992) found that viewership of news programs, which tend to portray African Americans as criminals, was associated with

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lower evaluations of African American affluence. Viewership of entertainment programming, which, at the time of the study, most prominently featured Blacks as members of well-off sitcom families or as high-profile sports stars, was associated with higher evaluations of affluence. Ford (1997) examined the effects of TV comedy skits on viewers' judgements of the guilt of an African American defendant in an assault case. He found that exposure to skits containing stereotypical portrayals of African Americans was associated with perceptions of the defendant as guilty. The skits had no effect on evaluations of White defendants.

Gender stereotypes also seem to be able to affect audience perceptions in some circumstances. For example, Kilborne (1990) found that, among men, exposure to advertising images of women in professional settings was associated with higher ratings of the professional competence and leadership ability of a female evaluation target presented in a neutral context. In a study using a similar methodology, Lafky, Duffy, Steinmaus, and Berkowitz (1996) found that exposure to stereotypical portrayals affected later evaluations of women presented in neutral contexts. A meta-analysis of TV programming's effect on viewer perceptions of sex-roles (Herrett-Skjellum, 1995) found consistent evidence that exposure to media stereotypes was associated with endorsement of gender stereotypes in both laboratory and real-world settings.

Cultivation theorists have also provided evidence of the impact of television portrayals on perceptions of social groups. This theory is specific to television and suggests that heavy viewers will believe the world is more like the content of television than light viewers do. Cultivation theory also outlines a process known as

mainstreaming, which suggests that members of different demographic groups, whose different experiences of the world should lead them to different evaluations, will be brought to a common perspective by television. This process predicts that heavy viewers across demographic categories will see the world in a similar way, whereas light viewers across these categories will be more clearly distinct from each other. Evidence for both these patterns of association has been found. In Signorielli and Lears' (1992) work children's exposure to the media predicted their attitudes towards sex-stereotyped chores. Similarly, Signorielli (1989), working from GSS data, found higher viewership of TV to be associated with sexist opinions about women's roles. She also found evidence of mainstreaming. Heavy viewers across demographic categories were more like each other than light viewers were.

Effects on Viewers' Self-perceptions

Some of the studies described above include as participants members of the groups portrayed in the texts used as stimuli. This aspect of the design is important because media stereotypes are felt not only to shape others' perceptions of the portrayed group, but also to affect group members' perceptions of themselves. One of the most common arguments about this kind of effect is that the lack of representation of certain groups makes group members feel that they are unimportant to the larger society and negatively affect these viewers' self concepts (Dorr, 1982). However, the studies that have attempted to isolate this pattern of effect are few and those that have been done have often been inconclusive. Despite the often lamentable patterns of portrayals of Blacks on television, Stroman's (1986) study of TV's effects on African American children found

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that television exposure was positively related to girls' self concept and unrelated to that of boys. Similarly, Subervi-Vélez and Necochea (1990), were unable to find an association between TV viewing and self-concept among Latino children.

An additional means through which the media are thought to have an effect is by shaping audience members' perceptions of the attributes and role of the groups to which they belong. Several studies have identified an association between individuals' television viewership and their acceptance of the roles or attributes common in television portrayals. Television viewership predicted sexism in Signorielli's (1989) work among both men and women. Signorielli and Lears (1992) found evidence of cultivation effects in relation to understandings of gender roles among both boys and girls. Furthermore, Tan and Tan (1979), found that among African American adults, heavy television viewers were more likely to say that Whites were nicer, smarter, better behaved, and more dependable than Blacks, suggesting the internalization of racist evaluations of African Americans.

The media's effect on viewers' perceptions of their communities' positions within a larger society has also been investigated. Matabane (1988), working from cultivation theory, found that African Americans who viewed a lot of TV tended to hold attitudes towards racial integration that were consistent with contemporary television portrayals of Blacks. Heavy viewers believed that integration was more prevalent and that more Black Americans were middle class than did light viewers. Evidence of mainstreaming was also found. Heavy viewers of different ages, education levels, and levels of community participation were more like each other in their perception of the prevalence of

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integration than were light viewers.

In a similar vein, Gandy (Gandy, 1994; Gandy & Baron, 1998) has investigated news reporting of risk to explore the possibility that the consistent framing of disparities within US society in terms of Black loss could lead to greater perceptions of risk among African Americans. This perception, combined with the suppression of White perceptions of risk by the same coverage, could lead to or reinforce differences between Black and White Americans' perceptions of the existence of discrimination. This could affect policy, make dialogue between these groups more difficult, and further separate the experiences of Black and White Americans.

An effect on how viewers understand the attributes and roles of the groups with which they identify could have far-reaching consequences. There is evidence that acceptance of the negative media traits common in the media portrayals of some social groups has meaningful effects. Much of the work in intergroup relations indicates that patterns of ingroup favoritism, which are a normal means of maintaining an individual's self concept, can break down when there are commonly accepted differences in status or power between groups (Tajfel, 1982a; 1982b; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Vaughan, 1978). To the extent that consistently negative media portrayals can serve to teach and to legitimate differential perceptions of the relative worth of particular social groups, they can shape the way viewers understand their relationship to the larger society.

Effects on viewers' policy support. Media portrayal patterns can shape the kinds of policy that viewers are inclined to support. The way the media present or frame their subject matter often implies a specific definition of the problems they cover, which, in

turn, supports some responses to issues while suppressing others. By emphasizing specific aspects of a social problem or by defining an issue in a specific way, the media can help determine the solution or response that audiences see as reasonable. Evidence of the possible impact of these aspects of media content can be found in the extensive work that has been done on news framing. For example, Kinder and Sanders (1996) report a series of experiments that manipulated the way political issues were defined, or framed, for an audience. They found that support for government assistance programs was stronger when recipients were identified as "minorities" or the "poor" than when they were identified as African Americans. These results suggest that framing issues such as poverty or unemployment as endemic to African American communities could have substantive effect by decreasing White support for policies designed to address these challenges (pp. 174-192).

A series of analyses has examined the media with an eye towards these kinds of effects. Entman (1992) suggests that the contrast between the representation of Black and White spokespersons on local news can contribute to the rejection of proposals that advance the interests of African Americans. His content analysis indicates that African American spokespeople are presented almost exclusively as representatives of the interests of Black communities, whereas White spokespeople are presented as proponents of the public at large. This portrayal pattern could be read to indicate that African Americans are more likely to advance special interests at the expense of society as a whole than Whites are. Similarly, Miller (1994) argues that recent US media portrayals of immigrants as criminals or financial burdens shape the way immigration policy is

understood. The nature of these portrayals implies that immigrants and immigration policy contribute to the criminal and welfare systems in ways that are factually unsupported. Gandy, Kopp, Hands, Frazer, and Phillips (1997) have looked at newspaper coverage with an eye towards determining whether the attribution of the risks facing African Americans affects audiences' willingness to support programs designed to eliminate racial disparities.

Representation over time. Despite the extensive insights offered by research into cross-cultural communication and media effects on stereotypes, there are some issues that these literatures have not yet been able to fully address. Two of the most fundamental of these issues are the means through which a society's patterns of representing a social group change over time and the nature of the standards to which media representations should be held.

One of the primary assumptions of much of the work that has been done on media stereotypes is that the patterns of representation of many groups change as a result or as a cause of changes in the groups' position within larger a society. Cultural studies scholars, for example, suggest that media portrayals must change in order for the power structure to remain stable. The maintenance of power is felt to be dependent upon the dominant ideology's ability to absorb or incorporate new voices.

Analysts working from other perspectives have made similar points. Media representations of under-served, minority, or foreign groups can move through a series of stages. Many discussions of US media suggest that minority group members were at first absent except for highly stereotypical roles that served to reinforce views of the portrayed

group as inferior or threatening (e.g., Bogle, 1996; Clark, 1969; Cripps, 1993; Greenberg & Baptista-Fernandez, 1980; Wilson & Guitérrez, 1995). Portrayals of some groups then became more positive, largely as the result of pressure on the media production industries. However, this generation of newly articulate, moral, and skilled characters is often felt to have been left in the service of dominant groups and ideologies. These characters are rarely allowed to be active spokespersons of the groups with which they are identified and their success is seen to elide the experiences of the members of these communities who have not been allowed to succeed (Carter, 1987; Gray, 1986; 1989; 1993; Lewis, 1991; Wiegman, 1991).

These analyses suggest that media portrayals only slowly and irregularly develop into varied patterns of representation that not only avoid established negative stereotypes and unproductive idealizations, but also take into account the breadth of experiences and perspectives within a represented community. The development of portrayals of minority and under-served groups is presented as the result of slow changes in the power of under-represented audiences and shifting social norms.

Although no specific pattern of transformation will hold for all stereotyped groups, patterns of representation have been found to change over time. These changes in the content of media portrayals suggest that the standards to which a particular portrayal is held will vary over time as well. There has been movement in the struggle to achieve more just and less damaging media representations. However, these changes suggest that there is no single set of criteria or means of establishing criteria through which a text could be evaluated. A text that is considered progressive in one era may

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seem outdated in the next.

One means of evaluating representational patterns in media texts across different time periods and different audiences is to assess their outcomes in terms of audience members' beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. One means of assessing a particular representational pattern of women, for example, is to determine whether the representation contributes to a particular audience's beliefs about real women, to their tendencies to over-generalize their perceptions of women, or to their tendency to interpret women's behavior in ways that conform to cultural stereotypes.

In order to do this, however, one needs a through understanding of how the perspectives of the audience interact with the content of a text to influence the attitudes, opinions, and cognitive schema that shape behavior. Despite the advances that researchers have made in documenting the media's potential to shape audiences' perceptions, one of the limitations of previous work is that it has not clearly established the cognitive factors or mechanisms that determine how media texts shape audiences' beliefs. This information is vital to evaluating which texts are likely to affect which audiences. This project is designed to investigate the mechanisms through which audiences can translate media representations into perceptions of the real world.

Categorization

A necessary component of any model of how the examples of media images are integrated into audiences' beliefs is an understanding of how individuals' mental representations of the world tend to be structured. Work on the effects of cross-cultural media and media stereotypes is based on the assumption that observers tend to order their

perceptions of the world in terms of categories. These categories, in turn, shape the way stimuli such as media representations are interpreted, evaluated, and remembered. Any effect a media representation has will take place in interaction with these established cognitive categories.

There are two primary models of the mental representation of categories. Each leaves room for mass media representations in the construction of how people understand social groups. Instance models, such as the exemplar model proposed by Linville, Fisher, and Salovey (1989), assert that social groups are thought of as a series of concrete examples. Evaluations of the group are made by reference to this stored sample. This type of model suggests that media representations can shape real-world perceptions by making up a portion of these examples, by becoming part of the mental sample from which perceptions are drawn.

In contrast, abstraction models, such as the prototype model drawn from Rosch's work (1978), reject the idea that judgments of the group are based on a stable of specific examples that are constantly revisited. Rather, category judgments are thought to be made up of an abstracted sense of the central tendencies of the group across many attributes. This model suggests that cognitive stereotypes change slowly in response to a large number of divergent examples that gradually shift perceptions of the group's central tendency. Within this perspective, media portrayals play a role in the mental representations of groups by contributing to calculations of these central tendencies.

Regardless of the model of mental representation that one accepts, the attributes through which a category is defined can be seen as a type of schema that influences what

is noticed and what is remembered about a person or event. Observers with well-established category schemas who are gathering routine or cursory impressions tend to note and recall characteristics of a target that are consistent with the established attributes of the category. A good illustration of this kind of effect is Cohen's (1981) study examining viewers' impressions of a videotape of a woman having dinner with her husband. Before viewing the tape, half the participants were told the woman was a librarian and half were told she was a waitress. Afterward, each group tended to report details from the tape that were consistent with her purported occupation. Studies by Rothbart, Evans, and Fulero (1979), Gaertner and McLaughlin (1983), O'Sullivan and Durso (1984), Devine, (1989), Gilbert and Hixon (1991), Dovidio, Evans, and Tyler (1986), and Ford, Stangor, and Duan (1994) also report that establishing or activating a social category shaped or facilitated participants' reaction to an associated target.

Category information may also shape an observer's interpretation of an individual's actions or character. Ambiguous behavior is often labeled or interpreted in ways that are consistent with established beliefs about the actor's social group. This influence may be one of the means through which stereotypes are maintained. This effect can be illustrated by a study by Darley and Gross (1983), in which observers' evaluations of a child's ambiguous performance on a test varied according to their beliefs about her socio-economic status. Even more troubling are Ducan's (1976) findings that an ambiguously aggressive push tended to be interpreted as playing around when performed by a White and as an aggressive shove when performed by an African American. These results were later replicated and expanded by Sagar and Schofield (1980).

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Work on cross-cultural media effects and stereotyping relies on theories of mental categorization in that it assumes that cognitive categories shape the way the media texts are interpreted. Media characters are thought to be seen as members of specific categories. Patterns within media texts contribute to the content of cognitive categories. These categories then shape future interpretations. The goal of the current work is to identify some of the attributes of media texts, of media audience members, and of the context in which the texts are consumed that may moderate the media's potential to contribute to cognitive categories. I seek to identify variables that have the potential to aggravate the negative effects of cognitive categories. I seek, for example, factors that increase the likelihood that category attributes may be indiscriminately applied to newly encountered category members or applied in ways that maintain unjustifiably negative or belittling perceptions. However, I also hope to identify factors that may advance the more positive potential of the media.

The two studies that make up this project investigate perceived character representativeness, or how common the character's attributes are thought to be in the real world, as a primary outcome variable. This specific aspect of textual interpretation was chosen because it is seen as a marker of the degree to which the attributes of media characters are applied to the audiences' understandings of what real-world groups are like. The second study of the project seeks to investigate the hypothesis that audience perceptions of characters' representativeness affect the characters' impact on the audience's beliefs about the real world.

Typicality and Believability

Previous work on character representativeness has often been subsumed under work on media realism. Realism has long been investigated as a potential moderating factor of the impact of media texts on audiences' beliefs, attitudes, and behavior (e.g., Austin, Pinkleton, & Fujioka, 2000; Eron, Huesmann, Brice, Fischer, & Mermelstein, 1983; Greenberg, 1972; Hawkins & Pingree, 1980; Perse, 1986; Reeves, 1978; Tan, Nelson, Dong, & Tan, 1997; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). Realism is a complex concept that has been defined in several ways within the field. There is a substantial body of research that has sought to investigate both the conceptual dimensions of realism perceptions (e.g., Hawkins, 1977; Potter, 1986; 1988) as well as to establish how to best measure the concept (e.g., Busselle, 1999). Since the ambiguities of the concept have not been entirely resolved with the field, I will clarify how the concept has been used in other works and how I believe it relates to perceptions of a character's representativeness.

Realism as a Textual Attribute

I conceptualize realism as the audiences' subjective evaluation of the degree to which a media portrayal comports with the audiences' perception of the world of potential experience. It is not a characteristic of a text itself. I would emphasize that realism is not used here in its formal, stylistic, sense within the field of film studies or even as more flexible reference to a text's level of abstractness or use of fantastic plot devices and elements. Although these aspects of a media portrayal can have important implications for how audiences approach a work, I consider the stylistic concerns that these usages reflect to be a factor that helps establish the nature of a text's perceived relationship to the world of potential experience rather the relationship itself. The

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distinctive editing and narrative style of Rome: Open City, for example, may contribute

to the audience's impression of the film's close, mirror-like relationship to its subject

matter. These qualities are not, however, the concept that I am attempting to address in

an investigation of realism.

There is a tradition of experimental research that has also defined realism as an

attribute of the text or of the presentation of the text. These works define realism in terms

of what has been called actuality (Atkin, 1983) or factuality (Wright, Huston, Reitz, &

Piemyat, 1994). Representations that are believed by the viewer to portray something

that really happened, such as news, documentaries or historical reenactments are defined

as realistic, whereas those that are believed to portray fictional occurrences, such as most

feature films and television entertainment programs, are not. This definition has been

applied in studies that trace the development of children's understanding of television and

of television genres (e.g., Hawkins, 1977; Wright, et al., 1994) as well as in research

searching for intervening variables of media effects.

The latter tradition includes much of the work on possible links between media

and real-world violence. For example, a study by Berkowitz and Alioto (1973) examined

the effect of violent television clips on the tendency of provoked subjects to display

aggression. One of the primary issues addressed by this investigation was whether the

participants' understanding that the portrayal represented a real event shaped their

reaction to it. The researchers wanted to know whether perceptions of realism affected

the audience members' behavior. They found that those who believed the portrayals to

be a representation of a real event showed higher aggression levels than those who

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watched representations identified as fictional.

Other researchers have taken this conceptualization and focused on audiences' perceptions of the actuality of a representation, sometimes presenting the same stimulus material labeled as either a recording of a real event or as a recreation by actors. Atkin (1983) for example, found that adolescents who saw footage of a fistfight embedded in a newscast reported higher tendencies to aggress than those who saw the same footage imbedded in a movie promo. Similar results were found by Thomas and Tell (1974) in work with college-age men. Geen and Rakosky (1973) have argued that exposure to representations of violence believed to be real has a greater effect because it is more arousing than violence believed to be fictional. They found that participants who were reminded that a violent movie sequence was performed by actors showed less physiological arousal than those who were not. In a follow up study, Geen (1975) found that violent materials presented to participants as fictional had less of an effect on physiological arousal than the same material presented as real.

This conceptualization of the tradition has some limitations, however. It is unable to capture much of the variation in audiences' perceptions of a text's realism. This formulation makes it difficult to deal with hybrid genres such as reality programs, re-creations, and docu-dramas. Furthermore, it is possible for there to be variation across participants in their perceptions of how a representation relates to real people and events even when there is agreement about the representation's actuality. For example, Press (1989) found that working and middle class women differed in their perceptions of the realism of a series of popular situation comedies featuring female characters. It is

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difficult to investigate or account for this type of variation through this conceptualization.

Perhaps an even greater limitation is the inability of the conceptualization of realism as actuality to adequately deal with fiction. There are ongoing debates about the cognitive position audiences take up when they interpret fiction and the degree to which this is determined by the text (e.g., Allen, 1993; Chatman, 1990; Smith, 1995;). However, the idea that a society's stories shape the way people think about their the world is fundamental to large numbers of humanistic fields, including literature, folklore, and anthropology. This assumption also guides the work of both experimental and interpretive communication scholars. Much of the cross-cultural effects and stereotyping literature reviewed above addresses the impact of media fiction. Cultivation theory, for example, is premised on the idea that that fictional TV programming affects perceptions of the characteristics of the real world. Cultural studies scholars often investigate the stories told by a society's media as one of the means through which the social structure, values, and perspectives of the society are maintained.

At the level of individual cognition, Shapiro and Lang (1991) argue that fictional TV representations can shape viewers' perceptions of the real world because the content of media fiction is cognitively indexed using some of the same criteria as those used for real-world events. When an individual has to evaluate a new, real-world situation, they search their memories based on contextual information that retrieves memory traces tied to media events as well as to real-world events. Therefore, their responses to new people and new situations can be shaped by fictional media representations just as they can be affected by real-world experience. Similarly, Slater (1990) examined the impact of

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fictional and non-fictional print media exemplars on audiences' understandings of social groups. He found that when audiences were unfamiliar with the group portrayed, the usual differences in the impact of fictional and non-fictional representations broke down. The audiences turned to fiction to shape their perspectives when there were no other sources available. These perspectives support the argument that fiction has the power to influence the audiences' worldviews in certain contexts. The formulation of realism as actuality does not allow for the study of this influence.

Realism as Audience Interpretation

Investigating realism as an element of audience interpretation that is affected by cues within the text, but still varies from viewer to viewer, offers a better chance of capturing variation in perceptions of realism. It allows one to ask more interesting questions about the role of fiction in audiences' construction of their beliefs about the world. A second way, then, to conceptualize realism is as the degree to which audiences' feel a representation matches or concords with some element of the real world.

However, even if one conceptualizes realism as an element of audience perception rather than a textual attribute, ambiguity remains. The audience can evaluate relationships between a media representation and the real world in a variety of ways. Much research has measured realism in ways that leave the concept only vaguely defined and indistinctly conceptualized. Study participants are often asked how much characters or events in the media are like those in "real life" (Greenberg, 1972; Perse, 1986; Reeves, 1978; Tan, et al., 1997), the degree to which they are "true to life" (Eron, et al., 1983) or the material's degree of "realism" (Elliott & Slater, 1980; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999).

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Since these measures do not clearly specify the kind of evaluation to be made, the question may be capturing a variety of different types of judgements that may respond to different influences and impact different outcomes. General realism questions, for example, have been found by different researchers to correlate with representativeness (Shapiro & Chock, 1999) and with similarity to the participants' ratings of their own experience (Austin, Roberts, & Nass, 1990). Other researchers have conceptualized judgements of realism as judgements of social utility, or how reliable the audience thinks the media representation is as a guide to behavior or roles (Austin, et al., 2000).

Although these different types of evaluations may be interrelated (Austin, et al., 1990; Hawkins, 1977), they are conceptually distinct. The lack of results that characterizes many of the studies that have used general measures of realism (e.g., Greenberg, 1972; Reeves, 1978; Hawkins & Pingree, 1980; Tan, et al., 1997) may be at least partially due to measures that capture a variety of different evaluative judgements. I will argue that general realism evaluations may subsume at least two different judgements that audiences can make in relation to a media text. The distinction between the dimensions is important because they may have different implications for how the audiences' engage with a text and how the text contributes to the audiences' attitudes and beliefs about the real world.

I will seek to identify two different dimensions of realism, typicality, or the frequency with which the attributes of a media representation are thought to occur in the real world, and believability. I define believability as the perceived consistency of a portrayal, as the perception that something could happen in the way represented rather

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than the perception that it happens frequently. I argue that that each dimension has different implications for the kind of impact a media text will have on audience members' understanding of what the world is like. Perceptions of typicality may shape the degree to which the attributes of a media character are applied to the audiences' perceptions, whereas believability is more likely to be associated with the audiences' level of identification, engagement, and sense of personal connection with a character.

The first goal of this project is to distinguish between these two potential dimensions of realism and to establish a coherent conceptualization of some of the kinds of realism judgements audiences make. The bulk of this project then goes on to deal with factors that shape one of the dimensions of realism, typicality or representativeness, and to explore its influence on the audiences' beliefs.

Realism as Typicality

One factor that has been found to influence realism judgments is the typicality or representativeness of the portrayal. This conceptualization defines realism as the frequency with which the attributes displayed by the media representation occur within the real-world population or as the proportion of people in a population that carry the attributes. For example, Shapiro and Chock (1999) had volunteers generate typical and atypical outcomes to a series of specific situations. After further pre-testing, the stories judged to be typical and atypical were presented to another set of volunteers and were evaluated on general realism measures. The volunteers were asked to evaluate whether the people and events were like those "in real life". The typical representations were seen as more realistic than the atypical representations.

This conceptualization of realism as the perceived commonality of the attributes of a media portrayal within a particular population is often evident in the type of outcomes researchers explore. For example, Fox and Philliber (1974) examined perceived realism as a moderating variable in the effect of television exposure on viewers' perceptions of affluence. Working from a hypothesis similar to that of cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1993), they suggested that the consistency of portrayals of affluence on television was leading to the perception of the general affluence of the US population. They thought that this perception would be greater among those who believed more strongly in the veracity, the realism, of television's depiction of American life. The structure of this argument implies that realism is seen as the typicality or representativeness of a text's portrayal of its subject.

Potter (1986), also working from cultivation theory, examined the potential of various forms of perceived realism to moderate viewers' estimates of the prevalence of crime and their perceptions of their likelihood of being victimized. Hawkins and Pingree (1980) carried out a similar study using nearly the same outcome measures. The effects of these studies are not based on the viewers' belief that what is portrayed has a real-world referent. Rather, it is based on the assumption that the attributes of the representation exist at a relatively high level of incidence.

Other researchers have attempted to investigate this conceptualization of realism directly. For example, Dorr, Kovaric, and Doubleday (1990) examined the influence of age and program content on children's perception of television programs' realism. One of the ways they measured the perceived realism of specific shows was by asking their

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participants to indicate what percentage of "real-life families in our country are like the television family". Participants were also asked more specific questions about the percentage of families that felt the same, acted the same, or had the same structure as the TV families. They found that the perceived representativeness of the programs varied with the content of the program and the developmental level of the children.

Although this formulation conceptualizes representativeness as partially determined by the content of the text, it also allows for variation across audience members. Evaluations of representativeness can be consequential to the outcomes investigated here, because, as will be discussed below, perceptions of the typicality or representativeness of a group exemplar are thought to moderate the extent to which the attributes of a media portrayal are applied to the group as a whole.

An important aspect of judgements of representativeness is the interpretive structure through which it is carried out. Media are assumed to be interpreted through a mental category structure. The most common operationalization of the concept in this area assumes that individuals routinely organize their understandings of the people and events shown in the media in terms of specific socially defined categories. Audience members then evaluate the representativeness of a specific aspect of a media text within that category. A realistic or representative media portrayal is defined as one that displays characteristics that are common among the category of events or people that it is seen to represent. To take a specific example, in a now seminal study of cross-cultural interpretation, Liebes and Katz (Katz, Liebes, & Berko, 1992; Liebes & Katz, 1990) carried out and examined a series of focus group discussions about the soap opera Dallas.

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They report several discussions about the show that reflect an attempt on the part of the audience to relate the program to real life. The discussion surrounding the show reflects an attempt to relate relatively concrete attributes of the characters to real-world people of specific social categories. JR's business behavior, for example, was explored by the audience in terms of its relationship to the practices of most businessmen, whereas Pam's drinking and smoking were examined in the context of the behavior of most Western women. In each of these cases, the audience members were not evaluating the characters in terms of their representativeness of people in general, but rather in terms of specific subset of people to which each character seemed to belong.

Much of the survey and experimental work that looks at the media's effect on audience's perceptions also assumes an interpretive model in which audience members identify a group to which a media character belongs, and then evaluate and extrapolate the attributes of the character within that real-world group. Studies of media stereotypes, for example, assume that audiences consistently perceive both the media and their world in very specific categories. They assume that viewers routinely use the same categories to classify media portrayals and to guide their application of the portrayals' attributes to the real world, often at the expense of points of reference that are logically more relevant. Characters and events are thought to be preceded in viewers' heads by a set of adjectives that categorize them and determine which social group the attributes they embody will be related to. It is assumed we do not see sports stars or lawyers as much as we see African-American sports stars and female lawyers.

The conceptualization that evaluations of character typicality are constrained by

the group to which the character is being compared is further complicated by the observation that the attributes that are used for the comparison are often at least partially subjective. Traits used as the basis of realism judgments are chosen selectively and audience members' realism impressions are often based on only some of the possible attributes of evaluation. Much of the research that investigates realism as a form of typicality or representativeness assumes audiences' judgments are based on very concrete points of reference. Fox and Philliber (1978) focus on income levels. Cultivation research (e.g., Hawkins & Pingree, 1980; Potter, 1986) tends to investigate the media's impact on outcomes such as the prevalence of crimes or the percentage of the population of certain occupations. Some work has also taken into account other factors such as the proportion of marriages that end in divorce and the number of people who have had illegitimate children (Perse, 1986).

Realism as Believability

This work deals with aspects of representation that can have important social and political consequences. However, this conceptualization does not address the elements of the text that seem to be the most fundamental nor do they capture the meaning of realism that is most commonly intended in everyday usage. It is worth a pause to consider the implications of what is typically meant by the term. When a movie, television show or book is praised for being "real" or for portraying "real people", it is rarely being noted for adhering to the most statistically common traits among the population of people it portrays. Emphases on incomes and ratios are likely to miss important aspects of the way in which texts are felt to relate to the world of potential experience. It is possible that

viewers and readers discount the accuracy or validity of a portrayal's relationship with the world in the terms of practical factors, only to accept it in terms of less tangible characteristics.

For instance, many young viewers find that the concerns, language and relationships portrayed on NBC's situation comedy Friends accurately represent their experience. It is unlikely, however, that they would feel that the income of two of the characters--which seems to cover the rent of a spacious, two-bedroom Manhattan apartment (with a terrace, no less)--is typical for either people of the characters' youth or erratic employment status. Traits used as the basis of realism judgments are chosen selectively. Audiences' realism impressions are based on only some of the possible attributes of evaluation. In this case, it is the social dynamics that are seen as accurate or realistic. Concrete points of reference like income or representativeness of vocation are not.

The conceptualization of realism as representativeness suggests that audience members learn of the world from the media by first identifying a category of which the portrayed character is a member, then noticing specific attributes of the portrayal, and finally applying those characteristics to everyone or everything in the category to which the portrayal belongs. Representativeness evaluations are based on whether viewers' perceive specific characteristics of a portrayal to be common among the type or kind of events and people they see the portrayal to be. To return to the example of Friends, viewers could identify the characters as portrayals of middle class young people and decide the quality of interpersonal relationships is the most salient reference point for

realism judgments. Then, they may judge whether the attributes of the show's ensemble are typical of all of their type. One might expect an audience that characterizes the show as realistic to see all "gen-X'ers" as existing within a circle of close, supportive friends that stand in for family.

This is likely to happen. However, it is unreasonable to believe that it is the only thing that happens when audiences evaluate the relationship of a media portrayal to the real world. Audiences are unlikely to always see the relationship of the text to the real world exclusively in terms of this kind of representativeness. They can interact with a work, construct links between it and their personal experience without necessarily comparing the attributes of a portrayal to a social group as a whole. Hints of this kind of pattern can be found in Press' (1989) qualitative study. The author herself conceptualizes realism as the representativeness of the characters in terms of social categories defined by race and class. She defines The Cosby Show, for example, as unrealistic because it portrays a well-off, dual-professional household that is statistically unrepresentative of the socio-economic status of African Americans. Her participants, however, often considered the program to be realistic and seemed to identify with the characters, even when their own financial circumstances differed strikingly from that of the characters. Press argues this pattern of realism illustrates of the hegemonic power of the media. It shows how television can reify a fantasy vision of middle-class life as the norm and elide the structural constraints that maintain socioeconomic divisions. What becomes "realistic" to the viewers is an artificial vision of middle-class success that helps blind them to the reality of their own existence. Even when the audiences' own experience

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tells them of the atypicality of a character's income, they persist in accepting the show as realistic. Press' is not alone in her criticism (see also, Gray, 1986; 1989; Carter, 1987) and she makes a valid point.

However, another way to approach the viewers' insensitivity to some of these factors is to investigate whether there are alternative criteria that are being used to make these judgments. Income levels do not seem to be the most salient dimensions on which viewers evaluated the programs. The dimensions through which they made these judgments emphasize the other functions media play in the audiences' lives and the other ways in which they may shape audiences' perceptions of the world.

Press' interviewees seemed to evaluate the characters in terms of the believability and plausibility of the characters' personalities and relationships. The use of emotive and individual-centered reference points can also be found in the reports of Liebes and Katz's focus group discussions of Dallas (Katz, et al., 1992; Liebes & Katz, 1990). As reported above, audiences evaluated characters in terms of the commonality of their attributes within general categories. However, focus group participants were also able to relate a media portrayal to their own world in terms of the dynamics of inter-family relationships and individual feelings. The show's audiences often saw the relationship between the text and the real world in terms of reference points that reflected their own experience rather than the characters' group identities or category membership. For example, they could see themselves as struggling to do the right thing in a world stacked against them like Bobby or thwarted in a desire for children like Pam. These viewers were not evaluating the realism of the characters' feelings and behavior in terms of any concrete

measure, but rather by way of emotional experience and patterns of interpersonal behavior. The audience members seemed to consider the most salient aspects of the representation not to be the character's level of affluence but rather their relationships and personal emotions. The salience of particular aspects of a representation, which seem to be affected by factors relating to the audience as well as to the text itself, seem to shape and constrain the way audiences' assess realism.

The potential for audiences to attend to emotions or relationships when making judgements of realism has implications for the way the attributes of media portrayals are related to the world of potential experience. Realism evaluations based on criteria dealing with emotions or relationships are often made on the basis of a different type of knowledge than those of realism as typicality. Whereas the evaluations that are the focus of cultivation theory are made on the basis of general, abstract understandings of patterns and of distributions within the world, these evaluations are more closely based on personal experience. These judgements are determined by whether a text presents something that the audience feels they recognize as a familiar emotion, a coherent motivation, or a true situation or relationship.

· The importance of personal experience in this context raises the possibility that judgements involving the coherence of the characters' behavior and the plausibility of their actions may be qualitatively different from judgements of the representativeness of the characters' attributes. The standard to which these emotional and relationship-centered criteria are being held is often not so much one of representativeness as much as ones of familiarity and coherence. One does not have to believe that most people have

relationships or feelings like a character to find it realistic that someone would have these relationships or feelings. These judgements seem to reflect a sense of characterlogical coherence and mark the audiences' willingness to suspend disbelief about the status of the character as a fictional creation and to develop an emotional connection with him or her.

There is empirical evidence of this type of evaluation. Austin, et al. (1990) investigated patterns of realism perception and identification in children's responses to the Cosby Show. The researchers suggest that children's identification with mass media portrayals are mediated by perceptions of the similarity of the mass media portrayal to their own experience. They found that perceptions of similarity, measured as the difference between separately-measured ratings of the warmth of the Huxtable family and a child's own, were significantly correlated with realism ratings, measured as the perceived similarity of the show's characters to most families. The closer the media portrayal was to the participants' own experience in terms of warmth, the stronger the realism ratings were. These results suggest that the viewers compared the portrayal to their personal experience. If the portrayal matched their own understanding of what the world is like, the text was judged to be realistic, to be like that of other people in the world. If the portrayal and personal experience clashed, the media representation was seen as unrealistic. In terms of at least some attributes of a text, similarity to an individual viewer's personal experience seems to dictate reality perceptions.

As Press (1989) points out, the prevalence of this type of personal connection, in lieu of other, perhaps more critical or abstract responses, can serve to elide perspectives

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that contribute to social change. However, audiences' ability to create this type of connection also makes possible some of the more idealized possibilities of communication. Although they may be less directly useful in constructing reality perceptions, judgements that focus on character's emotions or relationships may have additional implications that are equally important.

Texts where the viewer finds the characters' relationships and feelings to be highly salient are likely to result in a more personal or emotional reaction to the characters than texts with other emphases. Rubin and Perse (1987), for example, found that perceptions of the realism of TV soap operas were associated with greater levels of parasocial interaction.

Furthermore, although characters that viewers evaluate using these criteria may be identifiable by viewers as members of broad demographic categories, this type of realism formulation requires both a perception of and an investment in the importance of the characters' membership in communities defined by experience or personality. Portrayals cannot be defined exclusively in broad demographic terms and be seen as realistic by virtue of their similarity to individual experience.

One of the most commonly heralded solutions to prejudice and stereotyping in an interpersonal context is interaction between members of the evaluating and evaluated groups. It is integral, for example, to the work of Aronson and his colleagues (Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979), who found that use of school curricula that allowed children of different backgrounds to work together to achieve mutual goals was associated with a decrease in prejudice and stereotyping among students. Similarly, Bettencourt, Brewer,

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Croak, and Miller (1992) found that cooperative interaction decreased ingroup partisanship among adults in a minimal-group situation.

Prejudice is undeniably a slippery thing. The conditions under which this kind of cooperation can overcome it are limited. For example, changing the perceptions of adults, who are likely to be materially and emotionally invested in their existing perceptions, is likely to be more difficult than moderating children's perceptions. However, the tenor of this work suggests that increasing familiarity with members of another group in a positive context can help strengthen perceptions of members of other groups as individuals.

The hope is that through encountering others in cooperative interpersonal situations, characteristics other than readily apparent, power-infused, broad social categories are made salient. Broad social categories like race, ethnicity, culture, and gender tend to be associated with social power. They help determine individuals' access to opportunity, and are particularly likely to be loaded in terms of evaluative strength and power. They can also be particularly powerful in defining perceptions and evaluations. The hope is that positive, interpersonal experience moderates the power of these categories to determine individuals' perceptions of others. Familiarity does not make these categories entirely meaningless. However, the hope is that if the power of the expectations associated with these categories can be moderated though the recognition of simultaneous memberships in less loaded categories, these particular category structures become less influential in determining how individuals are perceived and treated.

Many have hoped that mass media can stand in for the real world when the

opportunities for real interpersonal experience are unavailable. Few argue that the media are better than real-world experience, but many suggest that it can be better than nothing. Exposure to media representations of other groups, for example, has been found to have positive effects on children's perceptions of those groups in certain contexts (see Mares, 1996, for a review). For example, in a 1985 study, Lonner, Thorndike, Forbes, and Ashworth examined Native Alaskan children's attitudes towards Whites, Blacks, and Native Americans before and after the introduction of television service into their community. They found that, although perceptions of Whites and Native Americans were unaffected by the children's exposure to TV, perceptions of African Americans were significantly more positive after TV was introduced. These results are particularly notable because of the nature of the programs that were airing at this time, which included Barney Miller, All in the Family, and Sanford and Son. Although these shows were an improvement over many earlier portrayals, the characters still retained many of the traits that define cultural stereotypes of African American (Dates, 1993). Lonner and his colleagues point out that the only exposure to African Americans this particular sample of children was likely to have was through television. They suggest that exposure to members of the group, in a context that was not overwhelmingly negative, was enough to positively affect these children's perceptions of African Americans. This interpretation of the results receives further support from an experiment by Gorn, Goldberg, and Kanungo (1976) that examined the effects of exposure to segments of Sesame Street that showed children of a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds playing together. The researchers found that children who were exposed to these

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segments were more likely to say they wanted to play with children of the racial or cultural backgrounds shown in the segment than were children who did not see the segment. To the extent that media representations can provide an emotional bridge between audience members and people who are members of other groups, they may be able to provide a sense of knowledge and a vicarious interpersonal connection that has the potential to have a positive role in increasing intergroup understanding.

The caveats to this possibility are, of course, legion. Available media materials often do not offer images that could make use of the potential pro-social aspects of the media. Furthermore, media content is inherently a product of the society in which it is created. Texts can usually move only so far away from the dominant social structure. The audience also has a share in the creation of meaning. Meaning cannot be created beyond what they are willing and able to comprehend. However progressive a writer's intentions, the interpretation of the text is also bound by the audience members' preconceptions and beliefs. This is illustrated by Vidmar and Rokeach's 1974 study of All in the Family. Prejudiced viewers tended to read endorsement, rather than the gentle ridicule the producer intended, in the program's presentation of the racist tirades of Archie Bunker. A progressively intended message may be undercut if the audience lacks the cognitive schema that will allow them to put the message together. However, the positive potential of the media exists. If perceptions of the believability of a text's characters increase the likelihood of developing this emotional connection and of moderating the impact of broad social categories, this aspect of interpretation can have important consequences for the media's role in the audiences' understandings of the real

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world.

To summarize, I hypothesize that audiences will vary in their perceptions of the realism of a specific media text or a character on at least two dimensions. Realism can be based on perceptions of typicality or of believability. A particular portrayal may be evaluated by whether the attributes of the representation are felt to be common among members of that group in the real world. These evaluations are made within categories. Media portrayals are compared to the type of person or event that they are thought represent, rather than to people or events in general. The realism of a character or a text may also be evaluated in terms of its believability. This evaluation does not imply an extrapolation or comparison of the traits of a portrayal to the world outside the viewer's direct experience or to members of general social categories. Believability is defined as the perception that a character or event portrayed in a text is coherent and consistent, given the premises of the story. This type of evaluation is more likely to require the viewer to compare what they see on the screen with their own emotions and experiences. A text is seen as believable if the audience finds what the characters feel and do to be like their own feelings and actions, if they can find themselves in the text. This leads to the first hypothesis of the study:

H1-a) Typicality and believability are two different dimensions of realism perceptions.

Audience evaluations of the different dimensions of media realism, of the different ways in which the world portrayed in the media relates to the world of potential experience, can be consequential in terms of the media's impact on the audiences' real-

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world understandings of represented social groups. If a media character is seen as typical or representative, his or her attributes are believed to be common among the group to which he or she is seen to belong. The perceived representativeness of a member of a specific social group, whether encountered interpersonally or through the media, may be an indication of the degree to which a member impacts perceptions of the nature or character of the group as a whole. This dimension will be the focus of the bulk of this study. However, the believability dimension may also have consequences. Investigating one of the potential consequences is the purpose of the second hypothesis of the study.

H1-b) Perceived believability of a character will be more strongly correlated with identification with the character than will typicality.

Further in-depth analysis of this element of audiences' interactions with a text is beyond the scope of the current project.

Social Distance

A factor that may affect audiences' interpretations of representativeness is the audience's level of engagement with the subject of a text. I will refer to this factor as social distance. It is one of the primary foci of this project. I argue that when audience members lack experience with the subject of a text, judgments of the text as representative can serve as a default position. Audience members, therefore, are particularly likely to use media portrayals to build understandings of other groups when they lack the experience with the represented society that would allow them to determine that portrayals are inaccurate or unrepresentative.

The impact of the audiences' familiarity with and sense of membership in the

subject of a media text on interpretation is particularly relevant in cross-cultural contexts. Despite recent increases in travel, most individuals' knowledge of people of other societies is heavily dependent on the mass media. However, the growing interconnectedness of the world's economic, political, and social systems is making media audiences' perceptions of other cultural groups increasingly consequential. More and more of the decisions we make, as individuals and as societies, have international ramifications. Our perceptions of other societies shape how members of these groups are treated when they are met face to face and influence the international public policy initiatives leaders formulate in response to their constituencies.

I would also note that much of the evidence that suggests that social distance may be consequential for media interpretation is drawn from work in intergroup perception. This project represents an attempt to investigate the applicability of the concepts that have been developed in this area to the context of mass media. As described, two important concepts of the field are the exemplar and abstraction models of mental category representation. Each suggests that some of a category's exemplars will contribute to understandings of the group to a greater degree than others will. An important part of a particular example's power to affect group understandings is, of course, its prototypicality, or the degree to which it seems to embody the attributes that define a group. However, each of these models also allows for variation in perceived representativeness in response to the position and experience of the observer. Differences in perceived representativeness may also affect the influence a particular exemplar has.

Instance models imply that different groups will be represented by different numbers of exemplars in an observer's mind. Therefore, the weight any particular exemplar has in the observer's evaluations of a group varies according to the number of stored images the observer carries in reference to that group. Individual examples of seldom-encountered groups will affect evaluations of the group as a whole more than individual examples of frequently encountered groups, because they are less likely to be contradicted or diluted by other examples.

Abstraction models of representation suggest similar predictions. This perspective assumes a graded category structure. Examples that carry more of the traits associated with the category are more central to understandings of the nature of the category. These central examples have a greater effect on perceptions of other members of the group than examples that are seen as less prototypical (Rips, 1975). There is also, however, a role for the observer's familiarity with the category. Greater experience with a group implies a greater number of encounters with group members. The observer will have a larger sample from which central tendency estimates are drawn. Each example, therefore, has a weaker impact on the estimate because it is more likely to be moderated by other, contrasting, examples. Both the exemplar and abstraction models suggest that the extent of an observer's familiarity with a social category shapes the likelihood that a single example will shape perceptions of the group as a whole.

Components of Social Distance

Social distance is the audiences' working knowledge of and investment in a group being portrayed. It is conceptualized as being made up of at least two factors, 1) a

viewer's cognitive complexity about a group and 2) his or her sense of membership in the group. If the target group were Canadians, for example, a viewer who had a complex schema about Canada and considered him or herself Canadian would be socially close to this group. In contrast, a viewer whose understandings of Canada lacked complexity and who did not see him or herself as Canadian would be socially distant.

Cognitive complexity is, at heart, a measure of coherent organization of knowledge. It varies within individuals across domains. One person can have a deeply complex understanding of literature, while having a fairly simple understanding of sports. Someone else may show the opposite pattern. Cognitive complexity is usually defined by three factors: differentiation, abstractness, and integration (Burleson & Waltman, 1988). Differentiation is the number of different concepts that an observer applies to the target of evaluation. Abstractness is the proportion of these concepts that represent general tendencies or other higher-order perceptions. Integration is the extent to which contradictions between concepts are recognized and resolved. A person with high cognitive complexity would be able to list a large number of concepts about a subject. A substantial proportion of these concepts would be abstract, describing general characteristics or tendencies rather than appearances or specific facts. Contradictory information would be acknowledged and reconciled.[1]

A variety of categories can, of course, be used to define a viewers' social distance

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[1] Most of the work on this topic has examined variation in cognitive complexity across observers within a specific domain. This dissertation will examine cognitive complexity, imbedded in social distance, as it varies within observers across different domains of knowledge. It seeks to evaluate the effect of the differences in cognitive complexity as the same viewers evaluate texts from societies with which they have

from the community represented in a text, including age, generation, gender, and political affiliation. However, society membership, or the nation or culture to which an individual belongs, defines the differences in social distance in the studies reported here.

Previous Work with Factors of Social Distance

The notion that viewer involvement affects the way a text is interpreted is not, of course, foreign to the field of communication. Several theories of media use and reception suggest that the knowledge an audience member brings to a text shapes the way the content is interpreted or used. Perhaps the most well known of these perspectives is media dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976), which suggests that viewers' dependency or reliance on a mass media text is associated with the text's power to shape their beliefs and behaviors. The factors that affect dependency are numerous and complex. However, in situations where viewers are learning about a society portrayed in a text, an integral component of dependency is the amount of information available to the viewers from their direct experience with the portrayed society. As their real-world experience with the society declines, their media dependency is likely to rise.

This project differs from most previous work on media dependency in two ways. First, it focuses on entertainment media, specifically feature films. Although the theory takes into account dependencies on entertainment media, most experimental studies within this perspective have focused on news (e.g., Hirschburg, Dillman, & Ball-Rokeach, 1986; Loges & Ball-Rokeach, 1993) or on other genres primarily used for

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different degrees of knowledge.

specific, practical purposes, such as television shopping (e.g., Grant, Guthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991). It also differs from most previous work in examining within-participant variation in dependency. It investigates how a viewer's reliance on media texts may vary systematically according to their involvement with the subject of the text.

Several researchers have found that the media's potential to impact viewers' real world perceptions of a group portrayed in a text is strongest among those who lack real-world experience with the group. For example, Armstrong, et al. (1992) investigated the impact of exposure to various types of TV programming on audiences' perceptions of the affluence of African Americans. They found that the association between media exposure and audience perceptions was strongest among students whose backgrounds suggested they had few opportunities for real-world contact with African Americans. More recently, Fujioka (1999) compared the effect of television exposure on perceptions of African Americans among White Americans and Japanese international students. The perceptions of the Japanese students, who had less direct experience with African Americans, were more affected than were those of the White American students.

A few works have examined the impact of experience with the subject of a text as defined by groups of different cultures or nationalities. Zohoori (1988) compared the perceptions of television realism by children who were born in the US with children who had recently immigrated. The study found that children who had immigrated were more likely to believe that the people, children, and events on TV were like those "in real life". Furthermore, children who had immigrated more recently felt television people and events were more realistic than did children who had been in the US for a longer amount

of time. The recently immigrated children would have had less experience with US culture and would be less likely to see themselves as like the characters on TV. Their greater perceptions of realism are consistent with theories linking perceived representativeness with the viewers' social distances from the community portrayed in a text.

Hall, Anten, and Cakim (1999) investigated the potential association between social distance and perceived character representativeness. We interviewed US students and Mexican and Turkish exchange students living in the US. We found that the non-US students reported that they had believed US television to be more typical or representative when they were watching in their home countries than they did after living in the United States. After having lived in the US, the non-US students' evaluations of television's typicality were almost indistinguishable from those of the US interviewees. The viewers' understandings of the typicality of US television decreased as they gained the direct experience that made their understandings of the country more complex and allowed them to see themselves as sharing more category memberships with the characters. The precursor to the work proposed here (Hall, 1996) also investigated the role of social distance on audience members' perceptions of the representativeness of a text. I compared viewers' evaluations of the typicality of characters of films set in socially close societies with evaluations of characters of films set in socially distant societies. The characters from films of socially distant countries were seen as more typical of their culture than were the characters in films of the socially near country.

This brings us to the second hypothesis of the study.

H2) The social distance between a viewer and the society presented in a media text will be positively associated with the perceived representativeness of the media characters portrayed in that text.

Mechanisms of Social Distance's Effect on Representativeness Perceptions

Previous work in social psychology suggests means through which the factors that determine a viewer's social distance from a film society may facilitate the application of the attributes portrayed in the film to perceptions of the real world.

Complexity of group representations. Viewers' levels of cognitive complexity in reference to a portrayed society could be related to their understandings of the representativeness of the portrayal's characters for two reasons. First, a less complex cognitive structure implies, by definition, that understandings of members of a group are less dense and are made up of fewer constructs. This suggests that each single example is less likely to be contradicted or moderated by other knowledge and so can have a more profound effect on understandings of the real world. In a small subject pool, each example has more weight than it would in a large one.

A few scholars have investigated concepts such as cognitive complexity in relation to audience members' reception of media texts. Zaller (1992), for example, suggests that the complexity of a citizen's understandings of political issues affect the susceptibility of their opinions to media messages. He argues that when individuals' knowledge of an issue consists of a few, loosely integrated concepts, a single, salient formulation of the issue can strongly affect their positions. However, when audiences have a lot of tightly integrated knowledge about an issue, their opinions are more stable and are less likely to vary in response to a particular message.

Outgroup homogeneity effect. Viewers' cognitive complexity about a film society may affect the representativeness of the film's content in an additional way. A lack of cognitive complexity in reference to a particular society implies that a viewer will be unfamiliar with the cues and markers that are meaningful signifiers within the community. The characterization of media portrayals may rely on cues the viewer has not been trained to notice or to ascribe meaning to. They may be based on a system of categories the viewer may not know exists. Without these cues, the viewer may perceive the society as homogenous.

For example, in a study by Dumas (1989), Chinese and US graduate students were asked to evaluate a liquor ad featuring an older and a younger man outside in daylight in tuxedos. US viewers used the models' clothing as cues to identify their relationship and the location. The tuxedos worn by the models were cited as evidence that they were at a wedding, and therefore the pair was father-and-son or father-and-son-in-law. Fewer Chinese participants mentioned the clothing, and fewer felt the image portrayed a wedding. Throughout the study, Dumas found that many aspects of visual images that had consistent and concrete implications for US viewers acted as only vague reference points for Chinese participants. Without the background to recognize or interpret the cues, the Chinese participants' understandings of the image was less concrete than or different from those of the participants who were members of the represented culture.

If audience members sense their inability to interpret the cues of the text, this inability may contribute to their sense of distance from the subject. It may lead viewers

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to believe that they are not members of the same groups as the characters and make the characters more likely to be seen as outgroup members. A sense of belonging to a portrayed society may, in turn, affect the way the text is interpreted. Observers respond differently to ingroups than they do to outgroups. One of the consequences of the ingroup/outgroup distinction is that members of the outgroup are likely to be seen as similar to each other. A socially distant viewer's sense of the homogeneity of the film society may be further exacerbated.

A long tradition of research suggests that whether because of a lack of familiarity, the use of different systems for organizing information, a need to maintain positive social comparisons, or a combination of these factors, observers tend to see outgroups as more homogenous than groups of which they consider themselves members. For example, in one of the more well-known studies that has examined this phenomena, Linville, et al. (1989) found that individuals tended to rate targets of different ages and nationalities as more homogeneous than those of their own age or nationality on a variety of attributes, including friendliness, interestingness, and motivation. Further work has proven this outgroup homogeneity effect to be consistent and robust. Evidence of the effect has been reported in the experimental work of Quattrone and Jones (1980), Jones, Wood, and Quattrone (1981), Park and Rothbart (1982), Wilder (1984), Linville, Salovey, and Fischer (1986), Park and Judd (1990), Judd, Ryan, and Park (1991), Park, Ryan, and Judd (1992), Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer, and Kraus (1995), Thompson, Kohles, Otsuki, and Kent (1997) as well as in the surveys and reviews of Ostrom and Sedikides (1992), Linville and Fischer (1993), Sedikides and Ostrom (1993) and Linville (1998).

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Perceptions of group variability are relevant to the investigation of the media's impact on audiences' understandings of the real world. Outgroup variability perceptions seem to make individual exemplars of a group seem more informative about other group members. In intergroup contexts, homogeneity perceptions have been found to contribute to both deductive and inductive processes of stereotyping. When a group is seen as homogenous, the characteristics of individual members are more likely to affect perceptions of the group as a whole than when the group is heterogeneous. If similar processes hold for situations in which the exemplar is a media representation, variability perceptions could help shape the degree to which the audience takes the attributes of the media exemplar and applies them to their understandings of the exemplar's real-world group.

Experimental work supports the contention that the perceived variability of a group can shape the extent to which a single example affects observers' understandings. Rehder and Hastie (1996) found that observers were less willing to adjust their estimates of the central tendency of a group in response to disconfirming examples when a group was seen as relatively diffuse than when it was seen as homogenous. Park and Hastie (1987) also found observers were more likely to generalize from a single example to an entire group if the group was seen as homogenous. Doosje, Spears, and Koomen (1995) replicated these results within more constrained conditions. When central tendencies reflected unfavorably on the ingroup, the attributes of a sample of outgroup members were more likely to be applied to the group as a whole when the group was seen as homogeneous than when the group was seen as heterogeneous. When the information

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about the group reflected favorably on the ingroup, there were no differences in the application of sample information according to the perceived variability of the groups. Each of these studies suggests that single examples have less of an impact on the group when the group is seen as highly variable.

Furthermore, perceived variability may also affect deductive stereotyping processes, or the application of attributes associated with the group to individual, real-world, group members. The possibility that variability affects the impact of central tendency understandings is fundamental to the homogeneity effect for many researchers. The dependent variable in Quattrone and Jones' (1980) work, for example, is the willingness of the observer to extrapolate from the exemplar to the group as a whole. They saw homogeneity perceptions as inexorably linked to the evaluation of individual group members.

Kruger and Rothbart (1988) found that the diagnostic strength of information about the group, made up at least in part of the homogeneity of the group, affected the groups' power to determine perceptions of individual members. Working more directly with the concept of variability, Verplanken, Jetten, and van Knippenberg (1996), found that if a group was believed to be homogeneous, information about an atypical group member was read longer and attended to more closely than information about typical group members. This difference was not significant for groups believed to be heterogeneous. Ryan, Judd, and Park (1996) found that the perceived level of adherence to a group mean predicted the likelihood that a newly encountered group member would be assumed to have attributes associated with the group. Perceived group dispersion was

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negatively associated with the observers' confidence in their assumption that a newly encountered member would carry group-associated attributes. Again, if this pattern holds in relation to media exemplars, it would suggest that when a society is seen as homogenous, a negative media representation is particularly likely to have negative consequences. This is a situation in which the attributes learned from the media texts may be indiscriminately applied to the audiences' perceptions of the real world.

H3) The perceived variability of a text's source society will be negatively associated with the degree to which the attributes of the text's characters are felt to describe real-world members of that society.

H4) The association between social distance and perceived representativeness will be mediated by the viewers' perceptions of the homogeneity of the portrayed society.

Subgrouping. A factor that has been advanced to explain the outgroup homogeneity effect is differential subgrouping across in- and outgroups. Although the explanations offered for the phenomena differ, a tendency for individuals to be able to identify a greater number of subgroups within their own groups has been identified in several contexts. Park, Ryan, and Judd (1992), for example, found that both business and engineering majors were able to generate more subgroups in reference to their own major than in reference to the other. An ingroup subgrouping effect has also been found in relation to groups defined by age (Brewer & Lui, 1984), gender (Vonk & Olde-Monnikhof, 1998), ethnicity (Huddy & Virtanen, 1995), and organization membership (Wallace, Lord, & Ramsey, 1995). It has been suggested that differences in the variability of in- and outgroups reflect differences in the observers' cognitive representation of subgroups. This theory gained support from Park, et al.'s (1992) work,

which found that when subgrouping was controlled for, the outgroup homogeneity effect disappeared. Furthermore, participants who were asked to generate subgroups within a category perceived more variability within the category than did those who did not generate subgroups.

H5) Participants will identify more subgroups in relation to socially near film societies than in relation to socially distant ones.

H6) Subgrouping will be associated with perceptions of the societies' variability so that the more variable the society is seen to be, the more subgroups will be identified within that society.

I should clarify that subgrouping, where individuals are sorted into clusters on the basis of their similarities and differences to each other, is a process distinct from that of subtyping, were individuals are identified as atypical of a group because of their divergence from the group's central tendency (Maurer, Park, & Rothbart, 1995). Subtyping has been identified as a barrier to stereotype change (Hewstone, 1989b; Hewstone, Macrae, Griffiths, & Milne, 1994; Johnston & Hewstone, 1992; Weber & Crocker, 1983), as will be discussed below.

Self-categorization theory. Most work on the outgroup homogeneity effect assumes differences in group perceptions are the result of either differing levels of familiarity or different methods of mentally representing members of in- and outgroups. There is, however, an alternative interpretation of the cause and nature of the outgroup homogeneity effect that should be addressed. Turner and his colleagues (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Turner, 1985; 1991; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) have developed a principal of intergroup relations called self-categorization theory. Pausing

for a moment to address this theory is worthwhile because it suggests an additional

mechanism through which a text's perceived representativeness could be shaped by

social distance and by the perceived variability of the portrayed society.

Turner argues that there are three different levels at which every individual

conceptualizes his or her identity: the interpersonal, where the self is seen as an

individual, the intergroup, where the self is seen as a group member, and the interspecies,

where the self is seen as a human being. The level activated shapes the degree to which

group understandings affect evaluations of individual group members. When an observer

sees him or herself primarily as an individual, group memberships are not very salient,

and others are more likely to be evaluated through personal attributes. When social

identity is activated, however, the group members become "psychologically

interchangeable" (Oakes, et al., 1994, p. 142). Under these conditions, observers see both

themselves and others as members of social groups. The similarities within the groups

are heightened and group understandings have greater effects on the evaluations of

individuals of both in- and outgroups.

The extent to which a specific level of categorization dominates social

perceptions varies from situation to situation according to the principal of meta-contrast.

A particular social group is likely to be salient when the differences within the group are

less than the differences between members of that group and others of comparable

groups. This suggests that the level of abstractness of observers' systems of

categorization changes depending on the comparisons they are asked to make. For

example, if a doctor is evaluating other doctors from a wide variety of fields, he or she is

likely to perceive a great deal of variability among them. Understandings of the general attributes of doctors will have relatively little effect on evaluations of individual members of this group. If any categorization understandings are to have an effect on these judgements, it is likely to be those associated with specific fields or specialties. However, if the same observer evaluates the same doctors in a context that compares them to corporate business people, the observer is more likely to see him or herself, as well as the other doctors, in terms of their occupation. The group will be seen as less variable and category understandings of doctors are more likely to be applied to individual group members.

Self-categorization theory predicts that when social identities are activated, all social groups will be marked by intragroup similarity. The outgroup homogeneity effect, however, suggests there is asymmetry across groups. Outgroups are seen differently than groups to which the observer belongs. Social categorization theory cannot, at first glance, account for this phenomenon. However, Oakes, et al. (1994) suggest an alternative explanation of the outgroup homogeneity effect that is consistent with the theory. They point out that most of the work on the phenomena has used across-subject designs and suggest that asymmetries in perceived group variability result, not from differences in perceptions of the group themselves, but rather from differences in the context in which each group is evaluated. They argue that when individuals are asked to evaluate outgroup members, the context is implicitly comparative. The outgroup is automatically seen in relation to the observer's own. Social group identity is activated, within-group similarities are stressed, and perceived variability decreases. However,

when an individual is asked to evaluate a group of which he or she is a member, no comparison is implied. The self and the other members of the group are categorized as individuals and more variability will be seen within the group.

The study that proponents of self-categorization theory feel tests this interpretation most directly is a work by Haslam, Oakes, Turner, and McGarty (1995). This study compared Australian participants' homogeneity perceptions of people of the US and of Australia in two conditions. Participants in one experimental group evaluated both people of Australia and of the US while participants in the other evaluated either one nationality or the other. The researchers speculated that the classic outgroup homogeneity effect should occur among those who evaluated a single nationality. The participants evaluating their own group would work from an individual-based frame of reference and stress the personal characteristics of the group members. Those evaluating an outgroup would work from a social identity frame and stress the similarities within the group. Among those who evaluated both groups, however, the outgroup measures would increase the salience of social group memberships. The ingroup, as well as the outgroup, would therefore be evaluated from a social identity perspective. Homogeneity would be stressed in both groups. The researchers found evidence of the outgroup homogeneity effect in the across-participants condition, but there was no significant difference in the variability ratings of the two groups in the within-participants condition.

An in-depth attempt to reconcile alternative models of intergroup perception is outside the scope of this work. I would note, though, that several studies, including Park and Rothbart (1982, exp. 3), Judd, et al. (1991), and Park, et al. (1992) found evidence of

the outgroup homogeneity effect in within-participant contexts. This suggests that either the level of category abstraction does not account for all the across-group differences in variability perceptions or that social identities can be cued in within-participant contexts.

However, it is reasonable to suggest that differences in the level of the categories within which in- and outgroups are evaluated may shape the perceived variability of the groups and contribute to social distance's effect on viewers' understandings of the real world. The studies proposed here assume that the category to which a media character's attributes are applied is society membership or nationality. It assumes that a US viewer watching Friends, for example, will evaluate the characters' representativeness implicitly in terms of US young people. Since these viewers' experiences with young people are likely to be dominated by US ones, they are unlikely to take into consideration the show's accuracy in representing young adults in places like Australia, Mexico, or Taiwan. They will use their own experience as a reference.

Turner's points about the fluidity and context-dependence of categorization suggest, however, that the category structure of nationality will not be peripheral in the evaluation of texts from societies of which the viewer is not a member. In these situations, the nationality moves from the background and becomes an explicit means through which characters' groups are defined. Therefore, viewers watching Friends in other countries are likely to see the show as explicitly representing US young people. The characters are likely to be evaluated as representatives of the United States. These viewers are less likely to apply their real-world experience with young people to their evaluations of the show. The characters' social identities as people of the US are likely

to be stressed.

Consideration of social categorization theory makes explicit an important assumption of the model of media learning outlined here. Media representations are assumed to have the ability to cue or activate categorization in terms of broad social categories, specifically society membership. This is not an unusual assumption. Both the work on cross-cultural media effects and investigations into stereotypes assume that audience members routinely organize, or are led to organize, their understandings of the people and events of media texts in terms of specific, socially defined categories. Furthermore, it is assumed that viewers routinely use a set of broad, demographic categories such as race, gender, and ethnicity to classify media portrayals and to guide their application of the portrayals' attributes to understandings of the real world. Research indicates that although there is variation across perceivers and situations, broad-based demographic categories are often routinely used to classify individuals. It has been found, for instance, that observers of groups are more likely to confuse individuals within categories of gender and race than across these groups (Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978, Studies 1 & 2; Biernat & Vescio, 1993).

The contrasts in the variability perceptions of social groups according to the nature of the categories that structure these perceptions also raise questions about the impact of exposure to media texts from socially distant societies on individuals' perceptions of the variability of the represented societies. Categories defined by nationality are felt to be actively cued by seeing films that are socially distant from the viewer. This should emphasize this particular category structure and social memberships

within it. Therefore, perceptions of the homogeneity of the ingroup society should be smaller among those who are exposed to socially distant media stimuli than among those who are simply asked to estimate the variability of a society without reference to a film.

H7) Ingroups will be seen as more homogenous among those exposed to films from socially distant groups than among those who do not see any films.

Social Distance Summary

Let me pause a moment and summarize how I think social distance, film society variability, and film character representativeness are related. I theorize that because all viewers process information in the same ways, but stand in different places in relation to the subject of a text, individual viewers' interpretations of specific texts will be different. When a text is set in a society about which viewers have little cognitive complexity and to which viewers feel they do not belong, the society will be seen as more homogeneous than when the setting society is one with which the viewers are familiar. The greater perceived homogeneity of the society implies that each individual media example will be seen as more informative of the group as a whole. Therefore, media characters from socially distant societies are more likely to be seen as typical of their entire group than media portrayals of socially close societies. A single media portrayal of a socially distant society will have a greater impact on the viewers' impressions of the nature of the community in the real world than will a media portrayal from a society the viewers know well and feel they belong to. Subgrouping should moderate film society variability perceptions.

Furthermore, because the salience of national groups is cued by exposure to films

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from countries foreign to the viewer, the variability of the ingroup should be smaller among those who have seen socially distant films than among those who have not been exposed to any media stimuli.

Further Consequences of Variability Perceptions

I argue that variability perceptions have a vital role in moderating the effect of social distance on viewers' understandings of the representativeness of media characters. However, perceptions of variability have additional consequences on the processes through which group understandings are constructed and maintained and, therefore, on the content of category information. These additional consequences can perhaps be seen most easily through a review of the work that has been done on the modification of cognitive stereotypes.

A long series of investigations into the moderation of stereotypes has emphasized the importance of an example's typicality to its impact on perceptions of the example's group. In some ways, the process of modifying group understandings through counterexamples can be seen as similar to the process of learning about a real-world group from a media representation. The circumstances through which examples are encountered differ, but the mechanism is the same. In both situations, an observer is applying the attributes of a single case to an entire population.

Previous work with counter-stereotypes. The tenor of this research suggests that a counterexample that is highly divergent from a group's perceived central tendency will be subtyped or excluded from the category. It will not affect perceptions of the group. Weber and Crocker (1983), in one of the most influential studies of stereotype change,

found that several moderately atypical examples had a greater effect on the stereotype of the group to which they belonged than a single, extreme example. These results have been replicated many times. Johnston and Hewstone (1992) found that counterexamples' influences on perceptions of their groups were predicted by their perceived typicality. In one of the most direct examinations of the effect of the typicality of counterexamples, Wilder, Simon, and Faith (1996) found that when counter-stereotypical examples were like other group members on all but a few attributes, perceptions of the group as a whole were less stereotypical than when counterexamples diverged on many attributes. Kunda and Oleson (1995; 1997) found similar results.

Consideration of the impact of the degree of a counterexample's divergence from expectation on its power to shape group understandings has given the field a great deal of insight into the way individuals' understandings of groups are constructed, maintained, and changed. The subtyping model has become central to models of stereotype change. There is, however, a caveat. In these studies, perceived typicality is operationalized as differences in the distance of the example from the central tendencies or prototype of the group. However, an example can be judged as atypical not only because it diverges from the prototype, but also because the group is seen as too heterogeneous to be fairly represented by a single exemplar. The perception of an example's atypicality and its resulting impact on the content of a stereotype depend on observers' perceptions of the variability of the group to which it belongs as well as on the example's deviation from a central mean. The work of Rehder and Hastie (1996), Park and Hastie (1987), and Doosje, et al. (1995), which are described above, provide evidence that variability

perceptions can moderate the effect of group understandings on perceptions of group members.

The perceived variability of a social group can have two effects on the way category information is used. The effects may have contradictory implications for the value of variability's influence on the treatment members of stereotyped groups receive. If perceptions of variability make it easier for positive counterexamples to be subtyped and fenced-off from evaluations of the group, they can be seen as standing in the way of positive change. Variability serves as a mechanism for the maintenance of the status quo. However, if the perceived variability of a group lessens observers' certainty that a group member will possess the traits assigned to the group, it makes category information seem less important. In this case, variability can have a positive effect on the way individuals from stereotyped groups are evaluated. Greater perceived heterogeneity may lessen the probability that observers are willing to attribute negative group information to individual members of the target group. In contrast to assessments of an example's unrepresentativeness that are made because of its divergence from a central mean, judgments of unrepresentativeness that result from the perceived heterogeneity of the target population may be indicative of a less deterministic view of the characteristics of the group's members. These judgments may result in more equitable access and greater opportunities for members of the portrayed community. The most socially productive level of perceived variability will depend on the circumstances and the nature of the example. Variability should be great enough to moderate the application of category traits to individual members and small enough to allow the perceived mean of the group

to be moved in a more positive direction.

The social utility of variability perceptions. The unwarranted application of negative attributes to individual members of stereotyped groups is undoubtedly the one of the most pernicious and most destructive aspects of this process. Moving perceptions of the central tendencies of groups in a more positive direction is, of course, of foremost importance. However, variability perceptions' beneficial social effects should also be considered. And it should be remembered that perceptions of homogeneity could have troubling consequences, even when the valence of the attributes applied to the group is positive. While moving the perceived mean of social groups is vital, it cannot solve all the problems that stereotyping engenders or erase all the barriers that members of stereotyped groups face when trying to achieve access to opportunities. Perceptions of the invariability of a group can be detrimental, independent of the valence of the stereotype's central tendency. Even positive stereotypes can have negative effects.

This can perhaps be most easily illustrated by reference to stereotypic attributes historically applied to women. Many aspects of the stereotypes of women are not, in and of themselves, negative. It is not bad to be nurturing, compassionate, supportive, or gentle. However, when applied, these positively valenced stereotypes have often served to limit women's opportunities to specific spheres with little direct social or political power.

Understandings of the nature of social groups are often not just descriptive, but are also prescriptive. They imply not just the application of specific traits to social group members, but also the lack of applicability of others. The attributes carried by category

information can come to be thought incompatible with other characteristics to the point that achievement of counter-stereotypical accomplishments is not acknowledged, is seen as invalid, or becomes a reason for exclusion from the group. Positively-valenced stereotypes can become means of maintaining existing power relationships and of preventing individuals of the stereotyped group from achieving access to opportunities. The vision of women as pure, nurturing homemakers, for example, has historically been used as a means of forestalling their access to education or their right to vote. The stereotype came to imply that women not only lacked the ability to make use of these opportunities but also suggested that achievement of skills associated with success within these institutions was incompatible with the roles and attributes traditionally assigned to them. Education was felt to make women unwomanly, while involvement in politics was felt to inappropriately focus their attention on worldly things and away from the purer sphere of the household.

Another example of positive cultural stereotypes with negative effects is that of Native Americans as pure, spiritual, and in touch with the land. These characteristics, while positive, are unlikely to offer members of these groups greater leverage in personal, political or legal struggles to achieve material resources or opportunities. Concerns or claims of the members of the group that do not seem to be consistent with the stereotype are often dismissed. This denial of stereotype-inconsistent opportunities challenges the legitimacy of group members' experiences and skills and makes the modification of the existing stereotype more difficult.

Furthermore, the attributes that make up stereotypes, even affectivity positive

ones, are not chosen randomly. Lakoff (1987) suggests that all category structures are built on social theories about the way the world works. These theories guide what is considered important and determine what criteria are used as a basis for classification. The attributes assigned to social categories are based on historical and social circumstance. They often allow for, and sometimes serve to bolster, the specific power structure of the community in which they exist. For instance, the positive characteristics associated with minority or underprivileged groups rarely challenge existing power relationships, and sometimes act as a means of maintaining them. When understandings of other groups change, even in an affectively positive direction, they are often bent around or fail to contradict existing negative characterizations.

Examples of positive perceptions of groups that allow for discriminatory practices include conceptions that African Americans are naturally good athletes or musicians. Although achievement in these areas is important, both these positive stereotypes are built around fields of individual endeavor in which success is seen largely as a matter of hereditary gifts. The acknowledgment of the achievements of African Americans in these contexts can leave largely unchanged the standing stereotypic attributes of laziness, untrustworthiness, and lack of ambition. Furthermore, individuals of color can succeed in these areas without changing the existing power structure and, in many cases, their success can serve to support the position of those who control it. The success of a Black baseball player or movie actor does not necessarily imply widened representation on the coaching and management staffs of the team or within the executive ranks and production crews of the movie studios.

Quantitative evidence of the limits of the pro-social effects of positive stereotypes is provided by Wilson's (1996) investigation of attitudes expressed by those who hold positively-valenced stereotypes of Jews. He found that those who held positively-valenced stereotypes were no less likely to hold negatively-valenced ones than were those who did not perceive Jews to be significantly different from White, non-Jews in terms of positive attributes. Furthermore, those who held positive stereotypes of people who are Jewish were more likely than those who did not stereotype to express negative generalizations of African Americans. Even the application of positive stereotypes may be indicative of a pattern of over-reliance on category information that could prevent the evaluation of individuals on their own merits.

Categorization and the use of category information are necessary and fundamental means of processing information. In many areas, of course, these processes are functional. Reliance on these cognitive processes is not something one could or would want to rid oneself of completely. Our lives would be unlivable if we had to meticulously examine each new chair-like thing we encountered to determine if it was something that we could sit on. However, when applied to broad social groups defining people, these patterns of processing can help us run very much astray. Even positive stereotypes need to be applied appropriateiy, or risk negative social effects. The more moderate or conscious application of category knowledge is often advisable.

Park, et al. (1992), Hilton and von Hippel (1996), and Langer (1989) have made similar points. Langer perhaps argues most forcefully for the importance of variability in the perception of social groups. She suggests that too great a reliance on broad category

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information can lead observers to make assumptions about group members that limit their opportunities to achieve. Langer goes on to suggest that making a greater number of distinctions within categories can help to moderate category information and make it less likely that the attributes of broad-based social categories will be prematurely applied to individual members of the category.

The two different effects that variability perceptions can have on observers' understandings of central tendencies, the protection of stereotypes from counterexamples and the moderation of the application of category understandings to individual members, make the calculation of the net social value of perceived variability complex. The power these understandings have to shape the lives of the members of the groups they describe will depend on the content of the stereotype, the identity of the observer, and the social context. No single model of representation is uniformly appropriate. However, it is important that variability perceptions are considered as a possible goal in the elimination of the misuse of category understandings. Encouraging the perception of homogeneity can have real benefits and can sometimes moderate the power of stereotypes in ways that moving the central tendency cannot.

Category Activation

The examination of the effect of the variability of social groups on the impact of individual exemplars on group perceptions is especially relevant when visual media texts are the source of the exemplars. One of the mass media's functions is to provide viewers with their sample of others. They provide the audience with exemplars of social groups with which the audience is relatively unlikely to have much informal, interpersonal

contact. However, perceptions of media characters can be structured by different forces than perceptions of real people met interpersonally. Fictional characters are, of course, expressions of their creators. The attributes the characters possess and the circumstances through which the audience discovers them are necessarily shaped by the text itself.

The texts' ability to shape these aspects of interpretation is the source of some of their power to create, reinforce or moderate audiences' perceptions of the groups they portray. An additional goal of this project is to explore some of the aspects of media texts and of the context in which they are consumed that may shape the media's impact on audiences' understandings of the real world. The second study of this project was designed to explore two additional aspects of the interaction between a text and its audience. It evaluates the impact of the activation of a particular category structure on the extent to which the audience applies the characteristics of a society shown in a film to their understandings of people of that society.

Implications of Category Activation

Work on category activation in interpersonal contexts suggest that priming or activating a specific category structure leads to the greater impact of the understandings of the category on individual members (Hilton & von Hipple, 1996). For example, Beckett and Park (1995) found that gender stereotypes had greater effects on evaluations of individual targets when observers were presented with photos that made the targets' genders more salient. Working more directly with the impact of category activation on media interpretation, Power, Murphy, and Coover (1996) carried out a study that dealt with stereotypes of both women and African Americans. They found that exposure to

stereotypical representations of African Americans made it more likely that viewers would make internal attributions of the responsibility of African Americans seen in negative situations in newscasts. They also found that exposure to female stereotypes was associated with decreased perceptions of the credibility of women featured in news stories. In contrast, exposure to counter-stereotypical portrayals of members of these groups was associated with greater perceptions of the credibility of women in the news and with more external attributions of responsibility among African American news figures. Activating a particular category structure seems to increase the power a single example has on observers' perceptions of the example's category as a whole.

The second study of this project was designed to explore whether category activation affects a media exemplar's power to shape audiences' perceptions in a similar way. The activation of a particular category is hypothesized to influence a text's impact on viewer perceptions of the real-world groups defined by that category structure. The likelihood that a particular category structure will be activated in reference to a film can be affected by a variety of factors, including the previous experience of the viewer, the content of the text, and the environment in which the text is presented.

The Text's Power to Activate Category Structures

The activation of the category structures that help shape audiences' interpretations is also shaped by the content of the text itself. The revelation of the category structures that define media characters can be extremely subtle. For instance, a filmmaker can imbed cues about the categories and contrasts that are structurally or thematically important to a story in the images through which it is told. An example of this is the

legendary opening shot of John Ford's <u>The Searchers</u>. In it, a door opens out of a black screen onto the elegiac splendor of Monument Valley. The camera then follows a pioneer housewife from what is now understood to be a dark house onto a porch as John Wayne rides out of the landscape. One of the primary category structures within the film, that of the domesticated, interior world of women as opposed to the unsettled, exterior world of men, is established in under two minutes without a single cut.

A media text's ability to guide audiences' attention and to establish the relevant category memberships of media characters allows them to affect audiences' understandings in both negative and positive ways. Texts establish the categories to which characters belong and the traits that they carry. If media characters lack diversity within categories or adhere to previously established, negative representations of members of specific social groups, as cultural stereotypes do, they can serve to reinforce faulty understandings of members of other groups. They can strengthen the power of group understandings by providing more examples that confirm them.

However, the media also have the potential to modify these structures. Media portrayals can expose viewers to counter-stereotypical group members. Furthermore, media portrayals can show audience members, and insist they pay attention to, details of the lives of people they are relatively unlikely interact with in substantive, interpersonal contexts. In doing so, the media may reveal cross-category similarities that are usually muted by other axes of division. Viewers' recognition of commonalties with people who would normally be considered outgroup members could help redraw category divisions or at least lessen the diagnosticy of categories defined by broad-based demographic

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attributes.

The context in which a film or television program is consumed is also important. The media materials that surround a specific film, for example, can also activate particular category structures. Films are rarely seen in isolation. Survey and interview research indicates that film audiences are heavily exposed to trailers, reviews, and advertising and that these messages influence their decisions to see particular movies (e.g., Custen, 1980; Austin, 1989). It is possible that these materials also shape the way films and the characters within them are conceptualized by the audience.

This project manipulates category activation through the use of priming materials designed to resemble promotional materials that a viewer would run across in the real world. I predict that if a film is shown in a context that activates the category structures of nationality or society membership, the film will have a stronger impact on the viewers' perceptions of groups defined in these terms than if it is shown in a context where this structure is not activated. This leads to the another set of hypotheses to be investigated in this project.

> *H8) Individuals for whom the category structure of nationality or society membership is primed will perceive less variability within the groups defined by these terms than will those for whom these structures are not primed.*

> *H9) Individuals for whom the category structure of nationality or society membership is primed before seeing a film will see the film's characters as more representative of their nation or society than will those for whom these structures are not primed.*

> *H10) Individuals for whom the category structure of nationality or society membership is primed before seeing a film are more likely to apply the attributes of the text's characters to their perception of people of the characters' society than are those for whom these structures are not primed.*

Attribution

Shaping the nature of the categories to which particular characters are seen to belong is not the only way a media text can affect viewers' evaluations of the representativeness of its characters. Other aspects of the text could shape the process of extrapolating from media examples to real-world groups. An aspect of interpretation that is strongly influenced by the text itself is viewers' attributions, that is, their evaluations of the causes of characters' behaviors.

Dimensions of Attribution

In interpersonal perception, attribution is felt to be fundamental to observers' understandings of others. Research in this area divides potential attribution judgments along a variety of continua. Two commonly cited dimensions are locus of control and stability. Locus of control is perhaps the most well studied means of classifying potential attribution judgements. Attributions are divided between those that are internal, where an act is thought to be caused by the characteristics of the agent who performs it, and those that are external, where an act is as determined by the environment that surrounds the agent. Attribution along this continuum is a complex process involving a large number of factors, including the distinctiveness and consistency of the agent's behavior and others' behavior in the same situation.

A second dimension along which attribution judgements are often divided is that of stability. Causal stability is most closely associated with the work of Weiner (1985), who argues that attributions vary in the perception of the causes' consistency over time. Some causes, such as effort or luck, will change across time and circumstance, whereas

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others, such as aptitude or task difficulty, are relatively constant.

Implications of Attribution

One of the factors that shapes attribution is the observers' expectations (Hamilton, 1979; Hewstone, 1989a; Jones, 1990; Jackson, Sullivan, and Hodge 1993; Trope, 1989). In the most general terms, observers are likely to see a behavior that comports with their expectations as a reflection of the true nature of the agent who performs it. They tend to see behavior that disconfirms their expectations as the result of situational constraints or temporary causes such as luck or unusual effort. One type of expectation is beliefs about the central tendencies of groups, or cultural stereotypes. Acts by group members that conform to the perceived central tendency of their group, and therefore confirm the observer's expectations, are seen as evidence of the agent's character. The behavior is attributed to a stable, internal cause. However, acts that suggest attributes different from perceived central tendencies tend to be chalked up to a special effort or to external constraints. They are not considered a reflection of the character of the agent. They are attributed to either unstable, internal causes or to external causes.

The influence of expectations on attribution can function to maintain group understandings. If an action is determined by a specific situation or is the result of an unusual application of effort, it is unlikely to be repeated by the agent. The agent's action will not contribute to the pool of examples from which an observer's perceptions of a group's central tendencies are drawn. Understandings of the characteristics of the group as a whole remain unmodified. These patterns of attributional evaluation help perpetuate group understandings by allowing observers to nullify examples that could disconfirm

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established beliefs while accepting examples that support their expectations.

Attribution is important, therefore, because it is a means through which an observer decides whether agents' behavior is informative about their nature and whether the behavior will predict the actions of people seen as similar to them. The ability of attributional evaluations to shape the effect of individual examples on group understandings is supported by Wilder, et al.'s (1996) work on stereotype change. They found that when observers were led to attribute a counterexample's behavior to stable, internal causes, the example affected understandings of the group as a whole. Actions attributed to external causes or to unstable internal causes had no effect.

It should be emphasized that the social value of different attributions of media characters depends on the nature of the character's behavior and the audience members' established beliefs about the character's group. The work on stereotype change, for example, seeks stable, internal attributions for counter-stereotypical actions. One of this tradition's goals is to understand the circumstances in which behavior that is inconsistent with group expectations is allowed to modify understandings of the groups' central tendencies. Since internal attributions often seem to make the behavior of individuals more informative of the group as a whole, they are seen as a means through which perceptions of central tendencies can be changed. It is hoped that a woman's counter-stereotypical behavior, for instance, will be attributed internally so that counter-stereotypical traits are linked to her when she is integrated into an observer's mental sample of women.

However, when behavior is seen to agree with group expectations, stable, internal

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attributions can become associated with the group, rather than the individual. When behavior matches the observer's expectations of the group, internal attributions can reinforce stereotypical understandings (Hamilton, 1979). If a woman's vehemence at a business meeting is attributed to feminine irrationality or emotionality rather than to her own character, the internally attributed action can contribute to an over-generalized understanding of women. It may help shape an observer's future evaluations of another woman's emotionality on the basis of group expectations.

In situations where a behavior can be read to confirm stereotype-based expectations, external attributions are likely to be more powerful in moderating established understandings of central tendencies than external ones. In Power, et al.'s (1996) work on media audiences' evaluations of Magic Johnson and Rodney King, previous exposure to stereotypical images of African Americans was associated with greater internal attributions of responsibility for these two individuals' negative situations. Exposure to counter-stereotypical images was associated with greater external attributions. In these contexts, external evaluations were sought after, pro-social responses because they undercut attribution biases that could have helped strengthen established, negative perceptions of the portrayed groups.

However, if the situational constraints that are seen to determine an individual's actions are also seen as stable, immutable, or applicable to all members of his or her group, the characteristics and behaviors exhibited by a specific target may be applied to the group as a whole. An observer may attribute the passivity of a female evaluation target to external factors such as learned patterns of socialization or cultural expectations.

If it is believed, however, that the expectations and experiences which led to her passivity are common to all women, other women are as likely to be judged passive as they would have been if passivity had been judged an internal, feminine trait. While the two explanations of the behavior may shape the observer's policy preferences in different ways, they may not differ in their effect on how specific individuals are treated.

Attribution of Media Characters

Attributions of an individual's behavior affect the extent to which the behavior impacts understandings of group members as a whole. These judgements have a gate-keeping role. They help to determine when an individual's behavior can be used to predict the behavior or nature of others in a group with which the individual is associated. I suggest that attribution judgements have parallel effects on the degree to which media characters affect audiences' perceptions of the groups to which they belong. If the viewer judges a character's behavior to result from internal or stable causes, the character is more likely to affect the viewer's beliefs about the character's group than if the viewer judges a character's behavior to result from external or unstable causes.

The final goal of this project is to determine whether viewer attributions of the media characters' behavior affect the character's power to shape perceptions of the group. It will explore whether the viewer's evaluations of the internality and stability of the causes of the characters' actions are associated with the power of the characters to shape beliefs about their group.

There is evidence that audiences routinely make attribution judgements of characters' behavior as they interpret media texts. The communication of the causes of a

character's behavior can be seen as intrinsically tied to the process of characterization. Stable, internal attributions are essentially judgements about an individual's dispositional traits. To decide that a man jumps a taxi queue because of stable, internal traits is to decide that he is inconsiderate and rude. To decide that he does so because he is in an unusual hurry is to exonerate him from these attributes. No matter how the judgement is framed, the observer is expected to work backward from characters' actions to their intrinsic attributes and subjective states of mind.

Audience reception research indicates that the determination of character motive and disposition is an important aspect of textual interpretation that is routinely engaged in by viewers of narrative visual media like film. In their investigation of cross-cultural interpretations of Dallas, Liebes and Katz (1990) identified discussions of character motivation as the most common topic within the referential frame. Livingstone (1990) used multi-dimensional scaling techniques to explore viewers' understandings of soap opera characters. She found that viewers had complex understandings of the dispositional traits of the characters and could consistently rate them on a variety of attributes such as morality, traditionalism, and warmth.

Also suggestive is an examination by Babrow, O'Keefe, Swanson, Meyers, and Murphy (1988) of children's perceptions of television characters and real-world peers. They found that perceptions of TV characters, like perceptions of people, were more complex among older children. The researchers' definition of complexity includes the criteria of integration. Integration is essentially the recognition and resolution of variability in the targets' behavior. It is a measure of observers' tendency to sort out

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what was caused by targets' dispositional traits and what was determined by the circumstances that surround them. This work also suggests that the deduction of characters' traits from their behavior is a routine aspect of interpretation.

Texts' power over attribution judgements. Viewers' interpretations of character behavior are guided or constrained by the text itself. Evidence of the media's power to convey causality is provided by Griffith and Sen's (1995) investigation of the relationship between exposure to Vietnam War films and viewers' attributions of the cause of the problems veterans faced after their return. The nine most commonly seen fictional films about the Vietnam War were divided into those that focused on situational causes and those that focused on agent causes. Exposure to situational films was associated with external attributions of the veterans' problems while exposure to agent films was associated with internal attributions of veterans' problems. Since this study is associational, it cannot clearly establish causal direction. However, it does suggest that viewers notice and respond to the casual implications of media content, even if only to choose films that comport with their beliefs.

Variation in audience interpretation of attribution. The ability of the creators of a media text to encode clues of the characters' nature and the causes of their behavior should not be taken, however, to suggest that audience understandings of causality in film and television are completely determined by the text. Several of the means through which media texts contribute to causal attributions are through mimetic devices, through the provision of evidence that audiences use to infer motivation. These inferences leave room for the viewer to exercise his or her own experience in the interpretation of the text.

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This allows for across-viewer variation. Furthermore, the cause of an individual's behavior can be overspecified even in media worlds. More than one interpretation of the relative impact of the characters' dispositional traits and the constraints of the situation are possible.

Work in audience reception provides evidence that character attributions vary across audience members. For example, Livingstone's (1990) investigation of viewers' interpretations of soap operas found that while audience members generally agreed on what happened within the story, there was considerable variation in inferential evaluations such as the characters' dispositional attributes and their motivations for behaving in a particular way. Liebes and Katz's (1990) Dallas study located differences in the kinds of attributions that tended to be made by viewers of different backgrounds. American and Israeli kibbutz members were more likely, for instance, to cite psychological explanations of characters' behavior, whereas Russian viewers were more likely to focus on how the characters' social roles determined their actions.

Radway's (1985) analysis of fans' readings of romance novels also suggests points of difference in judgements of characters' dispositions across different groups of readers. Feminist critics have repeatedly denounced this genre for portraying women as dependent and passive. In interviews, however, fans consistently described the novels' heroines as intelligent and independent. Radway argues that differences in the evaluations of the books' heroines reflect the use of different kinds of evidence to make dispositional attributions. Feminist critics focus on the characters' behavior as indications of their intrinsic traits. The heroines' lack of proactive behavior and repeated

need of rescue are seen as reliable evidence of their dispositions towards passivity and dependency. Fans of the novels, however, seemed to pay more attention to the diegetic aspects of characterization. They tended to accept the narrator's customary characterization of the heroine as independent and strong willed and attributed elements of her behavior that could suggest otherwise to the demands of the situation. "[They] believe," Radway writes, "that they are reading a story about an extraordinary woman who is overcome by unforeseen circumstances" (p. 347). The two groups of readers are using two different kinds of evidence to come to different attributions of the characters' behavior.

Attribution judgements, therefore, are based on both the evidence of the text and the position of the viewer. This suggests there will be enough variation in the participants' attributions of a single text to explore the following hypotheses:

> *H11) The impact of media characters on viewers' perceptions of the characters' groups will be moderated by the viewers' attributions of the characters' behavior. If their behavior is seen to result from stable causes, the characters' attributes are more likely to be applied to the group as a whole than if their behavior is seen to result from transient causes.*
>
> *H12) The impact of media characters on viewers' perceptions of the characters' groups will be moderated by the viewers' attributions of the characters' behavior. If their behavior is seen to result from internal causes, the characters' attributes are more likely to be applied to the group as a whole than if their behavior is seen to result from external causes.*

Variation in attribution is likely to be shaped by many factors of the text and of the audience. These factors include the content of the text, viewers' level of identification with the characters, the viewers' subjectivities, and the degree to which the behavior of the character meets the viewers' expectations. An in-depth investigation of

these aspects of interpretation is outside the scope of this study. However, locating an association between attribution and the effect of a particular representation would advance the field. Considering the abilities of media texts to influence attribution judgements, the identification of this relationship is an important first step in the investigation of aspects of a text's content that influence its power to shape viewers' understandings.

<div align="center">Relevance to Stereotype Accuracy</div>

A final point should be made about an additional consideration of the relationship between of media representations and audiences' perceptions of the real world. One means of separating functional group understandings from cognitive stereotypes is the criterion of accuracy. The analysis of this criterion allows for a discussion of some of the factors that may determine the social utility of group information in specific circumstances.

One of the driving hypotheses of Oakes, et al.'s (1994) application of social-categorization theory to stereotyping is that understandings of others in terms of the group to which they belong is not inevitably malicious or misleading. They offer the example of a police riot squad breaking up a demonstration. In this context, they suggest that it is more appropriate for the demonstrators to see the members of the riot squad in terms of their group memberships as police officers than to see them in terms of their individual identities. Horwitz and Rabbie (1989) make a similar point by insisting on the distinction between social groups, defined by linked fate, and social categories, defined by perceived similarity. They suggest that when the fates of groups members are seen as

interdependent, the behavior of individual members is likely to be influenced by the goals and needs of the group. In these contexts, considering group information when evaluating individuals can be appropriate and informative. The researchers feel that group understandings have consistently negative effects only when observers see group members as entirely controlled by the group and fail to recognize that they also act in response to individual desires and traits.

These perspectives reemphasize the notion that categorization processes are fundamental and normal aspects of individuals' interpretations of the world. In most cases, categorization is a functional way of processing information. Understandings of social groups only become problematic when they are inaccurate, overly generalized, or are applied in inappropriate contexts. A key aspect of stereotype research is locating the circumstances under which cognitive processes are likely to mislead.

Relevant to this end is a series of studies that have investigated the degree to which individuals' understandings of social groups match the groups' objective composition. Judd and Park (1993) analyzed Democrats and Republicans' evaluations of members of the other political party and found that both groups were seen as more extreme by members of the opposing group than they were seen by their own members. Democrats rated Republicans as more conservative than Republicans rated themselves, and Republicans rated Democrats as more liberal than Democrats rated themselves. The strength of the difference was moderated by the degree of party membership. A similar analysis of college students' evaluations of the characteristics of their own and other academic majors (Judd, et al., 1991) found that understandings of outgroups tended to be

less accurate than those of ingroups in terms of perceived stereotypicality and dispersion. Both of these findings suggest that people are more likely to overestimate the adherence of outgroups to central tendencies than that of ingroups.

Similarly, in the political party study (Judd & Park, 1993), the greater impact of group understandings among individuals for whom group membership was especially important is also suggestive of a situation in which observers' evaluations of social groups are likely to be inaccurate. Category information had more impact among those for whom political partisanship was especially salient. In many cases, an association between category salience and the use of category information to evaluate individuals is functional. Increased salience is often caused by situational factors that indicate that group identities will strongly shape members' behavior. To borrow Oakes, et al.'s (1994) example, the membership of an individual riot squad member in the category of police officers is likely to be highly salient while he or she is helping to break up a demonstration. This is also a situation in which this particular group membership is likely to strongly affect his or her behavior. When he or she is off duty, his or her occupation is likely to be less salient as well as less predictive of his or her actions. When salience and the effect of group memberships vary together, this cognitive process is likely to lead observers to useful evaluations of their social world.

There are, however, circumstances in which the salience of a particular category structure is increased without a corresponding increase in the likelihood that category membership will shape individuals' behavior. An African American politician's race, for instance, is likely to be more salient in a speech broadcast on TV than one aired on the

radio. However, the means though which the speech is transmitted are irrelevant to the degree to which the speech's content reflects this aspect the politician's identity. Situations that increase category salience without increasing the impact of the category membership on individuals' behavior may also be ones in which over-reliance on category understandings is a particular danger.

These two possible influences on the accuracy of perceptions of the portrayed society parallel two of the central foci of this dissertation. In- and outgroup distinctions are integral aspects of social distance, which is explored in the first part of the work. The salience of category structures is an independent variable of the second part of this project. These factors, in addition to shaping the degree to which an observer extrapolates from the example in a text to the real world, could also be seen as a reflection of the potential accuracy of the group understandings they affect. The willingness to generalize from media exemplars could be a cause and marker of inaccurate perceptions of social groups.

There is, however, an important issue that remains unresolved. The field has yet to determine an appropriate standard to which real-world group understandings should be held. A variety of measures of the real-world characteristics of social groups have been employed. Both Judd and Park's (1993) work on political parties and Judd, et al.'s (1991) work on academic majors use self-reports as an objective standard. The vulnerability of this kind of measure to social desirability concerns and self-presentation goals has led some researchers to consider other means of establishing objective markers. Allen (1995) used behavioral measures in addition to self-reports to investigate the

accuracy of gender stereotypes. The behavior measures did not provide any clear evidence of overgeneralization. Swim (1994) compared participants' evaluations of the differences and distributions of men and women to the observed differences between genders in previous studies. She found no evidence that this sample systematically over estimated observed differences. Each of these of measures has its strengths and weaknesses. The situations in which the use of a specific measure is appropriate remain undetermined.

A more fundamental issue is the potential of group understandings to be self-fulfilling. Although there are a variety of mechanisms through which this process may occur, the assumption that subjective perceptions of what groups are like can shape objective experience permeates all aspects of research into intergroup perception and underlies much of the concern about media stereotypes. Group understandings are powerful because they help create the reality against which they are measured. Perceptions of central tendencies may match objective standards because they themselves prevent the standard from changing. Situations in which perceptions of central tendencies serve to artificially reinforce the position of the groups they describe need to be added to the circumstances in which group understandings may function problematically.

Limitations of the Study of Interpretive Mechanisms

There are some limitations to the potential of the study of the interpretive mechanisms of media texts that I should address before I conclude. Understandings of the cognitive processes of categorization cannot address the issue of how categories

become socially significant without reference to specific social, economic, and historical factors. In the same way, understandings of textual interpretive processes cannot explain the effect of the media content without reference to the social, economic, and historical circumstances of the groups the texts portray.

The situations in which the reinforcing power of central tendency perceptions is strongest are unlikely to be exclusively defined by quirks of cognitive processing or the content of perceived central tendencies. Rather, they are likely to be influenced by unique social and cultural aspects of the environment and history of the groups involved. For instance, the degree to which perceived central tendencies determine group members' experience is likely to be shaped by the group's access to power. Groups that are dependent upon outgroup gatekeepers for access to social institutions, for example, are especially affected by what others think of them. Since normal mechanisms of outgroup perception will move others' perceptions towards the negative and the homogenous, individuals of these groups are likely to be especially vulnerable to negative stereotyping. Although this dissertation focuses on some of cognitive factors of interpretation that are likely to make stereotyping a particular threat, it does not fully account for the social factors that determine the difference between relatively benign categorization and limiting stereotyping.

The importance of leaving room for the effect of social factors in the consideration of processes of interpreting media texts implies an additional caveat that needs to be applied to the assumptions of this study. Much of this work is focused on perceptions of variability and its potential to moderate the application of central tendency

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information to individual group members. It should be remembered, however, that the value of variability is not absolute.

There are situations in which the acknowledgment of within-group similarity is socially productive. It can facilitate the movement of perceived central tendencies in a more positive direction. The subjectivity of some socially significant groups has not prevented individuals who are seen as members of these groups from being penalized by other individuals and by social institutions. Many social and civil rights movements have been premised on the creation or establishment of group identities on the basis of common histories and interests. The acknowledgment of the shared experiences of these groups by outgroup members can be an important step in the advancement of the groups' political goals and in the establishment of individual members' senses of self. Alternatively, the denial that members of a social group share cultural and historical experiences can serve to elide current injustices and deny the need for social change. In this dissertation, I hope to trace some of the processes of cognition and textual interpretation that shape perceptions of other groups. However, the social value of those processes depends upon the specific social contexts in which they operate.

Summary

In summary, the first part of this work attempts to determine whether viewers' understandings of the relationship between a specific media text and the society in which it is set varies as a result of the viewers' social distances from the society portrayed. I theorize that viewers' relationships to the group portrayed in a media text shape their perception of the portrayed group's variability. Variability is seen as important because it

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is felt to be an integral component of the application of category understandings to individual members. It is predicted to affect the extent to which a single member of the group is considered representative. Evaluations of representativeness, in turn, are predicted to influence the impact a single portrayal will have on understandings of the group as a whole.

The second part of this work is an exploration of whether, given the relationship of the audience member to the society in which a text is set, the context or content of a media portrayal can shape the application of the attributes of media characters to their real-world counterparts. A factor that may affect this process is the activation of a particular category structure as the viewer interprets a text. Activation is predicted to affect perceived variation by shaping the extent to which within-group similarities are maximized. When national categories are activated, specific portrayals should be seen as more representative of people of the countries in which they are set. Furthermore, in these circumstances, the attributes the portrayals carry should have a greater effect on viewer understandings of the people of the group as a whole. This study will also investigate the effect of viewer attribution on the impact of a specific media portrayal on viewers' beliefs. I suggest that the perceived internality and stability of the cause of the characters' actions will be associated with the degree to which the characters' attributes are applied to viewers' beliefs about the characters' social groups.

CHAPTER 2

Method

The central design of Study 1 is a 2 X 2 manipulation examining the effect of a viewer's social distance from a film's society on the viewer's evaluation of the representativeness of the film's characters. The study recruited participants from two different societies, the US and the Greater China (The People's Republic (PRC), Hong Kong, and Taiwan (ROC)). Within each sample, the participants were randomly divided into three experimental groups and a control group. Participants in the experimental groups saw two film segments. They saw a segment from a film that was produced in a society socially close to their own, the United States for the US participants, and Taiwan for the Greater China participants. They also saw a segment from a film produced in a society with which they are less familiar and with which they are less likely to feel a sense of membership. Films from Mexico and Australia were used in the study in addition to films from the US and Taiwan. Therefore, within the US sample, members of the three experimental groups saw a segment of a film from the US and a segment of a film from either Australia, Mexico, or Taiwan. The experimental-group participants from Greater China saw a segment of a film from Taiwan and a segment of a film from either the Australia, Mexico, or the US.

Members of the control groups completed the measures about the film societies without having seen any of the stimuli films. By comparing the control groups' evaluations of the film societies with those of the experimental groups, I can determine if any differences in the perceived homogeneity of the groups are artifacts of the

measurement processes and ascertain whether exposure to the films themselves affected homogeneity perceptions. After evaluating the film societies, the control group participants saw one of two films to be used in Study 2. One of the films was from the US and the other was from Taiwan. The films were randomly assigned to film sessions. They completed the same film-specific measures as the experimental group as well as a set of attribution measures as pre-testers for Study 2. A chart outlining this design is presented in Table 2-1.

Since the participants from Greater China were in the US at the time of the study, the relationships between the two samples and the film societies are asymmetrical. The participants from Greater China are more familiar with the US than US participants are with Taiwan. If there is little difference between the way the Greater China participants' rate US film characters and the way they rate Taiwanese film characters, it may be because there is relatively little difference in their familiarity with the two societies. This means that it is the participants' evaluations of the films from Australia, Mexico, and Taiwan that are the most critical in testing the project's hypotheses.

There is likely to be a great deal of variation within the two samples in terms of their familiarity with and sense of membership in the film societies. This is especially likely in terms of the Chinese and Hong Kong participants' familiarity with the setting of the Taiwanese films. The diversity within this sample has the benefit of containing enough variation in knowledge, similarity, and direct experience to allow me to investigate the factors that may contribute to the audiences' sense of membership and familiarity with the film society, as will be discussed below. However, this aspect of the

design also complicates the basic manipulation of the study.

In addition to the basic manipulation of social distance through the combinations of films and participant samples, the study also measures within-sample variation in social distance. It measures the participants' direct experience with the societies from which the films come, their sense of similarity to people of the society, and their previous exposure to media from the society. Therefore, in addition to the basic comparison of evaluations of films from socially distant and socially close societies, I am also able to test whether across-participant variation in social distance is associated with perceived representativeness of film characters or with perceived variation of the film societies.

Participants

One hundred and sixty-five volunteers participated in this part of the study. Eighty-five participants were from the US and 80 were from Greater China. The data from the US participants was collected first. These participants were solicited via classrooms, posters, and Internet news-group postings. Volunteers received either class credit or $5 for their participation. All of these participants were born in the US, are citizens of the US, and cited English as a first language. Eligibility was defined in these terms, not because these individuals meeting these criteria are considered more "American" than others, but rather because it was felt that the sense of membership and familiarity with other societies that is likely to be associated with having international familial or cultural ties could serve as a form of cross-categorization that would complicate the study. The data from four people were excluded because they completed

portions of the questionnaire incorrectly.[1]

Fifty-eight percent of the US participants were female. Seventy-five percent were White. Nine percent identified themselves as Black or African American and 11% were Asian American. Five participants (6%) identified themselves as Hispanic. The average age was 20($\underline{SD}$=2.39). Ninety-nine percent of the sample was made up of students. At the time of the study, 65% reported speaking two languages "well enough to carry out a routine conversation." Ninety-two percent reported seeing a movie, either in the theater, on TV, or on video, at least once a month. Fourteen percent reported seeing a non-US movie at least once a month.

Eighty volunteers from the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan (ROC), and Hong Kong were recruited through student organizations and newsgroup postings. Individuals were considered eligible to participate if they had been born in the PRC, Taiwan, or Hong Kong, had been citizens of the PRC, Taiwan or Hong Kong within the last six years, and had come to the US within the last six years. Participants were paid $8 for their participation. The Greater China participants were paid slightly more than their US counterparts because of the relative difficulty of recruiting this sample and because of

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[1] The range measure of perceived society variability was used to determine whether the participants' responses were excluded. The measure is described in more detail below. If part of the data was missing, but all the completed measures were done correctly, the participants' responses on the range measure were deleted listwise from analyses using this measure. The rest of their data remained in the analysis. However, if the range measure was completed in a way that indicated that the participant did not understand the scales--such as by putting the mean of a society outside its range--it was seen as an indication that the participant lacked the attention or the language skills to use the measure appropriately. The entire case was excluded from the analysis. The inclusion of the participants who did not correctly complete these scales was found to reduce the reliability of the character realism and society variability measures.

the longer distances that many of these participants had to travel. The data of ten participants in this sample were excluded from the analysis because the range measures were completed incorrectly.

Fifty-three of the participants, or 76% of the sample, were from the PRC, 13 (19%) were from Taiwan, and four (6%) were from Hong Kong. All of the participants identified themselves as Asian or Asian American except one, who identified herself as "other" and wrote in "Chinese". Of the non-Taiwanese participants, two reported having visited Taiwan and one reported having lived there.

Thirty-nine percent of the participants had come to the US within the year, and 90% had arrived within four years. The remainder of the sample, as established by the recruiting guidelines, had come to the US within six years. Sixty-nine percent of the sample claimed to speak two languages "well enough to carry out a routine conversation", whereas 23% described themselves as speaking three or more languages at this level of proficiency. Sixty percent of the sample had been studying English for at least ten years at the time of the study and 89% had been studying English for at least five years. Fifty percent evaluated their English skills to be at least "good" in comparison to a "native speaker". Another 34% evaluated their skills as "fair" and 14% described them as "poor".

Seventy-three percent were students. Fifty-four percent of the participants were female. The average age was 28($\underline{SD}$=5.71). This is considerably older than the average age of the US sample. Unlike the US sample, this group included a high percentage of graduate students. Seventy-two percent of the students within the Greater China sample

were doing graduate work. Although age has no direct effect on any of the outcome measures within either sample, these across-group differences need to be considered when interpreting the results.

Eighty percent of the Greater China sample reported seeing a movie, either in the theater, on TV, or on video, at least once a month. Thirty-nine percent reported seeing a non-US movie at least once a month. As one would expect, this is higher than the exposure to non-US films reported by the US participants.

<div align="center">Stimuli</div>

Eight film segments were used in this study. The movies from which the clips were taken were from four different societies, the United States, Taiwan, Australia, and Mexico. The segments were excerpted from the opening scenes of the films in order to control for the filmmakers' assumptions about the viewers' previous knowledge. No matter what the plot, the beginning of a film is a point in a narrative where the filmmaker assumes the audience knows nothing about the specific characters or situation.

Each film introduces a cast of at least three people in the opening ten minutes of the film. None are sequels or parts of series. None make use of characters, situations, or worlds developed in comic books, television shows, or other media with which the participants would be expected to be familiar. Pretests of primarily US students indicated that segments selected for the study were generally understandable and were evaluated as having been taken from a drama or comedy. Details about the films from which the stimuli materials were taken are presented in Table 2-2.

Participants in the experimental groups (US sample, n=55; Greater China sample,

$\underline{n}$=45) saw a segment from a film from their own society and a segment of a film from one of the other societies. Within these constraints, the titles of the films were randomly assigned. The order of the films and the societies of the films were counterbalanced across participants. Approximately one third of the US participants who were assigned to an experimental group saw a US and an Australian film segment ($\underline{n}$=20). A third saw a US and a Mexican film segment ($\underline{n}$=17), and a third saw a US and a Taiwanese film segment ($\underline{n}$=18). Similarly, approximately one third of the Greater China experimental-group participants saw a Taiwanese and a US film segment ($\underline{n}$=16), a third saw a Taiwanese and a Mexican film segment ($\underline{n}$=15), and a third saw a Taiwanese and an Australian film segment ($\underline{n}$=14).

Participants assigned to the control groups (US sample, $\underline{n}$=30; Greater China sample, $\underline{n}$ =25) were asked to evaluate two of the four societies in the study. The societies were assigned randomly and the order in which they were evaluated was varied randomly. Within the US sample, 14 members of the control group evaluated Australia, 15 Mexico, 16 Taiwan, and 15 the United States. Within the Greater China control group, 12 evaluated Australia, 14 evaluated Mexico, 12 evaluated Taiwan, and 12 evaluated the US.

Procedure

Volunteers participated in the study in groups of one to four. The same female US experimenter administered all sessions of the study. All the participants were asked to read and sign a consent form. Those that had been assigned to an experimental group were told they would be watching a film clip and then would be asked to complete a

questionnaire. They were informed of where the film was from, when it was released and were warned if it had subtitles. After viewing the first film segment, participants were given a questionnaire and asked to complete it until they came to a page that told them to stop. In both the questionnaire directions and the verbal instructions, they were asked to fill out the questions in order. It was explained that the questionnaire was designed to get their initial impressions, so they were asked not to go back and change their answers after they had completed them. They were instructed that if they hit a question whose answer they were not sure about, they were to make their best guess and go on.

The film-specific part of the questionnaire began with questions about the two characters with the most screen time in each film segment. The order in which the characters were evaluated was randomized across participants. Participants were told in the instructions that the "first questions are about specific characters within the film segment" and warned that "the order of the questions about the characters may not be the order in which the characters appeared in the film clip". After evaluating two characters, participants were asked about the interestingness, genre, and comprehensibility of the film segment as a whole. Their previous exposure to the film and their familiarity with its cast was also assessed. When all of the participants in a session had completed this section of the questionnaire, the second film segment was shown. Participants then completed duplicate measures for this film segment.

The next questions dealt with their perceptions of the homogeneity of the societies in which the films were set. The participants were asked to evaluate the societies in the same order as the films to which they corresponded. These questions were followed by a

manipulation check, measures of their frequency of movie viewing, and a series of items measuring basic demographic information.

Members of the control groups completed the same measures of society variability as the experimental groups. They were asked to simply think about individuals from two randomly assigned societies. This was followed by a screening of either an American film or a Taiwanese film and by questions about the film's characters and society. This portion of the questionnaire served as a pre-test for the following study. The questionnaire concluded with the same measures of movie viewing and demographic information that were used in the experimental groups.

Pre-testing

Two rounds of pre-testing were carried out in order to refine the questionnaire and the study methodology. The results of the analysis contributed greatly to the final form of the project. One of the initial findings was that the impact of society variability on perceived character typicality seemed to vary according to the prototypicality of the characters. For example, although the differences are not significant, the direction of the means indicate that among those who saw some of the Taiwanese films, society variability was positively associated with typicality. Among those who saw the US films, the means indicate a positive association.

Another initial finding was that evaluations of character typicality within subgroups defined by age and gender were less frustrating to the participants and more reliable than items that asked the participants to evaluate characters in terms of societies in general. Furthermore, the preliminary research and pretests emphasized the

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multidimensionality of the characters. Many had some attributes that were prototypical and other attributes that were not. For example, one of the Taiwanese films featured a female character who was seen as quiet and demure, which conforms to stereotype, but who was also bad at math, which does not conform to the stereotype. In order to accommodate these findings, measures of subgrouping were incorporated into the study. The counter-prototypicality measures and the measures of the characters' impact on the source society were redrafted so that they could take into account effects on specific attributes of subgroups.

The pretests also had several specific functions. One function was to select film characters that were mid-range in terms of prototypicality. If the characters are seen to either comport with or to contradict established perceptions of the society to an extreme degree, there would have been no room for evaluations to vary in response to social distance or the other investigated factors. Second, several of the measures required participants to evaluate the societies on a series of attribute scales. One of the functions of the pretests was to help select the attributes that are meaningful in the evaluation of a society's attributes. A third goal was to establish the reliability and comprehensibility of the measures of character typicality, believability, prototypicality, and attribution, and of society variability and subgrouping. The final function was to choose the characters' actions that the participants would be asked to consider when they made character attributions in Study 2.

Pretest 1

The first pretest included 63 people recruited from classrooms and the campus

newspaper. The volunteers participated in groups of one to ten. They watched one of the films that were being considered for use in the study. The films were randomly assigned to viewing sessions. The participants evaluated the two film characters with the most screen time, the film itself, and then variability of the society from which the film came. For two-thirds of the participants, the initial versions of the measures were followed by a series of open-ended questions, asking the participants to list positive and negative attributes of the societies that were being used in the study. Their responses contributed to the selection of the attributes through which the participants were asked to evaluate the different societies in the final questionnaire. The other third of the volunteers were participating as part of an in-class project and did not complete the open-ended questions due to time constraints. All participants were given the opportunity to respond to the questionnaire through an open-ended question at the end.

In response to the results of these initial pretests and the participants' responses to the open-ended questions, the character typicality items and the instructions to some of the society variability measures were redrafted.

Pretest 2

Forty volunteers, recruited from classrooms, newsgroup postings and advertisements in the campus paper, participated in the second round of pretests. They took part in groups of one to nine. They each saw one of the films being considered for the study. They completed close-ended measures about the films, the film characters, and the film societies. These pretests confirmed the reliability of the character typicality and the society variability measures.

They also completed open-ended measures describing "the personality [of the characters] as they would to a friend who hasn't seen the movie yet" and "the most meaningful thing [the character did in the film clip]". The descriptions of the characters contributed to the attributes used in the subgrouping measures, whereas the descriptions of the characters' actions contributed to the attribution measures in Study 2.

Measures

A copy of the questionnaire used in this study is included in Appendix A. A chart of the measures used in the study is presented in Table 2-3.

Social Distance

Social distance is the primary independent variable in Study 1. It is manipulated by the selection of the films and by the recruiting of the participants. However, the participants completed a brief manipulation check to insure the success of the manipulation of the viewers' familiarity with the cultures of the film. They were asked to indicate, on a seven-point scale, whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements that "[they] are familiar with the culture in which the film was set", and that "film was made with people like [them] in mind as an audience". Viewers are expected to be more likely to disagree with these statements in reference to films from societies of which they are not citizens.

Measures of Social Distance for the US Participants

At the end of the survey, a direct measure of the participants' familiarity with the societies used in the study was administered. Within the US sample, volunteers were asked three questions about the non-US societies they evaluated. The instructions

explained that "there are some places with which you are likely to have a lot of personal experience. You may be from the place. You may have lived in or visited the place. There are other places with which you are likely to have little or no personal experience." They were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale "how much personal experience [they] had with" each society. One end of the scale was marked "no personal experience", whereas the other end of the scale was marked "a lot of personal experience". In the next question, it was explained that "there are some places that you are likely to know a lot about. You may have studied them in classes or learned about them from news reports. There are other places you are likely to know only a little about." Participants were asked to indicate "how much [they] felt they know about [the society]" on a seven-point scale marked with "know very little" on one end and "know quite a lot" on the other. The final question asked participants if they "had any close friends or family members that were from the society". The questions were recoded so that they had a consistent direction and the z-scores were averaged into a single society familiarity index. The reliability of the three items, as established by Cronbach's alpha, is .857.[2]

Measures of Social Distance for the Greater China Participants

The data from the US sample was gathered first. Preliminary analysis of the US sample suggested that operationalizing social distance in terms of society membership may have failed to capture some of the major components of the ways audiences' approach texts. The results were not particularly promising. Given that the Greater

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[2] All of the reliabilities for the measures used in this project were assessed using

China sample was expected show more variation in relation to their familiarity with the socially near society than the US sample, the results suggested the wisdom of supplementing these measures for this sample of participants. The measures of familiarity with the source society used with this sample differed from those used for the US sample in two ways. Greater China participants completed measures of their familiarity with each society they evaluated, regardless of whether they were from that society or not. All the participants in this sample, therefore, evaluated their experience with Taiwan. Second, these participants completed an additional series of items after they completed those listed above. The supplementary questions were asked at the end of the questionnaire, and so the modifications do not threaten the comparability between the two samples in relation to the original measures.

The inclusion of the original measures allows for the construction of a parallel index of society familiarity within each group. Among the Greater China participants, the reliability of the z-scores of the three original items in relation to the socially distant societies is .873. The reliability of these three items in reference to Taiwan is less robust, .631. The reliability is suppressed by the inclusion of the item about the participant having family and friends from Taiwan. After deleting this item, the reliability of the other two items climbs to .713. The lack of covariance may be due to the political tensions between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, which is likely to have resulted in a great deal of awareness and media coverage on both sides of the Straight while limiting interpersonal contact between individuals from Taiwan and the mainland.

Cronbach's alpha.

Analysis were carried out on two different indices, one with and one without this item.

Additional measures were constructed in order to gather more detailed information about the Greater China participants' relationships to the societies portrayed in the films. These items were drafted, reviewed by a small number of participants from Greater China who had taken part in the initial data gathering, and then revised based on their feedback.

Social distance is defined as being composed of two factors, 1) the viewer's familiarity with the society and 2) the viewer's sense of membership in the society. The revised measures were designed to evaluate these components. I sought to determine if and how either of them contributed to perceptions of social distance and to textual interpretation. A sense of familiarity could come through real-world experience with the source societies. Therefore, participants were asked if they had "ever lived in [the society]" and if they had "ever visited [the society]". A skip pattern was created so that these items were only administered to participants who were not from the society in question.[3]

In addition to real-world experience, previous exposure to other media from the other societies may shape viewers' sense of familiarity with the societies. Previous media experience may have increased the participant's knowledge of the society, and thus affected their evaluations of the characters. Furthermore, familiarity with the styles, genres and conventions of a particular society's media may have made the representations seem more familiar or typical than they would to someone who lacked

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[3] The amount of time that had passed since the Taiwanese participants had come

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this experience. Therefore, these participants were asked about their media experience with the societies they evaluated.

Three seven-point scales were used to assess the participants' exposure to media concerning the film societies. The participants completed these measures whether they were from the society or not. It was explained that "there are some places where you are likely to have learned many things about through the media...There are other places you are likely to have learned very few things about through the media." Participants were asked to indicate, on seven-point scales, if they had "read many books about [the society] or [had they] read very few books about [the society]." The endpoints of the scale were marked "read very few" (1) and "read a lot" (7). Then they were asked if they had "seen many movies or TV shows about [the society] or [had they] seen very few movies and TV shows about [the society]. The endpoints of the scale were "seen very few" (1) and "seen a lot" (7). The last question was: "In the last six months, have you read or seen a lot about [the society] in the news or have you read or seen only a little about [the society] in the news?" The endpoints of the scale were "read/seen a little" or "read/seen a lot".

The reliabilities of these items of mediated exposure are acceptable for the questions relating to Australia (α= .764), Mexico (α= .859), and Taiwan (α= .756). However, the reliability of the items dealing with the US are less robust, .493. The mean of an additive scale for the US was higher than for the other societies, including that of Taiwan. The unreliability of these items may arise from the participants' status as

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to the US was assessed in the demographics section at the end of the questionnaire.

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immigrants or sojourners in the US. They may be using US media differently than the media of other societies. Alternatively, it may be that the prevalence of US media in global media markets or the status of the US as the last superpower contributed to material about the US being consumed in a different way than media from other societies. Rather than reflecting an interest in or an affinity with a particular society, consumption of materials dealing with the US may reflect consumption of different types of media in general. Two different analyses of the impact of this concept were carried out. One included those who saw the US films. The other included only those participants who saw film segments from Australia or Mexico, whose media exposure data is reliable.

The second component of social distance, the viewers' sense of membership or affiliation with the people of the film society, was measured through three seven-point scales. The items were designed to assess the participants' sense of similarity with the people in the film source society. These questions were only administered to those who were not from the society in question. Participants from Taiwan did not complete them in regards to Taiwan. It was explained that there "are some places where many of the people are likely to be very similar to you and other places where the people are likely to be very different". Then, for each society they had previously evaluated, they were asked to indicate whether they felt that "you have a lot in common with people of [the society] or do you feel you have very little in common with the people of [the society]". The end points of the scale were "have a lot in common" and "have very little in common". The next question was "do you feel that your background is like those of people of [the society] or do you feel your background is very different from people of [the society]?"

The final question was "do you feel that your values and beliefs are very much like those of the people of [the society] or do you feel your values and beliefs are very different from those of the people of [the society]. The scales for each of these final items were anchored with "very like" and "very different". The reliability of these items of perceived similarity ranged from alphas of .656 to .808 across the four societies.

<center>Character Interpretation Measures</center>

Character Representativeness

Perceived representativeness is the primary dependent variable in Study 1 and one of the dependent variables in Study 2. It is defined as the degree to which the attributes of a character are felt to be shared by others within the social group with which the character is identified. Participants were asked to evaluate two characters from each film segment. The concept was measured in two ways. The two measures are self-assessed character typicality and researcher-assessed character unrepresentativeness.

Self-assessed typicality. Participants were asked to evaluate this concept directly through six questions. They were asked to think of men or women, as appropriate, of a particular character's "age and culture". Participants then asked to indicate on a seven-point scale "how typical or atypical [the character] is of this group". There was a marked neutral point at four. The participants were also asked to indicate, on a seven -point scale, their agreement or disagreement with the statement that the character was "very different from other men/women of his/her age and culture" and that "Many men/women of [the character's] age and culture would behave like he/she did if they were in his/her situation". In the questionnaire, these items were placed among measures of the

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believability of the characters, the participants' liking of the characters, and other factors in order to disguise the intent of the study. Among the US participants in the experimental groups, the reliability of this measure, including measures of both characters for each film, was .699 for the US films and .715 for the non-US films. These measures were less reliable within the Greater China sample. The reliability was .665 for the Taiwanese films and .528 for the non-Taiwanese films.

Character unrepresentativeness. The concept of representativeness was also evaluated through a measure that was designed to directly operationalize the concept of representativeness judgements. The measure was constructed so that smaller numbers indicate the character is seen as representative, whereas larger numbers indicate that character is seen as unrepresentative. It is reported as "unrepresentativeness". To calculate this measure, the participants' evaluations of the characters and the characters' subgroups within their society were assessed independently. The degree of concordance between them was calculated by the researcher.

Participants in the experimental groups completed a series of seven-point scales rating the character on a series of eight attribute pairs. The scales were marked with an attribute at one end and the opposite of the attribute at the other. There was a labeled, neutral mid-point. The attributes were polite/impolite, traditional/modern, unambitious/ambitious, impulsive/self-controlled, practical/idealistic, talkative/quiet, group-oriented/individualistic, happy-go-lucky/serious. The attributes were chosen so that they encompassed traits that were established by previous work (e.g., Bartsch, Judd, Louw, Park, & Ryan, 1997; Haslam, et al., 1995; Kippax & Brigden, 1977; Kruger, 1996;

Lalonde & Gardner, 1989; McAndrew, 1990; Peabody, 1985; Pittam, Kashima, Iwawaki, 1990; Stephan, Ageyev, Coates-Shrider, Stephan, & Abalakina, 1994; Triandis, Lisansky, Setiadi, Chang, Marín, & Bettencourt, 1982) and pretests to characterize people of the four societies used in the study.

When evaluating the film societies, both the experimental and control group participants completed the same series of eight scales in reference to the "average person" in the society in which the films were set. Then, participants were asked to evaluate the average person within four subgroups for each society. The subgroups were young (17-34) men, young women, mature (35-68) men, and mature women. In order to calculate the indirect measure of representativeness, I took the average absolute difference between the participants' ratings of the character and their ratings of the characters' subgroup. The larger the absolute difference, the more unrepresentative the character was of the average person within the character's subgroup. The differences were averaged across attributes to create a single measure for each subset of characters in each type of film.

The measures of typicality and unrepresentativeness are not consistently correlated with each other. There are no significant correlations among the four character sets evaluated by the US sample. There is only one significant correlation among the character sets evaluated by the Greater China sample. The measures of typicality and unrepresentativeness are correlated in relation to one of the subsets of non-Taiwanese characters (-.35, p=.02). This difference is in the predicted direction.

There are several potential explanations for the lack of correlation between the

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two measures. It could be that self-presentational concerns or a desire to please the experimenter drove the direct measures of typicality. Another possibility is that in completing the typicality items, the participants evaluated a different set of attributes than those used in the unrepresentativeness measures. It could also be, of course, that the two sets of items are measuring different judgements or that one measure is not reliably capturing anything at all. The basic analyses of the study were carried out on each of these measures.

Character Believability

Perceived believability is the degree to which the behavior or personality of the character is seen as comprehensible and consistent given the characters' situation in the world of the film. Believability is hypothesized to be conceptually distinct from character typicality. It is hypothesized that it will be unaffected by the audiences' familiarity with the characters' society. It is also predicted to be more directly related to the audiences' identification with the characters than typicality. Participants were asked whether they thought characters in the film clips "were realistic" and whether the characters' "behavior was believable". Their responses to these items were averaged. Among the US participants, the reliabilities of the items, including the questions referring to both characters, were .763 for the US films and .787 for the non-US films.

It is interesting that the reliabilities of both the typicality and believability measures are lower among the Greater China sample than among the US sample. It may be that this reflects the greater variability in English fluency among the Greater China sample.

Character Counter-prototypicality

Rosch (1978) has argued that categories have structure, in that a cluster of traits can characterize a central model or prototype of a category. The membership of a specific example in the category is determined by a calculation similar to a probability judgement. The greater the number of central traits an example exhibits and the more strongly the example exhibits them, the more likely it is to be judged a member of the category. Furthermore, the closer the example is to the prototype, the more likely it is that the attributes of the example will be applied to newly encountered members of the group. Like representativeness, this factor is also likely to shape the degree to which an exemplar's attributes are applied to understandings of the real world. However, unlike representativeness, this factor is thought to be relatively unaffected by perceptions of variability within the group.

This study attempts to capture elements of this concept with the measure of counter-prototypicality. It is the extent to which a media character is seen to embody the traits that define its particular subgroup. The study sought to account for character counter-prototypicality in order to gauge the impact of this factor on typicality and variability judgments.

As noted above, participants in the experimental groups completed a series of 10 seven-point scales rating the character on a series of eight attribute pairs. Both the experimental and the control participants completed a similar set of scales evaluating four subgroups within each of the societies they evaluated.

The calculation of counter-prototypicality from these measures took several steps.

I first analyzed the control groups' evaluations of each society's subgroups in order to determine which attributes were significantly different from the neutral point descriptors of the different subgroups. Since this is a measure of how much the characters are seen to embody the traits that define the subgroup, only the attributes that were significant descriptors of the subgroup were used to calculate the measures. An attribute was seen to be significantly associated with a subgroup if single-value t-tests established that the mean of the subgroup on that attribute was significantly different from the mid-point with a p-value of less than .01. For example, among the US sample, young US men were seen as modern, ambitious, and talkative, whereas young US women were seen as modern, ambitious, impulsive, and idealistic. A relatively stringent standard was used for these evaluations to compensate for the large number of tests this analysis represents. This analysis also allowed me to establish the mean of the different attributes in relation to each subgroup. The means of these evaluations within the US and the Greater China sample are listed in Tables 2-4 and 2-5 respectively. These tables also indicate which attributes were used to construct the measures for each type of character.

Both relative and absolute measures of counter-prototypicality were calculated for each character. In order to calculate the relative measure, I took the average absolute difference between the evaluations of the character and the control-group means, using only those attributes that were relevant to the evaluation of the subgroup. Subgroups, as indicated above, are defined by age and gender. Participants in the experimental groups were asked to estimate the age of each character they evaluated. These estimates were used to sort the characters into subgroups by age.

The measure of counter-prototypicality differs from measures of unrepresentativeness in two ways. First, rather than using the average of all the evaluated attributes, it is calculated only on the attributes that are seen as meaningful in regards to the subgroup. Second, whereas the unrepresentativeness measure is a comparison between each individual's ratings of the character and their own ratings of the character's subgroup, the counter-prototypicality measure is an evaluation of the character in relation to a group standard, to the means and attributes established by the control group. This acknowledges the premise that although there are across-group variations in the application of category structures, the structures themselves are partially social constructions and are shared throughout a society.

Within the US sample, the counter-prototypicality means of the US characters ranged from 2.14($\underline{SD}$=.67) to 1.18($\underline{SD}$=.57). Among the non-US characters, the means ranged from .91($\underline{SD}$=.22) to 1.86($\underline{SD}$=.72). Within the Greater China sample, the counter-prototypicality means of the Taiwanese characters varied from 2.21($\underline{SD}$=.91) to 1.85($\underline{SD}$=.76). Among the non-Taiwanese characters, the means varied from 2.70($\underline{SD}$=.90) to 1.36($\underline{SD}$=.83). The smaller the mean, the closer the character's ratings are to those of the character's subgroup, and the greater the character's prototypicality.

In order to calculate the absolute scores, I ranked the non-US characters on the basis of their counter-prototypicality scores within each sample. The ranked characters were divided into thirds. I labeled the third with the scores indicating they were seen as the most prototypical as "prototypical" and the third with the scores indicating they were seen as the least prototypical as "non-prototypical". The middle third was coded as

missing. This served as the absolute measure of counter-prototypicality.

Identification

Participants were asked to indicate, on a seven-point scale, the extent to which they "identified with [the character]".

Society Variability Measures

Variability is investigated as a potential intervening variable in the effect of social distance on the perceived representativeness of the characters. Observers' understandings of group variability have been defined and measured in different ways. As in previous work in this area (e.g., Bartsch, et al., 1997; Judd, et al., 1991; Judd, et al., 1995; Park & Judd, 1990; Park, et al., 1992), parallel measures of the concept were used in the same study. Variability was measured through three measures calculated from two different sets of scales.

Range

The first measure of perceived variability, the range measure, was designed to capture the participants' perception of the dispersion of attributes within a society. Participants were presented with four unnumbered scales marked with attributes found by previous cross-cultural research to vary systematically across societies--self-sufficiency, reservedness, caution, and competitiveness. They were asked to indicate "where the average person in [the society] would be on each of the following attributes with an X." Then, they were to "indicate with two slashes (/) where the two most extreme people in [the society] would be, that is, the person who shows the characteristic most strongly and the person who shows the characteristic least strongly." An example was provided.

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The scales were coded by measuring the distance, in millimeters, of the marks representing the lowest person, the mean, and the highest person from the low end of the scale. The perceived range of each attribute was determined by calculating the distance between the marks representing lowest and highest person. The scale could potentially vary from .1, for those who place the maximum and minimum of the population's distribution .1 millimeter apart, to 15.2, for those who placed the maximum and minimum of the distribution at the ends of the scale. Range scores were averaged across attributes to arrive at a single measure for each evaluated society. This measure has been used in a variety of studies including Park and Judd (1990), Judd, et al. (1995), and Ryan, et al. (1996). Within the US sample, the reliability of this measure for the different societies ranged from to .813 to .904. Within the Greater China sample, the reliability of this measure for different societies ranged from .853 to .686.

Variability was also measured in two ways using a single set of scales, which were developed by Park and Judd (1990) from a measure created by Linville, et al. (1986). Probability of differentiation is the probability "that two randomly chosen group members will be perceived to differ in terms of the attribute" (Linville, et al., 1986, p. 167). Perceived variability is a measure of the extent to which category members are viewed as widely dispersed about the attribute's mean.

Probability of Differentiation

Participants were asked to evaluate the places the films were set on four different attributes. The attributes used in these measures were characteristics established to distinguish cultural groups by previous cross-cultural research. These attributes are

adventurous/unadventurous, competitive/collaborative, independent/dependent, and outgoing/reserved. Participants were provided with stick-on dots in three sizes and presented with four six-value scales. Each value of the scales was labeled to indicate a range of degrees to which an individual might posses the attribute. For example, in reference to the "adventurousness scale", one end was labeled "adventurous". The next values were labeled "moderately adventurous", "slightly adventurous", "slightly unadventurous", and "moderately unadventurous". The other end was labeled "very unadventurous".

Participants were asked to think of a particular group as a whole. They were asked to "estimate the proportion of people from [the society] who fall into each level of the characteristics listed below". If they thought a lot of people within the group occupied a particular position on the scale, they were asked to mark it with a large sticker. If they thought a moderate number of people occupied a particular position on the scale, they were to mark it with a medium sticker. If they thought a small number of people occupied a particular position on the scale, they were to mark it with a small sticker. If they thought no one, or almost no one, occupied the position, they were asked to leave the value blank. An example was provided.

To calculate the probability of differentiation, each value on the scale is initially considered a separate variable. Each possible response is coded as a numerical value. The absence of a dot is coded as zero, the smallest dot as one, the medium dot as two, and the largest dot as three. The scores of the six scale values are summed, and then the score of each scale value is divided by the sum to arrive at the proportion of the category

members perceived to be described by each level of the attribute (p_i). Probability of differentiation for each attribute was calculated according the following formula:

$$\text{Probability of differentiation} = 1 - \Sigma_{i=1,6}\, p_i^{2}$$

The scores of the four different attributes were averaged to create a single score for each society. Within the US sample, the reliabilities of these measures varied from .998 to .903 across the four societies. Within the Greater China sample, the reliabilities varied from .996 to .785 across the four societies.

Perceived Variation

To calculate perceived variability, each position on the scale was assigned a scale value of one to six. For example, in reference to the scale for adventurousness, the "very adventurous" position was assigned a scale value of six, "moderately adventurous" was assigned a scale value of five, and so on down to "Very unadventurous", which was assigned a scale value of one. The means ($\underline{M}$) of the perceived distributions were calculated for each scale through the following formula:

$$\underline{M} = \Sigma_{i=1,6}\, p_i\, X_i$$

X is the scale value and p is the subjectively perceived proportion of category members described by level $\underline{i}$ of the attribute. Perceived variation for each attribute was calculated according to the following formula:

$$\text{Perceived Variability} = \Sigma_{i=1,6}\, p_i (X_i - \underline{M})^{2}$$

The scores of the four different attributes were averaged into single measure for each society. Within the US sample, the reliabilities of these scales ranged from .734 to .938 across the four societies. Within the Greater China sample, the reliabilities ranged from

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.802 to .957.

The original scales Linville and her colleagues developed asked participants to write the proportion of the members of the group that would fall into each of the six values rather than using the stick-on dots to indicate these proportions. These scales have been used in a variety of studies (e.g., Lee & Ottati, 1995; Linville, et al., 1986; Linville, et al., 1989; Thompson, et al., 1997), including the forerunner to the work proposed here (Hall, 1996). Although these scales seem to capture perceived dispersion, they are awkward and time consuming to complete. Park and Judd's (1990) modification of this measure makes the procedure easier for the participants and therefore more appropriate for inclusion within a lengthy questionnaire, while providing results that are consistent with those of the original measure.

Pretests also suggested the importance of subgrouping in interpretive processing. It is thought to be a moderator of the perceived variability of a society (Maurer, et al., 1995; Park, et al., 1992) and may explain interactions between character counter-prototypicality and the effect of social distance. It was expected that familiarity with a society would be positively associated with both the number of attributes they used to describe the subgroups of the society and with the distinctiveness of the subgroups from each other. Subgrouping was predicted to be negatively associated with perceived character typicality and unrepresentativeness.

Two measures of subgrouping were used. Each was calculated from the same set of measures. As indicated above, participants were asked to evaluate the "average person" within a society on eight attributes, and then were asked to evaluate a series of

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four subgroups within the society on the same attributes. The subgroups were specified

for the participants and were defined by gender (men/women) and age (young/mature).

Attribute Count

The attribute count measure represents the average number of attributes that the

participant saw as valid descriptors of the group. The larger the number of dimensions

that are used to distinguish between members of a group, the more variable the group will

be perceived to be. This study used a close-ended measure that was adapted from an

open-ended one used by Park, et al. (1992). These researchers instructed participants

identify and describe different subgroups within a superordinate category. They then

coded the average number of attributes that the participants used to distinguish the

subgroups from each other.

Here, participants are presented with a list of attributes and asked to evaluate the

extent to which they described subgroups defined by age and gender. Participants can

indicate that the attribute is irrelevant to the subgroup by circling the labeled neutral point

in the middle of each scale. The measure was calculated by simply counting the number

of attributes that a participant considered a valid descriptor of each subgroup, that is, the

number of attributes that were not evaluated at the neutral mid-point of "4". These

counts were then averaged across the four subgroups to create a single index for each

society, so that they had a potential range from zero to eight. Within the US sample, the

reliabilities for the four societies range from .799 to .919. Within the Greater China

sample the reliabilities of the measures of the four societies range from .571 to .785.

Subgroup Distinctiveness

Subgroup distinctiveness is the degree to which the subgroups are seen as different from each other. It was measured by calculating the average absolute difference across four previously defined subgroups for each attribute. The scores were averaged across attributes within each society to create a single index. Huddy and Virtanen (1995) used similar measures in reference to subgroups chosen by the researcher. They used the correlation between groups rather than the absolute value of the differences. They based their measures on procedures used by Park, et al. (1992) with subgroups generated by the study participants. Within the US sample, the reliabilities for the societies range from .767 to .858. Within the Greater China sample, the reliabilities for the four societies range from .735 to .859.

Analysis

Initial analysis

For the initial analysis, the audiences' perceptions of the films were collapsed across film titles within the categories of socially distant and near films within each sample. The responses to films from multiple socially distant societies were evaluated together, in aggregate. Then, further analyses were done to determine if there were differences in response patterns across specific socially distant and near film societies.

The societies of the participants and the source societies of the films were chosen so that comparisons across samples would allow for the evaluation of possible further influences on these processes that could make some potential results more interpretable. Participants were drawn from the US and Greater China because these societies are significantly different from each other, but individuals from these societies are relatively

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accessible. The inclusion of US and Taiwanese films as stimulus materials allows for a crossed manipulation of the film societies and the participants' home societies. A portion of the participants of different societies will watch the same sets of films, but their social distances to the societies portrayed in them are likely to be different. If the typicality or unrepresentatitveness of the same characters were to be ranked differently among participants from different societies, it would strengthen the argument that differences in perceived representativeness are the result of universal interpretative processes rather than an effect of the specific films.

There are significant differences across and within the different political entities that I have labeled "Greater China"[4] and within the United States. However, the two groups have been established to be different from each other on several substantive attributes. The contrast between the societies of the United States and Greater China is supported by Hofstede's (1980) work on cultural dimensions. Working with questionnaires given to employees of a multinational corporation in 66 societies, Hofstede explored differences in cultural values across societies. His data indicate that both Taiwan and Hong Kong differ from the United States in terms of citizens' individualism, tendencies towards uncertainty avoidance, acceptance of power inequality, and "masculinity", a measure designed to capture the desirability of individual achievement over interpersonal relationships.

Triandis (Triandis, 1995; Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990; Triandis, et al., 1993)

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[4] The term "Greater China" is used to refer to the People's Republic of China (PRC), Hong Kong (SRC), and Taiwan (Republic of China). It is not intended to imply the desirability of any particular political relationships among these three entities.

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has also investigated differences across cultures, focusing on the factors that make up the attributes of individualism and collectivism. One study (Triandis, et al., 1990) found that individuals from the PRC and Hong Kong,[5] were more likely to endorse values promoting the welfare of the ingroup than were individuals from the US. Another work (Triandis, et al., 1993) included participants from ten different locations, including the US, Hong Kong, and the PRC. Individuals from Hong Kong and from the PRC were found to be more closely tied to ingroups than were participants from the US.

<div align="center">Implications of the Specific Cultures Studied</div>

The differences between the US and Greater China have implications beyond the establishment of contrast between the samples that will be used in this study. The individualist and collectivist character of the two cultures could affect the results of this experiment in at least two additional ways. Viewers from these two kinds of societies could respond to the films differently. One of the markers of a collectivist society is the importance placed on ingroups (Triandis, 1995). The sense of self of members of collectivist communities generally is more directly derived from ingroup memberships than the sense of self of members of individualistic communities. Social identities are more salient for members of collectivist cultures than for those of individualist ones. Therefore, members of these societies are more likely to be attuned to similarities within groups, whereas those who are from individualistic societies are more likely to be attuned to differences across groups. This suggests that observers from collectivist cultures are more likely to rate individuals within an established group as more homogenous than

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[5] At the time the study was carried out, Hong Kong had not yet been returned to

would observers from individualistic cultures.

In addition, individualist and collectivist societies may be objectively different in terms of variability. Triandis (1995) suggests that the behavior and attitudes of members of collectivist societies are more strongly affected by group norms than the behavior and attitudes of members of individualistic societies. Differences in ratings of the variability of US and Taiwanese societies could be an accurate reflection of these differences.

If the study design was left as a simple 2 X 2 manipulation (participant society X source society of film), these factors could produce results that would be difficult to interpret. The differing salience of ingroups across the two kinds of cultures suggests that Taiwanese participants will rate both cultures as relatively homogeneous, potentially eliminating any difference between the perceived variability of the socially distant and close societies. This, in turn, could eliminate any differences in the perceived typicality or unrepresentativeness of the texts' characters. Previous work suggests that individuals from collectivist societies do not respond to in- and outgroup differences in the same way as the North Americans or Western Europeans who are the most common participants in cognition and psychology experiments. Triandis, et al. (1990), for instance, found differences in US and Chinese participants' estimates of the variability of the two societies. US participants tended to rate the outgroup as more homogeneous than the ingroup, whereas participants from the PRC, a collectivist culture, tended to rate the ingroup as more homogeneous than the outgroup.

However, in the current study this pattern of results could occur through another

the People's Republic of China.

mechanism. The population from which the samples were drawn introduces an additional complication. The participants from Greater China were recruited from a population of students living in the US. It is not unreasonable to expect that members of this group have a greater sense of membership in US society and a more complex schema about life in the US than the US participants will have in reference to Taiwan. A pattern of results in which only the US participants show a difference in their representativeness ratings could indicate a failure of the manipulation of social distance among the participants from Greater China rather than a difference in the way individuals from the two societies interpret media texts.

An effect of collectivism on objective variability within the societies predicts a different pattern of results. This mechanism suggests that both groups of participants will find US society to be more variable than Taiwanese society and therefore US characters to be less representative than Taiwanese ones. This is the pattern of variability ratings that Lee and Ottati (1993) found in their work with Chinese and US volunteers. Both groups rated the US as more heterogeneous in terms of behavior, dress, and appearance.

The inclusion of films from Australia, an individualist society (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995), allows for an investigation of these factors and makes any results that do not conform to my initial predictions more interpretable. If both groups were to rate characters of US and Australian films as unrepresentative relative to characters of the Taiwanese films, it would suggest that all the participants were responding to commonly held understandings of the variability of people from the two nations. However, if the US participants were to show social distance effects for the three other film societies

included in the study, and the Greater Chinese participants were to show effects only in reference to the Australian and Mexican films, it would imply a different conclusion. These results would suggest that the Greater Chinese viewers have gained the experience or senses of membership they need to critically evaluate characters of US films. The lack of an effect in reference to US films would be due to a failure to have reliably evaluated social distance. Finally, if the US participants were to show uniform social distance effects and Greater Chinese participants were to show none, it would suggest that the effects of social distance were conditioned by the salience of individual identities prevalent in individualist cultures. This would indicate the need to expand the hypotheses proposed here to account for cultural differences in the effect of social distance on the interpretation of media meaning.

The relationships and interrelationships of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are complex. They are both linked and divided by history, economics, culture, and politics. The inclusion of participants from the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan creates a sample whose levels of knowledge, personal experience, and sense of identification with the specific target society of Taiwan vary at least somewhat independently. The use of this sample allows for the investigation of the importance of the different factors that may to contribute to social distance.

To review, I predicted that the participants' perceptions of the realism of the characters could be divided into different dimensions, which I refer to as typicality and believability. Furthermore, I predicted that participants would see characters of films from societies of which they are not a part and with which they have little experience as

more representative than characters of films from societies of which they are members. Therefore, US participants would be more likely to regard characters in film segments from Australia, Mexico, and Taiwan as representative than characters in film segments from the US. Greater China participants would be more likely to view characters in the Australian, Mexican, and US film segments as representative than characters in Taiwanese film segments. The design allows for the investigation of the impact of character counter-prototypicality on these relationships. The revision of the measures of social distance also allows for investigation of the impact of some of the components of social distance within the Greater China sample.

In addition, I predicted that the perceptions of the variability of the characteristics and attributes within the populations of the societies would be negatively associated with the participants' social distance from these societies. Perceptions of variability were thought to mediate perceptions of character representativeness. For example, the US participants would see the societies of Australia, Mexico, and Taiwan as more homogenous than that of the US. The relative difference in perceived homogeneity across socially distant and near societies will be positively associated with differences in the perceived representativeness of the characters from films of those societies. Greater China participants would see the societies of, Australia, Mexico, and the United States as more homogeneous than that of Taiwan. In turn, these differences are expected to predict differences in the perceived representativeness of the characters of the two kinds of films.

CHAPTER 3

Study 1, US Participants

The overall study design is a 2 X 2 experiment examining some of the factors that may impact film audiences' interpretations of the representativeness of the films' characters. The study focuses on two factors, a viewer's home culture and the viewer's social distance from the society in which a film was created. The study recruited participants from two different societies, the US and the Greater China (The People's Republic (PRC), Hong Kong (SRC), and Taiwan (ROC)). Within each society, the participants were randomly divided into three experimental groups and a control group. Participants in each experimental group saw two film segments, one from a film that was produced in a society socially close to their own, the other from a society that was more distant. First, I will report the analysis of the data from the US sample. Data from the Greater China sample is reported in the following chapter and the analyses of the two groups of participants together are reported in Chapter 5. At the end of Chapter 5, I summarize the findings of the study as a whole and explicate its implications for future research.

Method

Participants

Eighty-five volunteers from the US participated in this part of the study. They were recruited from classrooms, newsgroup postings, and campus newspaper ads at a large university in the Northeast. Fifty-eight percent of the US participants were female. Seventy-five percent were White. Nine percent identified themselves as Black or

African American and 11% were Asian American. Five participants (6%) identified themselves as Hispanic. The average age was 20($\underline{SD}$=2.39). Ninety-nine percent of the sample were students. Sixty-five percent reported speaking two languages "well enough to carry out a routine conversation." Ninety-two percent reported seeing a movie, either in the theater, on TV, or on video, at least once a month. Fourteen percent reported seeing a non-US movie at least once a month.

Procedure

Volunteers participated in the study in groups of one to four. The same female US experimenter administered all sessions of the study. Participants were first asked to read and sign a consent form. Those that had been assigned to an experimental group were told they would be watching a film clip and then would be asked to complete a questionnaire. They were informed of where the film was from, when it was released and warned if it had subtitles. After viewing the first film segment, participants were given a questionnaire and asked to complete it until they came to a page that told them to stop. In both the questionnaire directions and the verbal instructions, they were asked to fill out the questions in order. It was explained that the questionnaire was designed to get their initial impressions, so they were asked not to go back and change their answers after they had completed them. They were instructed that if they found a question they were not sure about, they were to make their best guess and go on.

The film-specific part of the questionnaire started with questions about the two characters of each segment with the most screen time. The order in which the characters were evaluated was randomized across participants. Participants were told in the

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instructions that the "first questions are about specific characters within the film segment" and warned that "the order of the questions about the characters may not be the order in which the characters appeared in the film clip". After evaluating two characters, participants were asked about the interestingness, genre, and comprehensibility of the film segment as a whole. Their previous exposure to the film and their familiarity with its cast was also evaluated. When all of the participants in a session had completed this section of the questionnaire, the second film segment was shown. Participants then completed duplicate measures for this film segment.

The next questions dealt with their perceptions of the homogeneity of the societies in which the films were set. The participants were asked to evaluate the societies in the same order as the films to which they corresponded. These questions were followed by a manipulation check, measures of their frequency of movie viewing, and then a series of items measuring basic demographic information.

Members of the control group completed the same measures of society variability as the experimental groups. After completing the consent form, they were asked to simply think about individuals from two randomly assigned societies. This was followed by a screening and a questionnaire that served as a means of pre-testing measures for a follow-up study. They saw either a segment from a US film or a segment from a Taiwanese film and completed questions about the film characters and the film society. The questionnaire concluded with the same measures of movie viewing and demographic information that was used in reference to the experimental groups.

Results

Typicality and Believability

This study predicted that typicality and believability are independent dimensions through which audiences evaluate the realism of media characters. As indicated above, three items were used to evaluate perceptions of the characters' typicality[1] and two items were used to evaluate perceptions of characters' believability.

In order to investigate this hypothesis, a principle component analysis with varimax rotation was carried out to determine whether the covariance between the items measuring the two concepts accounted for the overall variation in the measures. The initial analysis examines two subsets of characters in reference to each type of film. Each participant evaluated two characters in the segment from a socially distant society and two characters in the segment from the socially near society. When the data was coded, the characters were sorted into two different subgroups within each film type based on the alphabetical order of the characters' first name. Separate analyses were carried out for two different subsets of characters in relation to the film segments from the socially near films and from the socially distant films. For this sample, the socially near films are from the US, and the socially distant films are those from Australia, Mexico, or Taiwan. Each analysis of the US film segments, therefore, subsumes evaluations of two different characters, one from each film. Each film was seen by half the sample. Analyses of the film segments from the non-US film segments subsume ratings of six different characters, one from each film. Each film was seen by approximately one-sixth of the

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[1] The measure of unrepresentativeness was not used in this part of the analysis.

sample.[2]

There are consistent patterns across the analyses of the four sets of characters. Each factor analysis returned a two-component solution. Two of the typicality items ("how typical or atypical is [the character]" and "[the character] is very different from other [wo]men of [his/her] age and culture") consistently load on a single factor. A third item, which asked whether "many people of [the character's] age and culture would behave like [s]he did" in the same situation, loads more or less equally on believability and typicality in two cases, loads with believability in a third, and loads with typicality in a fourth. This item does not seem to have been as successful as the other two in reliably capturing the dimension.

In three out of the four cases, the two items measuring character believability load together consistently. In one case, which refers to a subset of characters in non-US films, the item about the characters' "believability" loads equally on the two factors. The factor loadings after the varimax rotation are reported in Table 3-1. Although some of the items seem to capture these dimensions better than others do, these analyses provide some support for the hypothesis that typicality and believability are two different dimensions on which this audience evaluated the characters' relationship to the real world.

I also predicted that perceptions of character believability would be more strongly associated with identification than typicality would be. To investigate this possibility, I

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[2] This analysis was only carried out in regards to the US sample. Preliminary analysis of the data from the Greater China sample revealed that factor analyses differed substantially across subsets of the sample defined by English proficiency. Determining whether any differences across groups were due to differences in the way characters were

carried out a series of regression analyses to see whether typicality and believability predicted the participants' level of identification with the characters. A separate analysis was carried out for the two subgroups of characters within each type of film. Believability significantly predicts identification with both US characters, $\underline{B}=.698(\underline{SE}=.28)$, $\underline{p}=.02$, and, $\underline{B}=.574(\underline{SE}=.23)$, $\underline{p}=.01$. The more believable the character, the more strongly the participants identified with him or her. Believability predicts identification with one of the non-US character subsets, $\underline{B}=.614(\underline{SE}=.23)$, $\underline{p}=.01$, but not the other, $\underline{B}=.389(\underline{SE}=.28)$, $\underline{p}=.17$. The non-significant character subset included a character that was extremely different from most of the participants in demographic terms. He was a Taiwanese man estimated to be in his mid-sixties. When this character is excluded, the relationship becomes significant, $\underline{B}=.698(\underline{SE}=.28)$, $\underline{p}=.02$, despite the decrease in sample size ($\underline{n}=46$).

Typicality predicts the participants' identification with one subset of US characters, $\underline{B}=.526(\underline{SE}=.24)$, $\underline{p}=.03$, but not the other, $\underline{B}=.205(\underline{SE}=.28)$, $\underline{p}=.46$, although the relationship is in the predicted direction. Typicality also predicts one of the non-US character subsets, $\underline{B}=.635(\underline{SE}=.24)$, $\underline{p}=.01$, but not the other, $\underline{B}=.080(\underline{SE}=.23)$, $\underline{p}=.73$. However, if the character that complicated the believability/identification relationship is excluded from the analysis of the non-significant subset, this association approaches significance, $\underline{B}=.477(\underline{SE}=25)$, $\underline{p}=.06$. If there were differences in the degree of association between the two factors, it would suggest that the two dimensions of realism evaluations have different consequences for the participants' engagement with the

perceived or to differences in the participants' proficiency with the nuances implied by

characters and, potentially, different effects on the participants' real-world attitudes and beliefs.

The necessity of eliminating one of the non-US characters to discover the relationship between the realism measures and identification indicates that the association depends on what or who is being evaluated. This relationship only holds with some types of characters. The Taiwanese character was liked and was rated to be a good person. Evaluative factors do not seem to have interfered with identification. Furthermore, although the character whose believability ratings were not associated with identification had a relatively low identification score, it was not the lowest among the non-US characters. One of the Australian characters, a woman estimated to be in her mid-thirties, was identified with the least. Excluding evaluations of this character did not substantially improve the relationship between believability and identification. Floor effects are not responsible for the lack of association. One potentially fruitful avenue for further research would be to investigate factors that may contribute to different kinds of identification across demographic and cultural divides.

Social Distance's Impact on Perceived Typicality

Manipulation Check

A comparison of the US participants' responses to the manipulation check confirmed that they felt they were more familiar with the culture of the US film segments than with those of the non-US film segments. Participants in the experimental groups were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements that that they

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the questionnaire's phrasing would have been impossible to accomplish with confidence.

were "familiar with the culture in which the film was set" and that the "film was made with people like me in mind as an audience" in relation to both the US film segment and the non-US film segment. These US participants were more likely to agree with the cultural familiarity statement, $t(54) = 3.65$, $p < .001$, and intended audience statement, $t(54) = 2.06$, $p=.04$, in relation to the US films than they were in relation to the non-US films. When the items are coded so that higher numbers represent agreement with the statements, the means for the familiarity question were 4.87($SD = 1.77$) for the US films and 3.55($SD = 1.89$) for the non-US films. The means for the US and non-US films' intended audience question are 3.89($SD = 1.61$) and 3.27($SD =1.85$) respectively. The range for both questions was one to seven.

Social Distance

There are two measures of representativeness. One, reported as self-assessed typicality, is an index built from a series of scales on which the participants evaluated how much the characters' are like others of the same background and culture. The other measure, called unrepresentativeness, instructs the participant to evaluate the character and the society's subgroup separately at two different points in the questionnaire. The evaluations are then compared by the experimenter. If social distance has an effect on perceived representativeness, the US participants should see characters in the non-US film clips as more representative of the characters' societies than they would see the characters in the US films.

Typicality. The self-assessed typicality measure does not provide any evidence in

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support of this prediction.[3] The mean for the US characters is 4.61($\underline{SD}$ = .77) and the mean for the non-US characters is 4.69($\underline{SD}$ = .82). Although the means are in the predicted direction, the difference is not statistically significant $\underline{t}(54)=.491$, $\underline{p}=.63$.

I also sought to determine whether familiarity with the film's source society, as established by the society familiarity index, influenced perceptions of the characters in the non-US films. This measure allows me to determine whether variation in social distance within the sample affects within-sample variation in perceived character typicality. I investigated this possibility through OLS regression. This analysis also provides little support for the hypothesis that familiarity with the source societies of the non-US film affects the participants' perceptions of the typicality of the characters from those societies. The relationship is not significant, $\underline{B}$= -.102($\underline{SE}$=.13), $\underline{p}$=.43.

Since the society familiarity measures subsume evaluations of several different societies, I also carried out an ANOVA including the film society as a random factor, the society familiarity measure as a covariate, and an interaction term between the two. Both the society and the interaction terms are significant, indicating that there were differences across countries in the impact of society familiarity. These results are presented in Table 3-2. When the association between film society familiarity and character typicality are examined individually for each non-US society, there is no association in reference to Australia within a 20-person sample. The association with Taiwan ($\underline{n}$=18) approaches

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[3] The following analyses use an index of perceived character typicality that includes all three original measures for reasons of conceptual consistency. However, additional analyses were done with a typicality measure composed of the two items that covaried consistently in the factor analysis. This analysis revealed no consistent pattern of results that are different from those reported.

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significance, $\underline{B}$=.504($\underline{SE}$=.26), $\underline{p}$=.07, but the direction is opposite to that predicted. The more familiar the participants were with Taiwan, the more typical they saw the characters in the Taiwanese film clips to be. The relationship with Mexico ($\underline{n}$=17) is significant, $\underline{B}$= -.321($\underline{SE}$=.11), $\underline{p}$=.01, and is in the predicted direction.

Unrepresentativeness. The difference in the means of the unrepresentativeness measure is in the predicted direction and is statistically significant, $\underline{t}$(54)=8.17, $\underline{p}$<.001. The mean in relation to the characters in the US films is 1.75($\underline{SD}$=.50), whereas the mean in relation to the characters in the non-US films is 1.21($\underline{SD}$=.38). This supports the prediction that audiences would be more likely to see characters from socially distant films as representative of the characters' societies.

I sought to determine whether the within-sample variation in familiarity with the culture was predicted by the participants' evaluations of the unrepresentativeness of the non-US characters. The relationship is not significant, $\underline{B}$= -.077($\underline{SE}$=.06), $\underline{p}$=.19, and the direction is opposite that predicted. ANOVA analyses give no indication of an interaction effect between the specific film society and the society familiarity index. This suggests that familiarity does not affect evaluations of films from different societies differently, nor does the relationship seem to hold within a particular cell or set of cells.

These results provide limited support for the prediction that social distance is negatively associated with perceptions of the character representativeness. One of the measures of representativeness conforms to prediction. The other does not. Measures of within-sample variation in the components of social distance do not consistently predict within-sample variation in perceptions of character representativeness in terms of either

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measure.

<u>Counter-prototypicality</u>

I investigated whether the prototypicality of the characters, that is the extent to which the character is seen to embody the traits that define the characters' subgroups, could be driving perceptions of representativeness and thus explain the contrast in the two sets of results.

<u>Association with typicality.</u> There is a significant difference between the counter-prototypicality rankings of the characters from the US films and those from the non-US films, $t(54)= 4.35$, $p<.001$. The mean for the US character is $1.71(\underline{SD}=.45)$, whereas the mean for the non-US characters is $1.32(\underline{SD}=.55)$. The non-US characters were seen as more like the average person within their subgroup on the attributes that defined the subgroup than the US characters were.

I sought to determine the relationship between counter-prototypicality and representativeness through OLS regression. For each type of film segment, I carried out one analysis for each of the two subsets of evaluated characters within each type of film segment. Each analysis of the US films, therefore, combines ratings of two different characters, one from each of the US film segments used in this part of the study. Measures of character counter-prototypicality were not correlated with perceptions of the typicality of either subset of characters from the US films, $\underline{B}= -.043(\underline{SE}=.17)$, $p=.81$, and $\underline{B}= .124(\underline{SE}=.22)$, $p=.58$. In order to investigate whether prototypicality may be affecting typicality evaluations differently within each film, an ANOVA was carried out that included the film as a fixed factor, the counter-prototypicality of the character as

covariate, and an interaction term between these factors. In each case, both the interaction term and measure of counter-prototypicality are non-significant.

In reference to the US films, I tried limiting the attributes used to build the prototypicality measures to the attributes that were seen to describe an individual character within the sample, rather than using the attributes that described the subgroup. I ran the analysis among the viewers of specific films. The results were mixed. The counter-prototypicality measures, calculated in this way, predicted the typicality of one character in one film (see Table 3-3), but not the other three. The direction is opposite prediction. The greater the gap between the evaluations of the character and those of the society subgroup, the more typical the character is seen to be.

The original measures of counter-prototypicality are not significantly associated with the typicality of the characters in the non-US films, $\underline{B}$=.263($\underline{SE}$=.30), $\underline{p}$=.39, and, $\underline{B}$= .071($\underline{SE}$=.14), $\underline{p}$=.62. I also ran ANOVA analyses checking for the interaction effects between the film and character counter-prototypicality. The analysis produced no significant results in regards to one subset of characters. In regards to the other, the interaction is significant, $\underline{F}$(5, 43)=2.70, $\underline{p}$=.03. The main effect for the film approaches significance, $\underline{F}$(5, 43)=2.33, $\underline{p}$=.06, but the main effect of counter-prototypicality does not, $\underline{F}$(1, 43)=.062, $\underline{p}$=.81. This suggests that counter-prototypicality may be affecting perceptions of the characters' typicality differently for different films. Since the sample sizes of the participants who saw specific non-US films were so small, I could not run analyses of measures constructed for individual characters within these films.

Association with unrepresentativeness. Unrepresentativeness, however, is closely

associated with counter-prototypicality. Counter-prototypicality significantly predicts both subsets of US characters, $B=.628(SE=.08)$, $p<.001$, and, $B=.762(SE=.11)$, $p<.001$. It also predicts each subset of non-US characters, $B=.323(SE=.13)$, $p=.01$, and, $B=.212(SE=.08)$, $p<.008$. Variation in the unrepresentativeness measures seems to be driven by the perceptions of the characters rather than by differences in perceptions of the society.

The lack of consistency in this analysis of representativeness weakens the support this study provides for the prediction that characters in non-US films would be seen as more representative of their society than characters in the US films. In order to get a better sense of what aspects of familiarity may be shaping the nature of these relationships, more finely tuned measures of society familiarity were included in the questionnaire for the sample from Greater China. The improved measures may offer the opportunity to explore how specific components of a viewer's relationship to a film's society may shape the film's impact on interpretation.

Film Interpretation Variables

Since neither the audience's social distance from the text or prototypicality has a consistent effect on character representativeness, I sought to determine if there were any other measured aspects of the participants' responses to the film or to the characters that may have affected perceptions of representativeness. Four other factors were evaluated, 1) the participants' interest in seeing the film, 2) their understanding or comprehension of the film, 3) frequency of film viewership, and 4) the participants' familiarity with the cast. The impact of the final factor, cast recognition, was only carried out in relation to

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evaluations of the US films, as there were not enough people who recognized an actor in the non-US film segments to analyze its impact in relation to these characters.

The analysis of the impact of frequency of film viewership and cast familiarity turned up some unexpected and interesting results that may provide a direction for further research. However, the results of this analysis as a whole did not provide additional clarification of the relationships that were the primary focus of the study.

Interest. There are no differences across the two types of film segments in terms of how interested the participants were in seeing the rest of the films, $t(54)=.468$, $p=.64$. Interest is not correlated with perceptions of character typicality for either the US, $B=.040(SE=.06)$, $p=.48$, or the non-US films, $B=.007(SE=.05)$, $p=.90$. Interest is not correlated with the unrepresentativeness measures for either the US, $B= -.040(SE=.04)$, $p=.27$, or the non-US films, $B= -.025(SE=.03)$, $p=.32$.

Comprehension. There are significant differences in the participants' ratings of how well they understood the different kinds of film clips. This sample was more likely to agree with the statement that they "understood what was happening in the film clip" in relation to the US films than the non-US ones, $t(54)=2.47$, $p=.02$. The mean for the US films on this seven-point scale is $5.96(SD=1.26)$ whereas the mean for the non-US films is $5.38(SD=1.51)$. However, the audience's sense of understanding of the films does not predict the perceived typicality of either of the US characters, $B= -.056(SE=.08)$, $p=.51$, or the non-US characters, $B= -.045(SE=.08)$, $p=.59$. ANOVA analyses indicated no significant interactions between subjective understanding and the title of the films or between subjective understanding of the non-US film and the non-US film society.

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I also sought to determine if the number of comprehension questions that the participants answered correctly predicted their perceptions of the characters. Seventy-three percent of the participants could answer all of the questions in regards to the US clip they saw, whereas 51% could answer all the questions in regards to the non-US film they saw. The comprehension index does not predict the perceived typicality of the characters in the case of either the US, $\underline{B}$=.085($\underline{SE}$=.13), $\underline{p}$=.51, or the non-US films, $\underline{B}$=.074($\underline{SE}$=.12), $\underline{p}$=.53. ANOVA analyses indicated no significant interactions between the comprehension index and the title of the films. There are no interactions between the comprehension index of the non-US film and the non-US film society.

Subjective understanding of the films is not associated with unrepresentativeness, US characters, $\underline{B}$= -.0691($\underline{SE}$=.05), $\underline{p}$=.21, non-US characters, $\underline{B}$= -.039($\underline{SE}$=.03), $\underline{p}$=.26. Nor are the comprehension indices associated with unrepresentativeness, US characters, $\underline{B}$= .110($\underline{SE}$=.08), $\underline{p}$=.18, non-US characters, $\underline{B}$= .037($\underline{SE}$=.05), $\underline{p}$=.50.

Frequency of film viewership. Participants were asked how often they watched movies in general, how often they watched non-US movies, and how often they watched dubbed or subtitled movies. General movie viewing is not associated with perceived typicality of the characters in the US films, $\underline{B}$= -.075($\underline{SE}$=.14), $\underline{p}$=.58. However, the frequency of viewing non-US films is negatively associated with perceptions of the typicality of the characters in the US films, $\underline{B}$= -.174($\underline{SE}$=.07), $\underline{p}$=.03. The frequency of viewing subtitled or dubbed films approaches significance, $\underline{B}$= -.153($\underline{SE}$=.07), $\underline{p}$=.07. The more often one sees these types of films, the less likely one is to evaluate the characters in the US films as typical.

There are no significant interaction effects between the movie viewing measures and the title of the US film on perceptions of the typicality of the US characters. The movie watching variables did not affect perceptions of the typicality of the characters in the non-US films, general movie watching, $B=.130(SE=.14)$, $p=.37$, non-US movie watching, $B=.070(SE=.08)$, $p=.41$, subtitled movie watching, $B=.082(SE=.13)$, $p=.36$.

The significant association is an unexpected result, and the relationships it suggests need confirmation before they are taken too seriously. However, there are several potential explanations of the contrast between the impact of general movie watching as opposed to watching non-US or subtitled films. It may be that the general movie question is limited by ceiling effects. The lowest value on the scale, "every 1-2 weeks" may have obscured meaningful variation within the sample. Sixty-six percent of the sample fell into this category. If this is true, it may be that film viewing of any kind depresses perceptions of character typicality. This would suggest that a type of film literacy, honed or developed by film exposure, can give viewers a sense how movies present an unrepresentative sample of people within a society and allowed the participants to be more critical of the typicality of the particular characters used in this study.

Another explanation is that the questions about viewing non-US and non-English-language films capture a different concept than the question about general movie watching. In the United States, films from other countries receive fairly limited distribution. These films must be sought out, either through art-house theaters, specialty cable stations or video rental stores. Consumption of these materials may represent a

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qualitatively different attitude towards film than consumption of mainstream Hollywood fare. The impact of film connoisseurship may be a factor affecting audience interpretation that merits further investigation. In either case, it is interesting that there was no effect on the non-US films. If this pattern is reliable, it may be that the participants' lack of familiarity with the film societies muted any effects of film literacy or a more critical orientation towards the films.

Film viewership has a different effect on measures of unrepresentativeness. In this case, neither general movie viewership nor viewership of non-US films has an effect on evaluations of US characters. General viewership has no effect on evaluations of characters from non-US films, $\underline{B}$=.060($\underline{SE}$=.07), $\underline{p}$=.37. However, frequency of non-US film viewership is significantly associated with unrepresentativeness, $\underline{B}$= -.078($\underline{SE}$=.04), $\underline{p}$=.05. Those who see fewer non-US movies are more likely to see the characters in the non-US films as unrepresentative than those who saw more films were. Frequency of viewing movies that are dubbed or subtitled has an even stronger effect, $\underline{B}$= -.136($\underline{SE}$=.04), $\underline{p}$=.001. If anything, previous exposure to non-US films made the characters in the non-US films of the study seem more representative of their culture. This was the opposite direction of the effect non-US film exposure on the representativeness of the US film characters as established by the self-assessed typicality measure. It is also further evidence that the two measures of unrepresentativeness may capture different concepts.

I would note that most of the US participants were drawn from a large University in a large city in the Northeast. Non-US films and art films are more likely to be

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available here than in many other parts of the country. There are several theaters in the area that specialize in foreign films, 24-hour cable stations with an extensive slate of foreign and independent film, and at least two local video rental chains that focus on hard-to-find titles. Although it is difficult to find directly comparable data, the means of these measures indicate that this population had more experience with non-US films than is common among the population at large (Austin, 1989; Klady, 1999). This is also testified to by the relatively weak, though still significant, difference in the participants' sense that they were part of the intended audience of the US, as compared to the non-US, films. The relatively small difference between the two suggests that at least some of the participants considered themselves part of a global audience for international film. The special characteristics of this population may have also influenced these results.

If is difficult to tell if these results are real or an artifact of the study design and the operationalization of its concepts. However, these results hint that exposure to films from socially distant societies may cultivate certain skills and perspectives that change, in complex ways, how individuals' interpret other films. Investigating how viewership of socially distant films may shape interpretation patterns may be a fruitful avenue for future research.

Cast recognition. Differences in the availability of the US and non-US films could have had implications for the participants' impressions of the characters' representativeness. After seeing each film segment, each participant was asked whether they had previously seen the film from which the segment came. None of the US participants reported having seen any of the films before they were exposed to them

during the study. However, the wider availability and greater popularity of US films meant that the casts of the US films, even independent US films like the one used in the study, were more familiar to US audiences than the casts of the non-US films. Participants were asked whether they had "seen any of the cast members before". They were given the opportunity name of any actors they recognized or to list any of the characters whose actor they felt they recognized, but could not name. One US participant felt they recognized one of the actors in the non-US film segments, whereas 60% felt they recognized one of the actors in the US film segments. Twenty-two percent could accurately name at least one of the actors playing an evaluated character.

In order to determine whether recognition of the cast member influenced the participants' evaluations of the characters they played, the participants' recognition of the characters and cast was built into a summed index. Those who scored a zero on this scale (n=22) recognized neither of the characters, whereas those who scored a four (n=2) could identify the actors who played each of the evaluated characters. The mean of this index was .98(SD=1.05). Familiarity with the actors who played evaluated characters is negatively associated with the evaluations of the typicality of the characters. Those who recognized the actor playing a particular character saw the character as less typical than were those who did not recognize the actor, B= -.208(SE=.10), p=.04. The impact of cast recognition was independent of the impact of non-US-film viewing. The two measures were not correlated and each factor remains significant when they are included in the same equation (see Table 3-4).

This result also complicates interpretations of the potential difference in means

between the perceived representativeness of characters in the US and non-US films. The direction of the means of the evaluations of the two types of films may be an artifact of the participants' greater familiarity with the US cast. I compared the means among those who recognized the actor playing neither of the evaluated characters and those who felt they recognized at least one evaluated character. In each case, the difference remains non-significant. The results are $t(21)=.182$, $p=.86$, and $t(32)= -.716$, $p=.48$, for the non-recognizers and for the recognizers respectively.

Cast recognition is not associated with unrepresentativeness, $\underline{B}=.003(\underline{SE}=.07)$, $\underline{p}=.96$.

Society Variability and Subgrouping Measures

The outgroup homogeneity effect predicts that individuals will see groups to which they do not belong as more homogenous than groups to which they do belong. Since this sample was more familiar with US society than the other societies used in the study, it was predicted that the US would be seen as more variable than the other film societies. Subgrouping is thought to be a contributor to variability perceptions. Therefore, I predicted that subgrouping would be associated with variability and follow a similar pattern across evaluations of the different societies. I also predicted that differences in individuals' perceptions of the variability of the film societies would be negatively associated with the differences in the representativeness of the characters in the socially distant and near film societies.

Variability. The measures of the non-US societies were compared to those of the US in aggregate. Each of the three measures of perceived variation indicates that the

non-US societies are seen as significantly less variable than the US, range, $t(53)= 4.01$, p < .001; probability of differentiation $t(54) = 2.62$, $p = .01$; perceived variation $t(54) = 4.13$, $p < .001$. The means of these measures are reported in Table 3-5. These results are consistent with the out-group homogeneity effect. However, none of the differences in the variability measures predict the differences in character typicality, range $B= -7.76(SE=.11)$, $p=.49$; probability of differentiation, $B= -1.61(SE=2.81)$, $p=.57$, perceived variability, $B=1.15(SE=.36)$, $p=.96$. Furthermore, the direction of the relationship was inconsistent across the three different measures.

When one looks at the differences in the unrepresentativeness measures as an outcome variable, there is no significant association with the differences in the range measures, $B= -.005(SE=.05)$, $p=.91$, or the probability of differentiation measures, $B= .880(SE=1.21)$, $p=.47$. However, differences in the third measure, perceived variability, significantly predicts differences in unrepresentativeness, $B=.142(SE=.15)$, $p=.03$. This relationship is in the predicted direction.

The prediction that the perceived variability of a film's society would moderate viewers' perceptions of the representativeness of the film's characters receives only limited support from this analysis.

Subgrouping. Subgrouping is thought to mediate perceptions of group variability. Therefore, differences in the number of attributes seen to distinguish subgroups within a society and the degree to which the subgroups differ from each other were predicted to be negatively associated with differences in the perceived representativeness of the characters.

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I examined the correlation between the subgroup measures and the variability measures. Although there are several significant results, none is particularly clear. The attribute count measure, the average the number of attributes that were used to describe US subgroups, is positively correlated with the probability of differentiation (.36, $p<.01$) and the perceived variation of US society (.37, $p<.01$). It is not significantly correlated with the US range measure (-.156, $p=.26$), and the direction of the relationship is opposite to prediction. Subgroup distinctiveness in relation to the US is associated only with the probability of differentiation (.38, $p < .01$). The direction is as predicted. The directions of the correlation with the other two measures run in opposite directions (range, -.21, $p=.12$; perceived variation, .09, $p=.53$).

The number of attributes used to describe the non-US subgroups is positively associated with probability of differentiation (.370, $p<.01$), but is negatively associated with the range (-.288, $p = .035$). It is not significantly correlated with perceived variability, although the relationship is in the predicted direction (.18, $p=.18$). Non-US subgroup distinctiveness is only significantly associated with probability of differentiation (.31, $p=.02$). Again, the direction of the association with the other two measures go in opposite directions, range, (-.22, $p=.12$); perceived variation, (.20, $p=.15$). Given the contradictory patterns of results, it cannot be said that this experiment provides strong additional support for the argument that subgrouping moderates perceived variability.

The two measures of subgrouping were examined to determine whether there are any consistent differences across the evaluations of the US and the non-US countries. It

was predicted that the US participants would identify more subgroups for the US than for other countries. The differences between the means of each of these measures are in the predicted direction. However, neither measure is significant, attribute count, $t(54)=.306$, $p = .76$; subgroup distinctiveness, $t(54)=1.94$, $p=.06$, although the subgroup distinctiveness measure is below .1. The means of these measures are reported in Table 3-6.

Neither measure predicts differences in the perceived typicality of the characters, attribute count $B=.102(SE=.13)$, $p=.44$, subgroup distinctiveness, $B= -.382(SE=.31)$, $p=.22$. When one looks at the differences in the unrepresentativeness measures as an outcome variable, there is no significant association with the differences in the attribute count measure, $B= .108(SE=.07)$, $p=.11$. However, its association with the difference of the second measure, subgroup distinctiveness, is significant, $B=.336(SE=.15)$, $p=.03$. This relationship is in the predicted direction.

Experimental/Control Group Differences

It was predicted that members of the experimental groups, who were exposed to films from two different countries, would see the in-group as more homogenous than those who did not see any films. T-tests compared the perceptions of the variability of US society across the control and experimental participants. There were no significant differences in relation to any of the three variability measures or either of the subgroup measures. Furthermore, the directions of the differences in the means are inconsistent, range, $t(67)=.457$, $p=.65$; probability of differentiation, $t(68)= -.674$, $p=.50$; perceived variation, $t(68)= -.135$, $p=.89$. This analysis did not provide any support for this

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hypothesis.

There were no differences between the control and experimental groups in relation to any of the variability measures regarding Australia, Mexico, or Taiwan.

Summary

A factor analysis of the items measuring the typicality and believability of the characters found that they consistently loaded on two different factors. This suggests that they tap into two different dimensions through which the realism of a character can be evaluated.

The results of the primary analysis investigating the impact of social distance on the perceived representativeness of the characters are inconsistent. I compared the evaluations of characters from socially near films with those of characters from socially distant ones. The means of one set of measures, the unrepresentativeness measures, are significantly different in the predicted direction. The other measures are in the predicted direction, but are non-significant. The within-sample measure of society familiarity does not consistently predict within-sample variability in character representativeness in terms of either measure. The unrepresentativeness measures, however, are closely associated with character prototypicality. This raises concerns that the measures may be strongly impacted by the degree to which the characters are seen to concord with established stereotypes, rather than by the structure of the participants' understanding of the film society.

US society is consistently seen as more variable than the non-US societies used in the study. Differences in none of the measures of variability predict the measure of self-

assessed character typicality. One of the variability measures, perceived variability, predicts the measure of unrepresentativeness. This measure assesses representativeness by comparing the participants' separate evaluations of the characters and the characters' subgroups. These analyses provide very limited support for the relationships between social distance, society variability, and character representativeness

There are no significant differences in the society variability ratings of the film societies across the control and experimental groups. Viewing the films does not seem to have affected the participants' perceptions of the film societies.

CHAPTER 4

Study 1, Greater China Participants

Method Summary

Participants

Eighty volunteers from the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan (ROC), and Hong Kong participated in this part of the study. Volunteers were recruited through student organizations. Individuals were considered eligible to participate if they had been born in the PRC, Taiwan, or Hong Kong, had been citizens of the PRC, Taiwan or Hong Kong within the last six years, and had come to the US within the last six years. Participants were paid $8 for their participation. The Greater China participants were paid slightly more than their US counterparts because of the relative difficulty of recruiting this sample and because of the longer distances that many of these participants had to travel. The data from 10 participants were excluded from the analysis because they did not complete the range measures correctly.

Fifty-three of the participants, or 76% of the sample, were from the PRC, 13 (19%) were from Taiwan, and four (6%) were from Hong Kong. All of the participants identified themselves as Asian or Asian American except one, who identified herself as "other" and specified "Chinese". Of the non-Taiwanese participants, two reported having visited Taiwan and one reported having lived there.

Thirty-nine percent of the participants had come to the US within the year, and 90% had arrived within four years. The remainder of the sample, as established by the recruiting guidelines, had come to the US within six years. Sixty-nine percent of the

sample claimed to speak two languages "well enough to carry out a routine conversation", whereas 23% described themselves as speaking three or more languages at this level of proficiency. Sixty percent of the sample had been studying English for at least ten years at the time of the study and 89% had been studying English for at least five years. Fifty percent evaluated their English skills to be at least "good" in comparison to a "native speaker". Another 34% evaluated their skills as "fair" and 14% described them as "poor".

Seventy-three percent of the participants were students. Fifty-four percent of the participants were female. The average age was 28(SD=5.71). This is considerably older than the average age of the US sample. Unlike the US sample, this group of participants included a high percentage of graduate students. Seventy-two percent of the students within the Greater China sample were doing graduate work. Eighty percent of the Greater China sample reported seeing a movie, either in the theater, on TV, or on video, at least once a month. Thirty-nine percent reported seeing a non-US movie at least once a month. As one would expect, this is higher than the exposure to non-US films reported by the US participants.

Design and Procedure

The procedure was the same as the one for the US participants, which is reported in the preceding chapter and in Chapter 2. This chapter reports the analysis of the Greater China sample, and the following chapter reports the analysis of the two samples combined. At the end of Chapter 5, a discussion section summarizes the results of the study as a whole and explicates its implications for future research.

<center>Results</center>

Analyses were carried out with the Greater China sample in order to investigate the relationships between social distance, perceived society variability, and perceived character representativeness within this group of participants.

<center>Social Distance's Impact on Perceived Representativeness</center>

<u>Manipulation Check</u>

The participants' responses to the manipulation check confirmed that they were more familiar with the culture portrayed in the Taiwanese film segments than with the cultures portrayed in the non-Taiwanese film segments. Participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements that they were "familiar with the culture in which the film was set" and that the "film was made with people like me in mind as an audience". They were questioned about both the Taiwanese film segment and the non-Taiwanese film segment they viewed. Participants were more likely to agree with both statements in reference to the Taiwanese films than the non-Taiwanese films. On a scale that ranged from one to seven, where seven is coded as "agree", the mean in reference to familiarity with the culture of the Taiwanese films is 5.62($\underline{SD}$=1.79) and is 3.29($\underline{SD}$=2.26) in reference to the non-Taiwanese films. This difference is significant, $\underline{t}$(44)=5.58, $\underline{p}$<.001. The mean of agreement with the statement about being part of the intended audience of the film is 4.60($\underline{SD}$=2.18) in relation to the Taiwanese film segments and 3.29($\underline{SD}$=2.25) in relation to the non-Taiwanese film segments. Again, this difference is significant, $\underline{t}$(44)=2.70, $\underline{p}$=.01.

<u>Social Distance</u>

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It was predicted that the Greater China participants would see the characters in the non-Taiwanese film segments as more representative of the characters' societies than they would see the Taiwanese characters as representative of Taiwan. There are two measures of perceived character representativeness. The first measure, self-assessed typicality, is an index built from a series of scales on which the participants evaluated how much the characters' are like others of the same background and culture. The other measure, unrepresentativeness, instructs the participant to evaluate the character and the society's subgroup separately at two different points in the questionnaire. The evaluations are then compared by the experimenter.

Typicality. The mean of the typicality index for the characters in the Taiwanese film segments is 5.39($\underline{SD}$=1.02), whereas the mean for the characters in the non-Taiwanese film segments is 4.74($\underline{SD}$= .92). One should note that the direction of the difference in these means is opposite that predicted. This difference is significant, $\underline{t}$(43)=3.39, $\underline{p}$=.002. There are no differences across volunteers from the People's Republic, Taiwan, and Hong Kong in their rating of the typicality of the Taiwanese characters, $\underline{F}$(2, 42)=.007, $\underline{p}$=.99, or the non-Taiwanese characters. This analysis provides no support for the prediction that the characters in the non-Taiwanese films would be seen as more representative of their society than the characters in the Taiwanese films.

I also sought to determine whether familiarity with the non-Taiwanese film societies, as established by the measures of the participants' experience with and sense of membership in the film societies, influenced these perceptions. Using an index

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constructed from the same three items that were used with the US sample, I carried out a regression analysis to determine whether familiarity with the non-Taiwanese society is associated with perceptions of the typicality of the non-Taiwanese characters. It does not provide any evidence of a relationship, $B=.005(SE=.16)$, $p=.97$.

Although the US participants were not asked about their levels of familiarity with US society, the Greater China participants were asked about their perceptions of Taiwan. I checked to see if their familiarity with Taiwan, measured through an index parallel to that used in the US sample, was associated with their perceptions of the typicality of the characters from the Taiwanese film clips. This investigation was carried out using OLS regression. The relationship is not significant, $B=-.136(SE=.22)$, $p=.55$. The item dealing with interpersonal contacts in Taiwan substantially lowered the reliability of the index within the sample. I excluded it from the measure and reran the analysis. The relationship is still non-significant, $B=-.077(SE=.19)$, $p=.69$.

Unrepresentativeness. The difference in the means of the unrepresentativeness measure is non-significant, $t(41)=.14$, $p=.89$. The means are in the predicted direction in that the non-Taiwan characters are seen as less unrepresentative, $1.91(SD=.91)$, than the Taiwanese characters, $1.93(SD=.65)$. However, this analysis provides little support for the hypothesis that audiences are more likely to see characters in films from socially distant societies as representative of the characters' culture.

I investigated whether within-sample variation in the participants' familiarity with a society was associated with within-sample variation in measures of character unrepresentativeness. The relationship is not significant in relation to the non-Taiwanese

film societies, $\underline{B}$=.131($\underline{SE}$=.17), $\underline{p}$=.45. ANOVA does not indicate the existence of any interaction effects. There is no significant relationship between character unrepresentativeness and the indices of familiarity with Taiwan whether one includes the item dealing with interpersonal contacts, $\underline{B}$= .040($\underline{SE}$=.14), $\underline{p}$=.77, or not, $\underline{B}$=.037($\underline{SE}$=.14), $\underline{p}$=.76. This item was found to lower the reliability of the measure in previous analyses. ANOVAs found no evidence of differences across participants from the PRC, Taiwan or Hong Kong in evaluations of the unrepresentativeness of characters from the Taiwanese or from the non-Taiwanese films. There is no evidence of interaction effects.

Components of social distance. The Greater China participants were also asked to complete more detailed measures of their familiarity and experience with the film societies. From these items, two different measures were constructed. One is a measure of media experience, or the participants' exposure to films, television programs, books and news about the film society. The other is a measure of social similarity, or how much the participants' feel they have in common with the people of the source society. I sought to determine whether these factors, which are conceptualized as contributors to audience members' social distance from a film society, are associated with their perceptions of the film characters. I also gathered information about the participants' having lived in or visited the film societies. However, not enough of the participants had done this to allow for an investigation of the impact of this factor on perceptions of film characters.

First, I examined whether the participants' exposure to mediated materials about

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the film society was associated with their perceptions of the typicality of the characters. Media experience is conceptualized as a contributor to perceptions of social distance because previous exposure to the media of a particular society can develop participants' knowledge about and sense of familiarity with the society. There is a significant difference between the participants' exposure to materials from or about Taiwan, and those from or about the other societies, $t(36)=3.01$, $p=.005$. However, media exposure is not associated with character typicality in regards to characters from either the Taiwanese, $\underline{B}= -1.53(\underline{SE}=.08)$, $p=.85$, or the non-Taiwanese films, $\underline{B}= -.039(\underline{SE}=.12)$, $p=.74$.

I also ran an analysis that excluded the participants who evaluated the US films in this study. The items dealing with exposure to materials about the US were unreliable. When exposure to media dealing with Taiwan is compared to exposure to media dealing with Australia and Mexico ($n=24$), the Greater China participants reported significantly more exposure to media about Taiwan, $t(23)=8.95$, $p<.001$. However, the media exposure index is still not significantly associated with evaluations of the characters in these film clips, $\underline{B}= -.006(\underline{SE}=.132)$, $p=.97$.

Media exposure is not significantly related to evaluations of the unrepresentativeness of the characters from the Taiwanese films, $\underline{B}= -.092(\underline{SE}=.07)$, $p=.20$. It is not significantly associated with the unrepresentativeness of the characters in the non-Taiwanese films whether the US is included, $\underline{B}= .093(\underline{SE}=.07)$, $p=.17$, or not, $\underline{B}= -.057(\underline{SE}=.12)$, $p=.65$. ANOVA does not indicate the existence of any interaction effects between media exposure and the specific film society.

Next, I sought to determine whether the participants' sense of similarity with the people of the film society is associated with their perceptions of the representativeness of the characters. The perception of similarity with the people of a society is conceptualized as another contributor to perceptions of social distance. There is a significant difference between the participants' sense of similarity to the people of Taiwan and their sense of similarity to the people of the other societies, $t(36)=7.34$, $p<.001$. The participants saw themselves as more similar to people of Taiwan, 4.90($SD=1.59$) than to people of the other societies, 2.82($SD=1.25$).

However, regression analyses indicate that the participants' sense of similarity with the people of the source societies is not significantly associated with the evaluations of the typicality of the Taiwanese characters, $B=.26$($SE=.11$), $p=.82$, or the non-Taiwanese characters, $B=-.022$($SE=.13$), $p=.86$. Analyses that searched for associations within specific film societies produced no significant results. Similarity is not significantly associated with the unrepresentativeness measures in relation to either the Taiwanese, $B=-.039$($SE=.07$), $p=.57$, or the non-Taiwanese films, $B=.056$($SE=.12$), $p=.063$. ANOVA did not indicate the existence of any interaction effects with the identity of the film society.

Counter-prototypicality

The most obvious explanation of the inconsistency of the results is that the prototypicality of the characters, that is, the degree to which the characters are seen to embody the traits that define their subgroups, is affecting the representativeness measures in different ways. Therefore, I investigated the impact of character prototypicality on the

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two measures of representativeness. The measure of counter-prototypicality is calculated by taking the average absolute difference, across attributes, between the participants' ratings of a character and the control-group mean for the character's subgroup. Only attributes that the control group saw as significantly defining the subgroup are included in the calculation.

The direction of the means of the counter-prototypicality measures indicates that the Taiwanese characters are seen as more like their subgroup prototype than the non-Taiwanese characters. This is the same pattern as that of the typicality measures, which were derived from the Likert scales. However, the difference is not significant, $\underline{t}(44)=-.970$, $\underline{p}=.34$. The mean for the non-Taiwanese characters is $1.79(\underline{SD}=1.08)$, whereas the mean for the Taiwanese characters is $1.62(\underline{SD}=.58)$.

<u>Associations with representativeness.</u> I tested the association between the representativeness measures and the counter-prototypicality measure separately for each subset of evaluated characters within each type of film segment. Each analysis of the Taiwanese films, therefore, combines ratings of two different characters, one from each of the Taiwanese film segments used in this part of the study.

I investigated the possibility that counter-prototypicality and character typicality would be associated through regression analysis. Counter-prototypicality is significantly associated with evaluations of one subset of Taiwanese characters, $\underline{B}=-.868(\underline{SE}=.26)$, $\underline{p}=.002$. The significance in relation to the other subset of characters is below .1, but is not conventionally significant, $\underline{B}=-.438(\underline{SE}=.24)$, $\underline{p}=.08$. These means are in the correct direction. The smaller the gap between the ratings of the character and the ratings of the

subgroup, the more typical the character is seen to be. In order to investigate whether prototypicality may be affecting representativeness evaluations differently within each film, an ANOVA was carried out that included the film as a fixed factor, the counter-prototypicality of the character as covariate, and an interaction term between these factors. In each case, both the interaction term and measures of counter-prototypicality are non-significant. There are no significant associations between character typicality and counter-prototypicality scores customized for each character.

Each analysis of the non-Taiwanese films combines ratings of six different characters, one from each of the film segments used in this part of the study. I included the film title as a fixed factor to control for differences across the different films. Counter-prototypicality is not significantly associated with either subset, $\underline{B}= -.203(\underline{SE}=.20)$, $\underline{p}=.31$, and $\underline{B}= -.291(\underline{SE}=.22)$, $\underline{p}=.20$, although the means are in the correct direction. An ANOVA was carried out that included the film title as a fixed factor, the counter-prototypicality of the character as covariate, and an interaction term combining the two. The small number cases in each cell limits the information the analysis can provide. However, the main effect for counter-prototypicality is significant in relation to one subset of characters, $\underline{F}(1, 33)=6.53$, $\underline{p}=.02$. Neither main effects for the film, $\underline{F}(5, 33)=1.18$, $\underline{p}=.34$, or the interaction term are significant, $\underline{F}(5, 33)=.565$, $\underline{p}=.73$. Nothing is significant in relation to the other subset of characters. Since the sample sizes of the participants who saw each non-Taiwanese film were relatively small, I could not run analyses of measures constructed for individual characters.

Film characters were divided into each analysis set according to the alphabetical

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order of the characters' names. The order of the characters was randomized. The significance of the association of one subset of characters, given the non-significance of the association in relation to other subset, is difficult to interpret. Perhaps the attributes of items used to construct the counter-prototypicality measures were particularly salient for the subset of characters that ended up in the second analysis set. However, given the inconsistency of these results, it is difficult to claim support for a relationship between typicality and prototypicality.

Associations with unrepresentativeness. I used regression analyses to see if the counter-prototypicality predicted the unrepresentativeness measures. Again, separate analyses were carried out for each subset of evaluated characters within each type of film segment. Each analysis of the Taiwanese films combines ratings of two different characters, one from each of the Taiwanese film segments used in this part of the study. Counter-prototypicality is significantly associated with the unrepresentativeness measure in relation to both subsets of characters in the Taiwanese films, $\underline{B}$= .657($\underline{SE}$=.09), $\underline{p}$<.000, and, $\underline{B}$= .525($\underline{SE}$=.18), $\underline{p}$=.004. ANOVA provides no evidence on interaction effects between counter-prototypicality and the film.

Each analysis of the non-Taiwanese films combines ratings of six different characters, one from each of the film segments used in this part of the study. Counter-prototypicality is significantly associated with each subset of non-Taiwanese characters, $\underline{B}$=.657($\underline{SE}$=.09), $\underline{p}$<.001, and, $\underline{B}$=.728($\underline{SE}$=.21), $\underline{p}$=.002. This relationship is in the predicted direction. The more the character is seen to be like the subgroup prototype, the more representative the character is seen to be. There is no evidence of interaction

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effects.

Film Interpretation Variables

As with the US sample, I investigated four additional factors that could have influenced perceptions of character representativeness: interest in the film, comprehension of the film segment, frequency of film viewership, and familiarity with the film and film cast. The results, however, provide little clarification of the relationships that are the primary focus of the study.

Interest. There are no conventionally significant differences in terms of the participants' disagreement with the statement that they "were not interested in seeing the rest of the film" in relation to the Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese films, $t(44)=1.94$, $p=.06$. The means of these measures, on a seven-point scale, are $5.27(SD=2.07)$ for the Taiwanese films, and $4.36(SD=2.35)$ for the non-Taiwanese films. The direction of the means suggests that the Greater China participants were less interested in the Taiwanese films than the non-Taiwanese films. This measure did not predict character typicality in reference to either the Taiwanese, $B= -.030(SE=.08)=.159$, $p=.69$, or the non-Taiwanese films, $B=.033(SE=.06)$, $p=.58$. Interest is not correlated with the unrepresentativeness measures for either the Taiwanese, $B= -.021(SE=.05)$, $p=.65$, or the non-Taiwanese films, $B= .293(SE=.06)$, $p=.64$.

Comprehension. Participants were more likely to say that they "understood what was happening in the film clip" in relation to the Taiwanese film segments than the non-Taiwanese film segments, $t(44)=2.98$, $p =.005$. The means, on a one to seven scale, are $6.22(SD=1.68)$ and $5.40(SD=1.79)$ for the Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese film segments,

respectively. However, the participants' subjective understanding of the film clip is not significantly associated with audiences' perceptions of the characters' typicality for either the Taiwanese, $B= -.031(SE=.06)$, $p=.59$, or the non-Taiwanese films, $B= .108(SE=.08)$, $p=.17$.

I also sought to determine if a more objective measure of film clip understanding, the number of comprehension questions the participant answered correctly, affected their perceptions of the characters. Eighty-two percent of the participants could answer all of the questions about the Taiwanese film, whereas 29% could answer all of the questions about the non-Taiwanese films. There is a positive association between comprehension of the Taiwanese film clips and perceived typicality of the film characters, $B=.566(SE=.23)$, $p=.02$. Those who could answer comprehension measures were more likely to see the characters as typical than were those who could not. Comprehension of the non-Taiwanese film clips is not associated with evaluations of the non-Taiwanese characters, $B= -.704 (SE=.15)$, $p=.65$, and the direction of the relationship is in the direction opposite that predicted.

This suggests that film comprehension may have impacted differences in perceptions of character typicality. However, when one compares perceptions of the representativeness of Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese characters only among those participants who had perfect comprehension scores for both films, the difference in the typicality scores is still significant, $t(9)=3.04$, $p<.01$. Although it is interesting, this relationship does not explain the differences in perceptions of typicality.

Neither the measure of subjective film understanding nor the number of

comprehension questions the participant answered correctly is associated with evaluations of the unrepresentativeness of the film characters.

Film experience. Neither general frequency of film viewership or frequency of non-US film viewership was significantly associated with measures of typicality or of unrepresentativeness. Analysis of the impact of recognizing the actors in a film clip or having seen the film was carried out in relation to one of the Taiwanese film segments, Eat, Drink, Man, Woman (n=22). There were not enough people who recognized actors in the other Taiwanese film or in the non-Taiwanese film clips to carry out the analysis in regards to these films. Cast recognition did not predict perceptions of the typicality of the characters, $\underline{B}$= -.082($\underline{SE}$=.17), $\underline{p}$=.64 or of unrepresentativeness, $\underline{B}$= -.082($\underline{SE}$=.12), $\underline{p}$=.49. Having seen the film did not affect either of these measures.

Variability and Subgrouping

I hypothesized that individuals will see groups to which they do not belong as more homogenous than groups to which they do belong. Since this sample was more familiar with and felt closer to the society of Taiwan than that of the other countries, it was predicted that Taiwan would be seen as more variable than the non-Taiwanese film societies. Since subgrouping is thought to be a contributor to variability perceptions, it was predicted to be associated with variability. Furthermore, I predicted that differences in individuals' perceptions of the variability and subgroups of the film societies would be negatively associated with the differences in character representativeness between the socially near and distant films.

Variability. There are no significant differences in the means of the three

variability measures of the Taiwan and the three non-Taiwanese film societies, range, $t(41)=1.21$, $p=.23$, probability of differentiation, $t(44)=.419$, $p=.68$, perceived variability, $t(44)=-.622$, $p=.54$. The directions of the means are inconsistent. Although the means of the range measure and the measure of the probability of differentiation are in the predicted direction, the means of the perceived variation measures are counter to prediction. The perceived variability of Taiwan is lower than that of the other film societies. The means of these measures are reported in Table 4-1. These results provide little support for the prediction that socially distant countries would be seen as more variable than socially near ones.

The differences in individuals' perceptions of the variability of the film societies were predicted to be negatively associated with differences in their perceptions of the representativeness of the film characters. The more variable the non-Taiwanese societies were seen to be, the less representative the perceptions of the film characters from these societies should be. The analysis found, however, that although all the relationships are in the correct direction, there are no significant associations between the differences in any of the society variability measures and differences in the typicality measures, range $B=-1.40(SE=.10)$, $p=.89$, probability of differentiation $B=-5.09(SE=4.33)$, $p=.25$, perceived variability $B=-.428(SE=.94)$, $p=.65$.

I also investigated the difference in character unrepresentativeness as an outcome variable. However, there are no significant associations between this measure and any of the measures of society variability, range $B=-.012(SE=.09)$, $p=.89$, probability of differentiation, $B=-2.36(SE=3.60)$, $p=.52$, perceived variation, $B=-.943(SE=.76)$, $p=.22$.

Subgrouping. The two subgrouping measures, the attribute count measure and the subgroup distinctiveness measure, were predicted to mediate perceptions of group variability. However, there are no significant associations between any of the three variability measures and either subgrouping measure.

The subgrouping measures were also examined to see if there are consistent differences across the measures of the Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese countries. It was predicted that this sample would perceive more subgroups within Taiwan than in relation to other countries. The means of each of these measures are in the predicted direction. The average number of attributes that the participants identified in relation to the Taiwanese subgroups was 6.96($\underline{SD}$=.79), whereas the number for the non-Taiwanese subgroups was 6.82($\underline{SD}$=1.04). However, this difference is not significant, $\underline{t}$(44)=1.22, $\underline{p}$=.23. The mean of the subgroup distinctiveness measure is 1.77($\underline{SD}$=45) for the Taiwanese subgroups and 1.41($\underline{SD}$=45) for the non-Taiwanese subgroups. This difference is significant, $\underline{t}$(44)=4.69, $\underline{p}$<.001. The means of these measures among the experimental groups' participants are reported in Table 4-2.

Differences in neither of the subgrouping measures is associated with differences in the measures of character typicality for either the Taiwanese or the non-Taiwanese characters, attribute count, $\underline{B}$= -.097($\underline{SE}$=.26), $\underline{p}$=.71, subgroup distinctiveness, $\underline{B}$= -.486($\underline{SE}$=.38), $\underline{p}$=.21. The means are in the correct direction. Nor do they predict differences in character unrepresentativeness, attribute count, $\underline{B}$=.216($\underline{SE}$=.21), $\underline{p}$=.32, subgroup distinctiveness, $\underline{B}$=.254($\underline{SE}$=.32), $\underline{p}$=.43.

Differences across Experimental and Control Groups

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I predicted that members of the experimental groups, who were exposed to films from two different countries, would see the ingroup as more homogenous than those who did not see any films. Using t-tests, I compared the perceptions of the variability of Taiwanese society across the control and experimental groups. There are no significant differences in relation to any of the three variability measures and the directions of the means are inconsistent, range, $t(53)=.02$, $p=.98$, probability of differentiation, $t(55)= -.033$, $p=.973$, perceived variation, $t(55)=1.10$, $p=.28$. Nor are there any differences in relation to the two subgrouping measures, attribute count, $t(55)=.502$, $p=.62$, subgroup distinctiveness, $t(55)= -1.04$, $p=.30$. Again, the directions of the means are inconsistent. This prediction is not supported.

I checked to see if there were any control/experimental group differences in perceptions of the variability of the socially distant societies, Australia, Mexico, and the US. There are no significant differences in relation to Australia or Mexico. Differences between evaluations on the range measure in relation to the US are not significant, $t(25)=.16$, $p=.88$. However, the experimental group has a significantly higher probability of differentiation score, $.78(SD=.03)$, than the control group, $.74(SD=.04)$. The statistics are, $t(26)= 2.82$, $p=.006$. The experimental group was more likely to see US society as variable than the experimental group. Differences in regards to the perceived variation measure approach significance, $t(26)=1.94$, $p=.06$. The mean for the experimental group is $2.07(SD=.60)$, and the mean for the control group is $1.67(SD=.43)$.

Summary

This analysis provides little support for the prediction that social distance is

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negatively associated with perceptions of character representativeness. One measure of representativeness is significant in the direction opposite to prediction. The direction of the means of the other is in the correct direction, but is non-significant. Measures of within-sample variation in the components of social distance do not predict within-sample variation of either measure of representativeness.

There are no significant differences between evaluations of the variability of Taiwan and the non-Taiwanese film societies used in the study. Differences in none of the measures of variability predict differences in either measure of character representativeness. These analyses provide no support for the prediction that socially distant societies would be seen as more variable, or that perceptions of variability would moderate perceptions of character representativeness.

There are no consistent significant differences in the society variability ratings of Taiwan across the control and experimental groups. Viewing the films does not seem to have affected the participants' perceptions of Taiwan.

CHAPTER 5

Combined US and Greater China Samples

For the last part of the analysis, I combined the data sets from the two samples. This part of the analysis has two purposes. First, it explores possible reasons for the results of the separate analyses of the US and Greater China samples. The different film societies used in this study were chosen to allow for subsidiary analyses in case the study predictions were not fully supported. In Chapter 2, I explicated means through which three factors, 1) differences in the veridical variability of the societies, 2) differences in the participants' tendencies to notice variability, and 3) differences in the success of the manipulation, could affect the outcome measures. I pursue these alternative factors here.

Second, combining the samples allows for the exploration of differences in the way the film source societies are perceived across the two populations. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study as a whole and a discussion of its implications for further research.

An issue that needs to be addressed first, however, is the validity of the two measures of representativeness that were used in the study.

Typicality as opposed to Unrepresentativeness

I predicted that each sample of participants would see characters from socially distant societies as more representative of their society than characters from socially near societies. I used two measures of representativeness. The measure that was reported as self-assessed typicality was built from a series of Likert scales that asked participants to evaluate the typicality of the characters. The other measure, unrepresentativeness, was

based on items through which the participants evaluated the characters and the characters' subgroups separately. The evaluations were then compared by the experimenter in order to create a single measure.

The latter measure, unrepresentativeness, supports the study hypothesis among the US participants. Among the Greater China participants, the means are in the correct direction, but the difference is statistically insignificant. The other measure, built from Likert scales, provides little support for the hypothesis. In regards to the US participants, the means are in the predicted direction but are non-significant. Among the Greater China participants, the means are significant but opposite to the predicted direction.

The two measures, however, are not correlated with each other. Among the US sample, the correlation coefficients range from -.07 to .16 across the four character subsets. None are significant. Within the Greater China sample, the correlation coefficients range from -.33 to .08 across the four character subsets. The correlation is only significant in only one case, dealing with the one of the subsets of non-Taiwanese characters. Since characters were divided into subsets on the basis of the alphabetical order of the characters' names, the inconsistency is hard to explain.

The lack of correlation between the two measures indicates that they are not capturing the same underlying concept. This result points to measurement validity as a potential explanation of the failure to find substantive support for the hypotheses. This issue will be dealt with more extensively in the concluding chapter, but issues it raises need to be addressed before further analyses are undertaken.

There are several potential explanations of why these two measures do not

correlate with each other. Participants may have been evaluating the typicality of the characters through the Likert scales on different attributes than those used to construct the unrepresentativeness measure. The study participants may have evaluated the typicality of the characters in terms of personality attributes other than the ones in the scales, in terms of demographic attributes, the stylistic attributes of the film, or even more complex characteristics like behavior patterns. I may have simply selected the wrong characteristics to evaluate the characters and their subgroups. Also, differences in the level of measurement could be complicating the association. The self-assessed typicality measures are general questions, whereas the researcher-assessed measures of unrepresentativeness evaluate the concept on a set of specific personality attributes. The contrast between the general and the more specific measures may be obscuring their association.

Self-presentational concerns may have also complicated the participants' responses to the self-assessed typicality measures. The participants may have sought to avoid appearing judgmental or biased and second-guessed their assessments of the characters or the characters' subgroups. In the case of the evaluations of ingroup characters, the participants' emotional investment in their own group memberships may have shaped their assessments of the typicality of the characters. For example, they may have rated pleasant characters of their own group as typical and unpleasant characters as atypical in order to protect their perceptions of the ingroup. These sorts of influences may have also complicated the participants' evaluations of the characters' typicality. Finally, it may be that audiences' were not making cognitively based calculations at all,

but rather were relying on more holistic impressions of the characters' realism. The judgements that audience members make when called upon for these assessments may be very different from the abstract calculations envisioned by the researcher.

I investigated the study hypotheses using both the self-assessed measure of typicality and the researcher-calculated measure of unrepresentativeness. However, I emphasize the researcher-calculated unrepresentativeness measure. I consider this measure to more closely capture representativeness for three reasons. First, since the link between the evaluations of the character and the evaluations of the characters' social groups were calculated by the researcher, the measures were more indirect and are less likely to be affected by social desirability factors that would obscure the results.

In addition, the behavior of this measure is more consistent with previous studies than is that of the self-assessed typicality measure. Although none of the results provide overwhelming support for the study hypotheses, the researcher-constructed unrepresentativeness scale performs according to the predictions built from previous research in some circumstances. Among the US sample, for example, this measure supports the prediction that the characters in films of socially distant societies would be seen as more representative than characters in films of socially near societies. That is, the difference between the participants' evaluations of the characters and their evaluations of the characters' real-world subgroups is larger in relation to the socially distant film societies than in relation to the socially near society. Within the Greater China sample, the mean is in the correct direction, but the difference is not significant.

Finally, I feel that the researcher-assessed unrepresentativeness measure is more

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consistent with the theory underlying these hypotheses. The relationships that this work was designed to investigate were based on the assumption that audiences' established perceptions and beliefs about the variability and central tendencies of social groups are cognitive structures shape their subsequent judgements and evaluations, often without their awareness. The hypotheses imply that the representativeness of the character shapes the character's impact on a viewer's perceptions of the real world regardless of whether the viewer consciously makes and articulates an evaluation of realism. Their established beliefs about the portrayed groups are seen as the structures that unconsciously limit their responses to particular texts.

However, the participants' interpretations of a how common a media character's attributes are among the character's social group are unrelated to the measurable associations between evaluations of the attributes of the character and the attributes character's social group. This suggests that the participants' typically judgements are affected by other factors either during the process of recalling their impressions or of articulating the evaluation. Since the indirect measure taps the underlying cognitive belief structures rather than viewers' articulations, it more closely captures the theoretical construct of the message.

Character Representativeness and Society Variability across Groups

There are several other factors that could have contributed to the typicality and unrepresentativeness measures and the perceptions of society variability. I sought to determine if they could explain any part of the failure of the typicality measures to support the study hypotheses.

Two of these explanations grow from the differences between US society and the societies of Greater China. Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the PRC are all more collectivist than the US (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995; Triandis, et al., 1993). One of the defining characteristics of collectivist societies is that more emphasis is placed on group memberships. Therefore, the Greater China participants may be more sensitive to ingroup homogeneity than the US participants across different target groups. This possibility is supported by other work, which has found that the outgroup homogeneity effect either does not exist or is less robust among participants from collectivist societies (e.g., Lee & Ottai, 1993; Triandis, et al., 1990). This explanation suggests that the Greater China sample would routinely estimate the variability of the societies to be lower than the US sample would, regardless of the nature of the target society. It predicts that the US sample would show a difference across the evaluations of the two types of film characters, whereas the Greater China sample would not. This explanation cannot directly account for the significant result in the wrong direction in regards to the self-assessed typicality measure. However, this factor may have moderated perceptions of the distant film societies enough to make the prototypicality of the film characters a stronger predictor of perceived typicality. It may have helped obscure the effects of the cognitive processing patterns that are the focus of this work.

Furthermore, since group norms have less impact on individual behavior within individualist societies than within collectivist ones, there is likely to be more variation within US society than within Taiwanese society. A second explanation of across-group differences in representativeness perceptions is that objective differences in the

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variability of the socially near societies of the two participant groups subsumed any outgroup homogeneity effects and obscured the impact of social distance on perceived character representativeness. This explanation suggests that both the US and the Greater China sample would see US and Australian societies as more heterogeneous than Taiwanese society. Both samples, therefore, would evaluate characters from US and Australian films as less representative than those from Taiwanese ones. This hypothesis suggests that the outgroup homogeneity effect does not function in this situation because of clearly established differences in the objective variability of the groups.

A final explanation is that the manipulation of social distance failed in relation to the Greater China participants. These volunteers are drawn from a population of students living in the US. Although the recruiting parameters stipulated that they had been the US for a relatively short time, they had more direct experience with the US than with the other "distant" film societies. These participants also had more experience with the US than most US participants had with Taiwan. If the participants' experiences in the US allowed them to develop more heterogeneous perceptions of US society, it may have raised the aggregate scores of the socially distant measures enough to obscure differences across the in- and outgroups. This explanation predicts that the outgroup homogeneity effect would hold when the Greater China participants were asked to evaluate societies like Australia and Mexico, with which they have limited real-world experience, but would not hold among the participants who were asked to evaluate US films. Just as there is asymmetry in the sample's social distance from the two societies, there may be asymmetry in the effect of social distance on their evaluations of character

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representativeness. Again, however, this factor cannot directly explain the significant result in the opposite direction in regards to the typicality measures.

The data were coded to compare the participants' evaluations of the socially distant and socially close societies among the two samples together. Therefore, evaluations of the "socially distant" characters within the US sample include characters from Australian, Mexican, and Taiwanese film segments, whereas evaluations of the distant societies for the Greater China sample include Australian, Mexican, and US film segments.

I then investigated the hypothesis proposed by the three alternative factors that may have affected perceptions of character typicality and society variability.

Impact of asymmetry in the social distance manipulation. One potential contributor to the results is the asymmetry of the manipulation of social distance. The Greater China participants have some real-world experience with US, whereas the US participants do not have any real-world experience with Greater China. There may not have been a clear difference between the near and distant societies among the Greater China participants who were evaluating a US film. This suggests that the US film characters would be seen as less representative by the Greater China participants than the Taiwanese characters would be seen by the US participants.

Analysis of the Greater China participants' subjective senses of familiarity with the non-Taiwanese film societies indicates that the US is the most familiar of the three distant societies, but not by an overwhelming margin. The sample sizes limit the power of individual statistical tests, but the means, reported in Table 5-1, put the US on par with

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Australia in terms of familiarity. An ANOVA testing for differences across the mean familiarity scores of the three societies among the Greater China participants is not significant, $F(2,42)=.839$, $p=.44$. Furthermore, when the participants who evaluated a US film are excluded from the sample, the difference between the perceived typicality of the Taiwanese characters and the Australian and Mexican characters remains significant in the wrong direction, $t(29)=3.56$, $p=.001$. The explanation that the Greater China participants' experience with the US contributed to the results by depressing their evaluations of the typicality of the US characters is not supported.

Impact of veridical differences in society variability. Another possibility is that the results represent veridical differences in the variability of the societies of the US and Taiwan. Since the US is likely to be more heterogeneous than Taiwan, perceptions of the representativeness of the US characters are likely to be depressed, which may have obscured differences between perceptions of the cultures that result from the predicted processing patterns. Paired t-tests suggest that the United States is clearly seen as more variable than Taiwan by the US participants. All three measures of variability are significantly different, range, $t(22)=3.52$, $p=.002$, probability of differentiation, $t(22)=2.21$, $p=.04$, perceived variation, $t(22)=3.17$, $p=.004$.

The sample size limits the power of the analysis within the Greater China sample. With a sample size of approximately 19, only the range measure is significant, $t(17)=2.27$, $p=.04$. The direction is as predicted. The directions of the other two measures are inconsistent. Perceived variability is in the predicted direction, $t(18)=1.03$, $p=.32$, whereas the probability of differentiation is not, $t(18)=-1.36$, $p=.19$. Furthermore,

there are no significant differences between the evaluations of the representativeness of the US characters and Taiwanese characters among either the US participants, $t(17)= .98$, $p=.34$, or the Greater China participants, $t(14)= -1.34$, $p=.20$. This suggests that any differences in society variability perceptions did not consistently impact perceptions of character typicality. The direction of the means does not change from those of the larger sample. This explanation was not supported.

Impact of sensitivity toward society homogeneity. The final explanation is that the Greater China participants are habitually more likely to perceive a society as variable than the US participants. Using independent t-tests, I compared the perceptions of the variability of the four film societies across the two samples, using participants in both the control and the experimental groups. The means are reported in Table 5-2. The most consistent differences were in the two samples' evaluations of Mexico. US participants evaluated Mexico as significantly more variable than the Greater China participants on two of the three variability measures, the range measure, $t(57)=4.49$, $p<.001$, and the measure of perceived variation, $t(59)=2.05$, $p=.05$. The third measure, of probability of differentiation, is in the predicted direction, $t(59)=.169$, $p=.87$. The mean of US participants' evaluations of the US on the range measure is also significantly larger than that of the Greater China participants, $t(98)=1.99$, $p=.05$. Although significant results are relatively sparse, the consistency in the direction of the means across the analyses is suggestive. The means of the variability perceptions of the US participants is higher than that of the Greater China participants in all 12 analyses.

If one considers the average difference in the means of the two samples'

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evaluations of the four film societies, the difference is widest in relation to Mexico (1.05) and smallest in relation to Taiwan (.02). An informal evaluation of the means suggests that this primarily due to the Greater China participants' evaluation of Mexico as homogenous. Their evaluations of this society are markedly lower in comparison to their evaluations of other societies, whereas those of the US participants are closer to their evaluations of the other societies. It is interesting that the Greater China participants' evaluations of Mexico are among the lowest in the sample. It is a point at which several factors coincide. It is a collectivist society evaluating another collectivist society across a wide social distance.

These results cannot be seen as anything more than suggestive. However, the consistency of the means suggests that, if anything, the Greater China participants are more likely to evaluate societies, including those with which they are familiar, as homogenous than the US participants are. This tendency, although fascinating, cannot directly account for the lack of results in terms of character typicality.

Perceptions of the Film Source Societies

The study evaluated the participant's perceptions of the different film societies using measures and techniques adapted from those developed by Gardner (Gardner, et al., 1972; Gardner, Lalonde, Nero, & Young, 1998; Gardner, Wonnacott, & Taylor, 1968; Lalonde & Gardner, 1989). As indicated above, participants were asked to evaluate the "average person" within a society on a series of seven-point, bipolar scales with a marked, neutral mid-point. An attribute was deemed significantly descriptive, or stereotypic, of a society when the group mean differed significantly from the mid-point

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with a p-value of less than .01. A relatively conservative criterion is used to account for the large number of t-tests that this analysis represents and to insure that the identified attributes have a substantive impact on the participants' perception of the target society. In addition to Gardner's own work, similar methods have been applied by McAndrew (1990) and by Pittam, et al. (1990).

US participants. The US participants' perceptions of Australia, Mexico, Taiwan, and the United States were largely concordant with what has been found in previous research on national stereotypes. Among the US sample, Australians were described as polite, ambitious, impulsive, talkative, and happy-go-lucky. Mexicans were described as polite, traditional, talkative, group-oriented, and happy-go-lucky. People from Taiwan were described as polite, traditional, ambitious, self-controlled, practical, quiet, group-oriented, and serious. The participants' self-descriptions indicated that people from the US were impolite, modern, ambitious, impulsive, and talkative. The average differences from the mean within this sample are listed in Table 5-3.

Greater China participants. The Greater China participants' perceptions of Australia, Mexico, Taiwan, and the United States were measured and calculated using the same questions and techniques as those of the US sample. The Greater China participants' perceptions of Australia, Mexico, Taiwan, and the US were largely similar to the US participants' perceptions of these countries. They agreed with the US sample in describing Australians as polite, talkative, and happy-go-lucky. However, they also saw people from this society as practical. In concordance with the US evaluations, Mexicans were described as talkative and happy-go-lucky. People from Taiwan were

described as polite, traditional, self-controlled, and serious. People from the US were described as polite, modern, ambitious, impulsive, and talkative, and happy-go-lucky. The average differences from the mean are listed in Table 5-4.

One interesting pattern across these two samples is that each sample seems to have evaluated the group with which they are associated as different from the neutral point on fewer attributes than the other sample did. The Greater China participants define the group with which they are associated through five significant attributes, whereas the US participants' evaluations of the society are significant on all eight attributes. Similarly, the US participants see US society as characterized by five attributes, whereas the Greater China sample characterized the US with seven. Although this pattern is tenuous, it may be that each group is less willing to characterize their own group in general terms than other groups.

Across-sample differences. Independent t-tests were used to determine if there were any across-group differences in the participants' perceptions of the film societies. The results are reported in Table 5-5. These analyses represent a large number of t-tests. Although I report significance values of .05, I only seek to interpret those that reach the more conservative value of .01 or less.

It should also be noted that there were fewer participants who evaluated Mexico and Australia, and so there was less power to determine differences in relation to perceptions of these countries. There was one attribute for each film society that may have been formally significant if these samples had been equal in size to those of the US and the Taiwanese samples. The difference in evaluations of Australian ambitiousness

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approaches significance, $t(58)=2.00$, $p=.051$. The Greater China participants' mean is lower on ambitiousness than the US participants. The difference between the US and the Greater China participants' evaluations of the impulsiveness or self-control of people from Mexico also approaches significance, $t(59)=1.87$, $p=.07$. Given these means and sample sizes, each of these analyses had about 85% power to discern differences between the groups at the .01 level.

Even when sample size is taken into account, the most consistent differences are in relation to those societies where differences in social distance are likely to be the most profound, that is Taiwan and the US. The US participants evaluated people of Taiwan as more traditional, quieter, and more serious than the Greater China participants did. These attributes are not overwhelmingly negative. However the nature of these attributes suggests that the US participants may see attributes traditionally associated with Asians as more strongly associated with people from Taiwan than the Greater China participants did.

The Greater China participants were significantly more likely to evaluate people of the US as polite, talkative, and serious than the US participants themselves were. The natures of these attributes do not immediately suggest a pattern of out-group denigration. The participants who were not from the US endorsed the most obviously evaluative attribute, politeness, more strongly than those who were from the US did. "Talkative" and similar attributes have been found to describe conceptions of people in the US by other studies (Bartsch, et al., 1997; Kruegar, 1996; Ladone, & Garder, 1989; Stephan, et al., 1994). People of the US do not seem to have been strongly associated or

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disassociated with seriousness within the previous literature. However, the finding that people in the US are seen as "polite" is strikingly unusual. At least one previous study found that people in the US were described as the least polite of the societies studied (McAndrew, 1990). It may be that this result reflects a desire among the participants to avoid insulting the US experimenter or it may be that this impression is relatively unique to this particular population. Future research may benefit from further investigations of if and how the impressions of a particular society change when individuals become sojourners or visitors within a society.

Discussion

These results have implications for future research.

Realism Dimensions

One of the initial goals of the study was to test whether the concepts of typicality and believability were two different dimensions though which audiences evaluate the realism of a media text. Factor analyses of items measuring these two concepts among the US sample indicate that they load consistently on two different factors. This supports the hypotheses that they reflect two different types of judgments of the relationship of a media representation to the real world.

This is significant because the two dimensions of realism are likely to influence audience interpretation and the media texts' effects differently. However, the lack of correlation between the typicality measures and what was conceptualized as the operationalization of this judgment emphasizes the fluidity with which these judgments

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are made. Further research into how audiences make different kinds of evaluations of a text's realism would be beneficial.

Social Distance, Character Representativeness, and Society Variability

The central analyses of the study investigated a series of hypotheses about the relationship between audiences' social distance from a society represented in a text, their perceptions of the variability of the text, and their perceptions of the characters' representativeness. Character representativeness is used as the primary outcome variable because it is seen as a marker of the degree to which the attributes of the character are applied to the audiences' understandings of the character's real-world groups.

I predicted that characters from societies that were socially distant from the viewer would be seen as more representative than those from societies that were socially near to the viewer. Furthermore, I predicted that this relationship would be mediated by perceptions of the variability of the film societies. Therefore, I predicted that the differences in audiences' perceptions of the near and distant film societies would predict differences in their perceptions of the representativeness of the characters from the near and distant societies.

I used two measures of character representativeness. One measure, self-assessed typicality, is based on a series of Likert scales. Participants were asked to evaluate how much the character was like others of his or her age and gender within his or her society. These items were used in the factor analysis of realism dimensions described above, and were found to be distinct from measures asking participants about the "realism" and "believability" of the characters. This measure provided little support for the hypothesis.

Among the US sample, the means of his measure were in the predicted direction, but were non-significant. Within the Greater China sample, they are significant in the direction opposite that predicted. The characters from the socially near society, Taiwan, are seen as more typical than the characters from the socially distant societies.

The second measure, unrepresentativeness, was calculated from scales that asked the participants to evaluate the character and the character's subgroup within the characters' society at different points in the questionnaire. The evaluations were built into a single measure by taking the average, across attributes, of the absolute difference between the participants' evaluations of the character's attributes and their evaluations of the characters' subgroup. This measure supported my prediction among the US sample. The distance between the evaluations of the characters and evaluations of the characters' subgroups is larger in relation to the socially distant film societies than in relation to the socially near society. In relation to the Greater China sample, the mean was in the correct direction, but the difference is not significant. Within-sample variation in measures of society familiarity, which is conceptualized as one of the components of distance, does not predict within-sample variation of either of these measures in either sample.

The two measures of representativeness are not correlated with each other. Since the unrepresentativeness measure is somewhat insulated from social desirability concerns, best supports the hypotheses, and is closer to the conceptualization of representativeness, I focus on this measure.

There are two different factors that are hypothesized to affect the perceived representativeness of a character. One is the perceived variability of the film society. Since representativeness is essentially a judgment of the proportion of people within a group that carry a particular attribute, it is dependent upon how much variation there is within a group. All other things being equal, any single exemplar is less representative of a heterogeneous group than a homogeneous group. This aspect of perceived character representativeness is the primary focus of the study. However, perceived society variability did not consistently predict either measure.

The representativeness of a character is also likely to vary as a result of the attributes of the character. The attributes of some characters are congruent with the audiences' established understandings of the central tendencies or prototypical model of the group. The attributes of other characters do not comport so closely. The counter-prototypicality measure was an attempt to take the influence of this latter factor into account. It was intended to be used as a control measure. The predictions of the elaborate patterns of results across different samples were another attempt to take this into account. Although character's prototypicality will affect representativeness judgements, it is unlikely to do so in the way that the study hypotheses would predict. Finding the predicted patterns would have been a strong argument that the outcome measures were affected by social distance and the cognitive mechanisms hypothesized, rather than by the attributes of the specific films.

The lack of a clear pattern within the results means that the scattering of significant results carry substantially less weight. These analyses suggest that the content

of the film segments had an effect on the outcome measures that were inadequately accounted for by the design of the study, as few of the results carried across the different film segments. It seems this pattern of the results may be unique to this particular set of films.

These findings illustrate the difficulty of using real-world media materials in order to study the kinds of cognitive mechanisms under investigation here. What was gained in terms of generalizability did not offset what was lost in the form of control. It may be that real-world stimuli are inappropriate for investigations of these kinds of cognitive mechanisms, or that they at least require more extensive and more through pre-testing than my resources allowed. Future research would benefit from a more detailed understandings of how the characteristics of the texts shape the way audiences formulate the relationships between media representations and real-world people.

Another way forward suggested by these results is investigating the interaction between the audience and the text from the other direction, that is, looking at how differences in the characteristics of media representations may shape the way audiences use the text. The second study of this project, which exposed larger numbers of people to the same texts, allows for an investigation of effects that may be unique to specific characters. As discussed in the following chapter, these results suggest some potential textual characteristics that may be worth further investigation in terms of their impact on audiences' beliefs.

Society Stereotypes

Finally, the data collected for this study also allow for an investigation of the participants' beliefs about the film societies. These results suggest that the two samples' evaluations of the film source societies were very similar. However, there is some evidence that the Greater China participants were generally more likely to evaluate societies as homogenous than the US participants were. This may reflect cultural differences across the two groups. Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the PRC are all less individualistic than the US. This suggests that individuals from these societies may be more attuned to similarities within groups than their US counterparts are.

CHAPTER 6

Study 2

Introduction

Study 2 is a 2 X 2 design. Half the participants saw a segment of a film from a socially near society and half saw a film from a socially distant society. Before seeing the film, half of each of these groups read a priming summary designed to activate categories of nationality or society membership. After seeing the film, the participants were asked to report their evaluations of the film characters, as well as their perceptions of the societies from which the film came. The goal of the study is to investigate whether the activation of a specific social category structure can affect audiences' perceptions of the characters' representativeness or their tendency to apply the character's attributes to real-world groups defined by that category structure. The study also sought to determine whether there is any correlation between the participants' attributions of the characters' behavior and their perceptions of the characters' real-world groups.

Character Representativeness

The previous study investigated the perceived representativeness of film characters as an outcome variable. The decision to construct the study in this way was based on the belief that perceived representativeness influences the power a media character has on audiences' beliefs about the real world. It is thought that the more representative a character is seen to be, the more likely it is that the attributes of the character will be applied to the audiences' beliefs about the character's real-world group. One of the goals of the second study of this project is to investigate this assumption

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directly. It is designed so that a relatively large sample of participants are exposed the same stimulus film. This design allows for the exploration of an association between perceived character representativeness and the application of the characters' attributes to their real-world counterparts.

I predicted that the perceived representativeness of the character would affect the degree to which the audience applied the character's attributes to their understandings of the character's real-world group. The more representative the character, the more likely it is that the people within the character's subgroup should be seen to carry the character's attributes. For example, if an impolite character is seen as representative, the character's subgroup is more likely to be seen as impolite than if the character is seen as unrepresentative.

Furthermore, the impact of character representativeness should be particularly acute when the participants have little real-world experience and a weak sense of membership in the character's society, that is, when their social distance from the society is very high. Therefore, the association should be stronger among the participants watching a film segment from a socially distant society than among participants watching a film segment from a socially near society. This work uses two different films as stimulus materials, one from the US and one from Taiwan. Among the US viewers who participated in this study, the association between character representativeness and evaluations of the characters' subgroup should be stronger among those watching the Taiwanese film than among those watching the US film.

Category Activation

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The previous study is also based on the assumption that observers organize their perceptions into mental categories. The categories shape how information is gathered and guide how new stimuli are interpreted. Media representation patterns are consequential because they contribute to audiences' perceptions of what people within a specific social category are like. The ongoing repetition of the media stereotype of Asians as sly, for example, is thought to contribute to audiences' mental preconceptions about people in this category. These perceptions then guide the audience's interpretations so that ambiguous behavior by Asians is more likely to be perceived as underhanded. Furthermore, category perceptions can focus audiences' attention so that they are more likely to take into account incidents that support their understandings and discount those that do not.

However, all individuals and the majority of media characters belong to multiple categories simultaneously. One can be a woman, and a doctor, and a resident of Chicago, and an African American, and a liberal. The relative importance of different categories in interpreting information about the individual is partially determined by social norms. There will be some consistency from person to person within a particular society. However, the relative importance accorded to different categories by the viewer will also vary to some degree from viewer to viewer as well as across different times and contexts.

The relative weights given to an exemplar's various category memberships can affect stereotyping processes. In interpersonal contexts, the activation of a particular category structure can shape the degree to which an individual example affects viewers' understandings of the groups defined by that category structure (Hilton & von Hipple,

1996). An example of experimental work that has investigated this is Beckett and Park's (1995) work on gender stereotypes. They found that gender stereotypes had greater effects on evaluations of individual targets when observers were presented with photographs that made the target's membership in these categories more salient.

If a similar mechanism shapes interpretation of media characters, the category structure that is active when a media text is consumed may affect the interpretation of the characters, and thereby affect the impact of the text on the audiences' beliefs about the character's group. If a film is shown to a viewer in a context that stresses the characters' nationality or society membership, it is more likely to impact the viewer's perceptions of national groups than it would otherwise.

In this study, I presented half the participants with a summary intended to activate the categories of nationality or society membership. The other half of the participants read a control summary. I predicted that the participants who were exposed to the primes would see the film society as more variable than those who did not. The activation of the category would cause the similarities between members of these categories to be emphasized. Since subgrouping is tied to variability perceptions, participants who were exposed to the primes should identify fewer subgroups within the film source societies than the control group. Furthermore, the participants who read the priming summary should see the characters as more representative than the participants who read the control summary.

Self-categorization theory (Oakes, et al., 1994; Turner, 1985; Turner, et al., 1994) suggests that the strength of the effect of the prime is likely vary across those who see the

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US film and those who see the film from Taiwan. This theory suggests that individuals conceptualize their identity at three different levels of categorization, 1) the interpersonal, where the self is seen as an individual, 2) the intergroup, where the self is seen as a group member, and 3) the interspecies, where the self is seen as a human being. The extent to which a specific level of categorization dominates social perceptions varies from situation to situation according to the principal of meta-contrast. A particular category structure is likely to be activated when the differences within the group are less than the differences between members of that group and others of comparable groups. Which category structure is active varies depending on the nature of the evaluations the participant is making.

Oakes, et al. (1994), working from this theory, have suggested that the way the outgroup homogeneity effect has been measured contributes to the differences that researchers have found in perceptions of the variability of in- and outgroups. They argue that when individuals are asked to evaluate outgroup members, the context is implicitly comparative. The outgroup is automatically seen in relation to the observer's own. Social group identity is activated, within-group similarities are stressed, and the perceived variability of the outgroup decreases. When an individual evaluates a group of which he or she is a member, no across-group comparison is implied. The other members of the ingroup are categorized as individuals, and more variability is seen within the group. This suggests that for the US participants, the nationality or social membership of the characters in the Taiwanese film will have a higher base-level salience or activation rate because it contrasts with the participants' own. There is less room for

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this category to be activated by the priming manipulation. Therefore, the difference between the perceptions of the primed and control groups should be stronger among those who saw the US film than among those who saw the Taiwanese film.

Attribution

Most of this project has focused on whether audiences' interpretations of character representativeness influence the effect of the character on audiences' beliefs. The final goal of this study is to complete a preliminary investigation of another aspect of audiences' interpretation of media texts, their attributions of characters' behavior, which may also affect whether a particular media text shapes the audiences' beliefs.

Attribution is the evaluation of the causes or reasons for an individual's actions. Previous research defines at least two different dimensions of attribution judgements that may impact a media text's effects on audiences' beliefs about the real world, internality and stability. The internality of an attribution is the degree to which an observer believes an individual's behavior was caused by internal, rather than external, causes. If an action is seen as a reflection of the person's personality or state of mind, it is considered internal. If it is seen to be caused by the situation, the action is attributed externally. Attributional stability refers to the degree to which an individual's behavior is believed to result from causes that will not change over time, rather than temporary causes such as mood or transient situational constraints. The two dimensions can vary independently of each other.

Audience attribution of media characters' behavior is partially determined by the content of the text. However, just like the attribution of real-world behavior, the

attribution of character behavior is a partially intuitive judgement that is shaped by the observer's background knowledge, interpretive schemata, and personal experience. There is likely to be variation across different observers in their perceptions of the causes of a specific character's behavior.

Attributions shape the nature of the information that is inferred from an exemplar's behavior. Some attributions imply an action is informative about the situation or social context, whereas others imply it is informative about the person who performed the action. If one makes a stable, internal attribution of an individual's action, it implies that the traits revealed by the action are informative of the individual's nature and intrinsic character. It helps the observer predict how the individual will react to other situations. If the action is externally attributed, it reveals less about the individual and cannot be used to predict how that person will react in other situations.

For example, if one is seen to snap at a subordinate because of having a bad day or because of the subordinate's provocation, the behavior will be seen as relatively unlikely to be repeated. It tells an observer little about how one may behave with other people or in other situations. However, if the same action is seen to result from habitual bad temper, this type of behavior is likely to be repeated and will be seen as more informative about how one treats others or how one will behave in other settings.

If audiences interpret the behavior of media characters in the same way they interpret the behavior of real-world exemplars, attributions may shape the degree to which media characters affect audiences' beliefs. A final purpose of this study is to see whether these interpretive differences shape a media text's impact on understandings. I

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predict that the internality and the stability of the audiences' attributions of characters' behavior will be positively associated with the degree to which the attributes of the characters are applied to the audiences' understandings of the real world. For example, if a young, US male character engages in impolite behavior, the attribute of impoliteness is more likely to be applied to perceptions of young US men in general if the audience member attributes the behavior to internal causes. Since internal attributions imply that the traits revealed by the character's behavior are intrinsic to the character him or herself, they are more likely to be seen as relevant to perceptions of the character's group than traits attributed to the situation. Similarly, the attribute of impoliteness is also more likely to be applied to perceptions of young US men in general if the audience member attributes the behavior to stable causes. Traits that are seen to result from causes that do not change over time are more likely to be seen as relevant to the group than those associated with transient characteristics.

The study evaluates the participants' attributions of the evaluated film characters' most notable action. This allows me to test for an association between the stability and the internality of the audiences' attributions of characters' behavior and the strength of the character's effect on audience understandings of the real-world group. I would note that the two dimensions of attribution were not manipulated in the study, but were allowed to vary naturally among the participants. This design does not, of course, allow for proof of casual direction. However, establishing an association between attribution and the strength of a text's effect would advance previous research.

Using two films allows one to gain an initial sense of the generalizability of any

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associations. If the same pattern is found in regards to both films, it becomes less likely that the result is an artifact of the content of a particular film.

To summarize, the basic design of Study 2 is a 2 X 2 manipulation (prime X film source society). Half the participants saw a segment of a film from a socially near society and half saw a film from a socially distant society. Before seeing the film, half of each of these groups read a priming summary designed to activate categories of nationality or social membership. The rest of the participants read a control summary. After seeing the film, participants completed measures describing their reactions to the characters and their beliefs about the society from which the film came.

The analysis focuses on three factors. First, it seeks an association between the perceived representativeness of the characters and the degree to which the characters' attributes are applied to the audiences' perceptions of the characters' subgroup. That is, I predict that the audience will rate characters' subgroups more highly on the attributes of representative characters than on the attributes of unrepresentative characters.

This study also primes categories of the nationality or society membership for half the participants. The priming manipulation is designed to activate the category structure of society membership, rather than other structures such as gender, ethnicity, or age. Therefore, nationality or society membership should play a greater role in the primed audiences' interpretation and application of the text than it otherwise would. The participants for whom society membership is primed should see the film society as less variable than those in the control groups. The activation of the category structure causes similarities within the categories to be emphasized. Furthermore, the audiences for

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whom this category has been activated should rate the characters' subgroups more highly on the characters' attributes than should those who were not exposed to the priming summary.

Finally, I seek an association between the attributions of character behavior and the degree to which the attributes of the character are applied to the audiences' perceptions of the group. The stronger the internality and stability of the attribution, the more likely the audience members are to rate a character's subgroup highly on the attributes associated with the character.

Method

Sample

One hundred and fifty-seven people participated in this part of the project. The criteria for participating were having been born in the US, US citizenship, and having learned English as a first language. Eligibility was defined in these terms because it was felt that the sense of membership and familiarity with other societies that is likely to be associated with having international familial or cultural ties could serve as a form of cross-categorization that would complicate the study. Volunteers were recruited through classes, news-group postings, and campus newspaper advertisements at several colleges and universities in and around a large, Northeastern city.

The data of 18 people who took part in the study as part of a class exercise were excluded because they did not meet the citizenship or language eligibility requirements. The data of 19 participants were excluded because they completed the range measures

incorrectly,[1] leaving a final sample size of 120.

Fifty-nine percent of the sample was women. The average age was 22.18($\underline{SD}$=5.17), with a range from 18 to 44. Eighty-three percent of the sample identified themselves as White, 10% identified themselves as African American, and 5% identified themselves as Asian or Asian American. Five participants (4%) identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Thirty-eight percent felt they spoke two languages "well enough to carry out a routine conversation." Four participants identified themselves as tri-lingual.

This sample had a relatively high exposure rate to movies. Seventy-two percent saw a movie, either in the theatres, on TV or on home video, at least once every 2 weeks. Ninety-two percent saw one a month. However, these participants, like US moviegoers in general, had much less frequent exposure to non-US films. Nine percent of the participants saw a non-US film once a month, and 51% of the participants estimated they saw at least two a year. Many of these films are likely to have come from Great Britain or Australia, as is indicated by the relative rarity of viewing subtitled or dubbed movies. Six percent saw a subtitled or dubbed film at least once a month, 28% estimated they saw two a year.

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[1] If part of the range data was missing, but the responses that were there were completed correctly, listwise deletion was used. The participants' responses to other measures were included in the rest of the analyses. However, if the participants completed one of the range scales in a way that indicated that did not understand the scales themselves—such as by placing the mean outside the range—the entire case was excluded from the study. Not completing this measure correctly was seen as an indication that the participants were either not attending to the questionnaires or were not responding in good faith. Inclusion of the participants who did not complete the range measures correctly tended to reduce the reliability of other measures.

Films were randomly assigned to screening sessions. The size of the sample that saw the US film, <u>Bodies, Rest, and Motion</u>,[2] is 59. Five people had seen the film previously. Seven had not seen the entire film, but felt they were able to recognize the title or that they had heard something about it. On a scale from one to seven, the mean of the participants' agreement with the statement that they were "familiar with the culture in which the film was set" is 3.69($\underline{SD}$=2.12). The mean of their agreement with the statement that the "film was made with people like me in mind as an audience" is 3.17($\underline{SD}$=1.90).

Seventy-two participants saw the Taiwanese film, <u>Eat, Drink, Man, Woman</u>. Only three people had seen all or part of the film. Six felt they were able to identify the title or that they had heard something about it. On a scale from one to seven, the mean of the participants' agreement with the statement that they were "familiar with the culture in which the film was set" is 2.78($\underline{SD}$=1.80). The mean of their agreement with the statement that the "film was made with people like me in mind as an audience" is 3.77($\underline{SD}$=1.70).

The finding that the mean of the participants' evaluation that the Taiwanese film was made with them in mind is substantially higher than the ratings of the US film on the same item is unexpected. Although the difference between these measures does not meet the conventional level of significance, $\underline{t}$(118)=1.83, $\underline{p}$=.07, this result suggests that there may be real differences in the participants' level of identification with the characters. The difference between the participants' rating of their familiarity with the two cultures,

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[2] Both the US and the Taiwanese film segments were used in Study 1. Each is

which is in the predicted direction, is significant, $\underline{t}$(113.4)= -2.52, $\underline{p}$=.01.

Procedure

At the beginning of each session, all the participants were given a sealed questionnaire booklet and a consent form. They were asked to read, sign and pass up the consent forms. The top sheet of the questionnaire booklet contained a set of instructions. The participants were told that they would be watching the opening ten minutes of a mainstream, commercially released motion picture. They were informed that they would only be seeing a short clip of the film. Therefore, the first page of the questionnaire contained a brief summary of the film, like something they would find in a movie guide section of a newspaper. They were asked to read this summary because it would help them complete the questionnaire later. These instructions were repeated orally in all sessions.

Although the written instructions were always the same, there were two different priming summaries used for each film. Each was formatted to look like a thumbnail film review from a newspaper entertainment guide. One version stressed the national origin of the film, whereas the second version emphasized the thematic content of the film. Both sets of summaries are included in Appendix B. The questionnaires were randomly distributed so that half the participants in each session read each version of the questionnaire.

When all the participants in a session finished reading the film summary, they were informed that the clip they would be seeing was from the very beginning of the

described in Table 2-2.

film, just after the opening credits. They were told where the film was from, the year it came out and, in the case of the Taiwanese film, warned about the sub-titles.

After the screening, the participants were asked to open and complete the questionnaire booklet. The booklet began with measures that asked the participants to rate the typicality and believability of two characters with the most screen time in the film segment. In the case of Bodies, Rest, and Motion, they were asked to evaluate one male and one female character, called Nick and Beth, respectively. Beth was estimated to be 25($\underline{SD}$= 2.41) years old by the participants, whereas the character of Nick was estimated to be 27($\underline{SD}$=2.92). Those who saw the Taiwanese film, Eat, Drink, Man, Woman, were asked to evaluate two female characters. One, Jia-Ning, was estimated to be 18($\underline{SD}$=2.15) years old, the other, Jia-Chien, was estimated to be 26($\underline{SD}$=3.32) years old. Participants also completed items that were designed to assess the stability and internality of their attributions of the characters' behavior. The order in which the characters were assessed was randomized across the participants. These questions were followed by items assessing their evaluations of the film itself.

Participants were then asked to complete a series of questions designed to measure the variability of the society in which the movie was set. Those who watched the Taiwanese film completed measures of their familiarity with Taiwan, whereas those who saw the US film were asked to evaluate the United States. All groups were then asked "when they first became aware of where the film was made" as a manipulation check. The questionnaire concluded with items measuring their exposure to different kinds of movies and basic demographic questions. After they completed the

questionnaire, all participants were debriefed. Participants who were not receiving extra credit were paid and asked to fill out receipts.

Measures

A sample version of the questionnaire used in Study 2 is attached as Appendix C.

Application of Character Attributes to Society Perceptions

This measure was calculated from the scales of the same type as those used to build the counter-prototypicality measures and the unrepresentativeness measures in Study 1. When the participants evaluated the films' societies, they completed a series of seven-point scales describing the "average" person of the society. The scales were marked with an attribute at one end and the opposite of the attribute at the other. There was a labeled, neutral mid-point. An attempt was made to include attributes that have been found in previous research to characterize the four societies in the study as well as attributes that had been used by pretest participants to describe the film characters. The attributes used in these measures included the eight attributes used in Study 1, polite/impolite, traditional/modern, unambitious/ambitious, impulsive/self-controlled, practical/idealistic, talkative/quiet, group-oriented/individualistic, happy-go-lucky/serious, as well as two additional attribute pairs. These attributes, unconfident/unconfident and shy/friendly, were frequently used to describe characters, but did not distinguish characters of different countries or distinguish perceptions of countries. The order of the attributes was randomly determined, but was the same for all participants.

After evaluating the "average person", participants were asked to evaluate the

average person within four subgroups for each society. The subgroups were young men (age 17-34), young women, mature men (age 35-68), and mature women. The order of the subgroups was randomly determined, but was the same for all participants.

The subgroup and attributes that are the focus of the analysis of the media characters' effect depend on the specific film and the character. Each character is predicted to affect perceptions of their own subgroup. For example, if a film features a young male US character who has been previously evaluated as impolite, the impoliteness of young US men will be analyzed. The ratings of the impoliteness of young US men should be higher among those who saw this character as representative than among those who saw him as unrepresentative.

Manipulation Checks

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate "when they were first aware of when the film was made?" Participants were asked to circle one of four options that ranged from 1 "before seeing the clip" to 4 "never". This served as an indirect manipulation check.

Priming Summary Evaluations

After evaluating the film, participants were asked to complete two seven-point scales evaluating the "summary you read before you saw the film". "Based on what you've seen of the film so far," they were asked, "how accurate do you think the summary is? That is, do you think the summary is correct in its evaluation of the film?" The ends of the scale were marked "not at all accurate"(1) and "very accurate" (7). Then, participants were asked to evaluate how relevant they thought the summary was. "That

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is, [did they] think the summary discusses the most important things about the film, or does it discuss things that were relatively unimportant?" The ends of the scale were marked "not at all relevant" (1) and "very relevant" (7).

Representativeness

Participants were asked to evaluate the two characters with the most screen time. As with Study 1, two measures of character representativeness were calculated, self-assessed character typicality and researcher-assessed unrepresentativeness.

Character typicality. Self-assessed character typicality is the degree to which the character's attributes are felt to be common within the character's real-world social group. The participants' evaluations of the character's typicality were measured using an index of the same six questions, three for each evaluated character, that were employed in Study 1. As in Study 1, these questions were embedded in a series of items asking participants to evaluate the likableness, realism, and humorousness of the characters and the degree to which they identified with them. These questions served as controls and helped mask the intent of the study. The reliability of the scale, including both characters in the film segments, was .739 for the US film and .623 for the Taiwanese film.

Character unrepresentativeness. The second measure, unrepresentativeness, was designed to capture the degree to which the character's attributes are felt to be common within the character's social group. It was intended to be a direct operationalization of the participants' judgements of typicality. This measure is constructed in the same way as the unrepresentativeness measure used in Study 1. Participants were asked to evaluate the attributes of the character and of the character's subgroup on a series of ten attributes.

The two sets of scales were separated from each other within the questionnaire. The researcher calculated the measure by taking the average, across attributes, of the absolute difference between the evaluations of the character and the character's subgroup.

Attributions of the Characters' Behavior

The audiences' attributions of the characters' behavior were evaluated using measures adapted from two established attribution scales. The most prominent action the characters' performed in the clip was described. One character, for example, decided to move to another town. Another paused on her way home from work to chat with her friend's boyfriend. Further details of actions used in these measures are provided in Appendix D. The character actions that participants were asked to evaluate were selected on the basis of pretest findings. In the third pretest, participants were asked to indicate "the most meaningful thing [the character] did in the film clip" in an open-ended question. The behavior or action that was most commonly identified as meaningful was the one the participants were asked to evaluate. Although there was some variability in what was seen as the most meaningful action, there was a reasonable amount of consensus in these evaluations.

Participants were asked to describe "the causes or reasons" for the character's action in an open-ended question and then asked to evaluate the internality and stability of the causes they identified. The procedure of having participants' evaluate attributes they themselves generate has been used in several contexts. It is perhaps most closely associated with the attribution style questionnaire. This measure, which was developed by Peterson and his colleagues (1982), was designed to identify individuals' tendencies

towards certain attribution patterns. The original applications of the scale conceptualized attributional style as a stable personality attribute, although later researchers have applied the scale to determine how situational constraints may shape attribution patterns.

Respondents are asked to identify the causes of a series of events and then evaluate the internality, stability, and globality of the cause through single-item questions. Many researchers have used this measure to investigate attribution patterns as a correlate of or contributor to specific personality attributes (e.g., Corr & Gray, 1996; Mitchell, 1989) or to psychological conditions such as depression (e.g., Alloy, Lipman, Abramson, 1992). Versions of the procedure have also been applied in cross-cultural or intergroup research. In an investigation of how stereotypes affect attribution patterns Ben-Ari, Schwarzwald, and Horiner-Levi (1994) used a version of the scale in which participants chose and evaluated an attribution from a closed list of options. Islam and Hewstone (1993) used the original measure to evaluate ingroup attributional bias.

In the current study, each participant is evaluating only two incidents, and I am primarily interested in variation associated with the presentation of the action and with the viewers' relationship to the observed character. Using the single-item measures typical of the attribution style questionnaire would make it difficult to evaluate the reliability of the measure in this context. Therefore, I asked the participants to evaluate the internality and the stability of their attributions on a series of five Likert scales borrowed from the Causal Dimensions Scale, which was created by Russell (1982) and revised by McAuley, Duncan, and Russell (1992). Scale items have been found to reliably discriminate observer attributions in a variety of works including those of

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Abraham (1985), McAuley and Shaffer (1993), Jackson, et al. (1993), and Weber (1994). The scale is designed to evaluate attributional internality, stability, and controllability. I selected items from the scale that were designed to measure internality and stability for this investigation.

After completing the open-ended question about the causes of the characters' behavior, participants were asked to complete a set of five seven-point scales evaluating the causes or reasons for the characters' behavior.

Internality. The internality of the attribution was measured through three questions. Participants were asked whether "the cause(s) [is] something that reflects an aspect of [the character] or something that reflects an aspect of the situation", whether "the cause(s) [is] something outside of [the character] or inside [the character]", and whether "the cause(s) [is] something about [the character] or something about other people". The questions were coded so that the larger the number, the more internal the attribution. The mean of the three questions was calculated to serve as an internal attribution index for each character. In reference to the US film, the reliabilities for these items were .700 for Beth and .716 for Nick. In reference to the Taiwanese film, the reliabilities for these items were .536 for Jia-Chien and .764 for Jia-Ning.

Stability. Stability was evaluated through two items. Participants were asked whether "the cause(s) [is] permanent or temporary" and whether "the cause(s) [is] changeable or unchangeable". The questions were coded so that the larger the number, the more stable the attribution. The mean of the two questions was used as a stability attribution index for each character. In reference to the US film, the reliabilities for these

items were .627 for Beth and .578 for Nick. The attributions of the actions of the Taiwanese characters were less reliable, with an alpha of .497 for Jia-Chien and .496 for Jia-Ning.

The reliabilities of both the internality and the stability measures are lower for those viewing the Taiwanese as opposed to the US film. The contrast in the reliability of these measures across the US and the Taiwanese films may, in itself, be a mark of the difference in the social distance between the audience and the two film societies. Without a clear understanding of the social structure in which the characters operate, the conclusions to which the audience members come regarding their behavior are more tentative and more random. Therefore, they may be more variable.

Society Variability and Subgrouping Measures

Just as in Study 1, this experiment made use of three measures of variability and two measures of subgrouping.

Perceived variability of the films' source societies. Perceived variability was evaluated by three measures: the range measure, perceived variability, and probability of differentiation. The composition of the questions and the attributes on which participants were asked to evaluate the societies were the same as those used in Study 1. The reliability across attributes for the range measure was .659 for those evaluating the United States and .806 for those evaluating Taiwan. The reliabilities of the measures of probability of differentiation and perceived variability of the US were .962 and .723, respectively. For Taiwan, these reliabilities .934 and .841, respectively.

Subgrouping of the films' source societies. There were two measures of

subgrouping, the attribute count measure and the measure of subgroup distinctiveness. The attribute count is the average number of attributes that the participant saw as valid descriptors of the society's subgroups. As described above, participants were asked to evaluate the average person within four subgroups for each society. The subgroups were young (17-34) men, young women, mature (35-68) men, and mature women. The attributes were paired opposites arranged on a seven-point scale with a labeled mid-point. The attributes used here include those used in Study 1, as well as confident/unconfident and shy/friendly.

The number of attributes that were used to describe a subgroup was calculated by counting the number of attributes that a participant considered a valid descriptor of each subgroup, that is, the number of attributes that were not evaluated at the neutral mid-point of "4". These counts were then averaged across the four subgroups to create a single index for each society, so that the potential range was from zero to ten. The reliability of these measures across subgroups was .843 for the United States, and .854 for Taiwan.

Subgroup distinctiveness is the degree to which the subgroups were different from each other. Subgroup distinctiveness was measured by calculating the average absolute difference across subgroups for each attribute. The reliability of these measures across subgroups was .854 for the United States and .877 for Taiwan.

Results

Since the priming manipulation has the potential to affect measures of character interpretation in ways that might affect the investigation of other hypotheses, I report these results first. I then discuss the impact of character representativeness on the

audiences' application of the characters' attributes to perceptions of the characters' real-world societies. Finally, I report the analyses of the participants' attribution of character behavior.

Priming Effects

Half the participants viewing each film were exposed to a prime designed to activate the category of nationality or society membership.

Manipulation Check

Analysis of the manipulation check in regards to the US film indicates that those who read the priming summary were aware of the origin of the film earlier than those in the control condition, $t(57) = -2.44$, $p = .02$. The manipulation was successful, if not strong.

The manipulation check in relation to the Taiwanese film indicates that there is no significant difference between the primed and non-primed viewers in terms of when they found out where the film was made, $t(56) = -.63$, $p = .53$. This suggests that the summaries presented before the film clip may have been unsuccessful in affecting the salience of society membership as a category among the participants. This result, of course, implies that the manipulation may not affect the participants' perceptions and suggests that any lack of results may be due to a failure of the manipulation.

Participants' evaluations of the relevance and accuracy of the priming and control summaries were also compared. There were no differences in evaluations of the accuracy or relevance of the priming and control summaries in regard to either film. In both cases, the control and priming summaries are viewed as equally accurate and relevant.

<u>Manipulation Effects</u>

I predicted that participants who read the priming summary should evaluate the characters to be more typical than those who read the control summary should. Furthermore, the calculation of the unrepresentativeness scores should indicate that participants in the priming condition see characters as more like their subgroups than do participants in the control condition. Participants who read the priming summary should also describe the film society as less variable than those who read the control summary should. Since subgrouping is associated with perceived variability, this implies that those who read the priming summary would describe less clearly defined subgroups within the society than would those who read the control summary.

<u>Character typicality and unrepresentativeness.</u> In relation to the US film, there are no direct priming effects on the typicality measures of either character, Beth, $t(57)= -.333$, $p=.74$; Nick, $t(57)=.450$, $p=.65$, or of the characters evaluated together, $t(57)=.054$, $p=.96$. Nor is there any effect in regards to the Taiwanese film, Jia-Chien, $t(59)= .79$, $p=.43$; Jia-Ning, $t(59)= -1.20$, $p=.24$; characters together, $t(59)= 1.24$, $p=.22$.

I also sought priming effects on the unrepresentativeness measures. There were no significant results in regards to either character in either film, Beth, $t(57)= -.861$, $p=.39$; Nick, $t(57)= -.184$, $p=.86$, Jia-Chien, $t(59)=.166$, $p=.87$; Jia-Ning, $t(59)=.385$, $p= .702$. Evaluating the characters of each film together does not result in any significant differences, US film, $t(57)= -.674$, $p=.50$; Taiwanese film, $t(59)=.154$, $p=.73$.

The analysis not only failed to discover any results in regards to the Taiwanese film, where the effect was predicted to be relatively small, it also failed to discover any

results in regards to the US film. This analysis provides no support for the prediction that activating a particular category structure would affect the application of media character attributes. It is difficult to determine from the available data whether this because the prediction is incorrect or because the priming manipulation was too weak.[3]

Society variability. Among those who evaluated the US, the overall mean of the range measure is 12.56(SD=1.54) on a scale that ranges from .1 to 15.2. The range measure is designed to capture the audiences' sense of the breadth of variation within the population on a set of attributes. The second measure of variability is the probability of differentiation, which represents the average probability across attributes that two randomly chosen group members will vary in terms of the attribute. The overall mean for this measure was .78(SD=.11). Perceived variation is the average, across attributes, of the extent to which category members are perceived as widely dispersed about the attribute's mean. It is basically the average of the variation of the scales constructed by the participants. The overall mean of the perceived variation measure is 2.37(SD=.49). Although the directions of the difference in the means between the control and priming groups is in the predicted direction for all three measures of variability, the difference

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[3] I also sought to determine whether there were priming effects on the degree to which the characters' attributes were used to describe their real-world subgroups. I examined the evaluations of the characters' subgroups on the attributes that were used to describe the characters by the participants in Study 1. There is one significant result. Among the participants who saw the US film, the group that read the priming summary evaluated young American women to be more ambitious (5.63(SD=1.89)) than members of the control group (4.93(SD=1.31)), t(57)=2.16, p=.04. Since the female character the participants' evaluated was characterized as unambitious, it is unlikely that the difference is the direct result of exposure to the character. Considering the relatively low level of significance and the high number of t-tests the analysis represents, it is possible that this difference is the result of chance.

does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance for any of the measures, range, $t(54)= -.22$, $p=.83$; probability of differentiation, $t(57)= -.46$, $p=.65$; perceived variation, $t(57)=-1.91$, $p=.06$. The means within the primed and control groups for each of these measures are reported in Table 6-1.

In relation to the Taiwanese film, the overall mean of the range index is 10.98(SD=2.36). The mean of the probability of differentiation measure is .774(SD= .132), and the mean of perceived variability is 2.14(SD= .59). All priming effects for these measures are non-significant and none approach significance. The means of the two different groups on these measures are reported in Table 6-2. Although the difference in the range measure is in the predicted direction, measures of perceived variability and probability of differentiation were greater among the control group than the primed group. This is contrary to prediction.

I would note that the outgroup homogeneity effect suggests that these US participants should evaluate the US as more variable than Taiwan. When one compares the evaluations of the variability of the US and Taiwan, the US is significantly more variable on two of the three measures, the range measure, $t(98.8)= -4.25$, $p<.001$, and the measure of perceived variation, $t(118)= -2.39$, $p=.02$. The means of the probability of differentiation measure were in the correct direction, but were statistically insignificant, $t(118)= -.41$, $p=.68$. This aspect of the results is consistent with previous findings.

Society subgrouping. In relation to evaluations of the US, the mean of the subgroup differentiation measure is 1.50(SD=.50). The overall mean of the subgroup count measure was 8.35(SD=1.41). On average, participants described subgroups within

the US through just over eight of the ten attributes. The differences in the means of both subgrouping measures were in the predicted direction. However, neither difference is statistically significant, attribute count, $t(57)=-.306$, $p=.76$; subgroup differentiation, $t(55)=-.42$, $p=.68$. The means of the subgrouping measures within the control and experimental conditions are reported in Table 6-3.

Among the participants who saw the film from Taiwan, the overall mean of the subgroup differentiation measure is $1.57(SD=.61)$, and the overall mean of the subgroup count measure was $8.04(SD=1.72)$. Although the difference in the means of each of these measures are in the predicted direction, neither is significant, subgroup count, $t(59)=-.76$, $p=.45$; subgroup distinctiveness, $t(59)=-.75$, $p=.45$. The means of these two measures within the primed and control conditions are reported in Table 5-4. The prediction that activating the category of nationality or society membership would affect perceptions of the variability of the film societies is not supported by these analyses.

Potential moderators. I also sought to determine whether there were any other factors that might be moderating or masking the impact of the priming manipulation on perceptions of variability or of subgrouping. I tested for interaction effects between the priming manipulation and four types of control variables; 1) previous exposure to the films' cast, 2) frequency of film viewing, 3) reactions to the film and its characters, and 4) the demographics of the participant in relation to those of the characters.

Cast recognition and frequency of film viewing were found to be associated with perceptions of character representativeness in Study 1, and so they are investigated as potential interactions here. Reactions to the film itself, such as comprehension and

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interest, could also have shaped the impact of the prime by influencing the audiences' degree of engagement with the film. Demographic factors are also considered because points of similarity other than society membership, including gender, age, race or ethnicity, could influence the audiences' responses to the characters. Similarity between the character and the participant in terms of these factors could influence interpretive factors, such as attention and identification, which may shape representativeness perceptions. The prime, therefore, may affect those who have some other connection to the characters differently than those who do not. Furthermore, if the characters are evaluated in terms of these category memberships, it could obscure any effects of the priming manipulation.

The impact of these factors on self-assessed typicality and on unrepresentativeness was investigated through ANOVAs. Self-assessed typicality and unrepresentativeness were entered as independent variables in separate sets of equations that incorporated interaction terms along with the main effect variables. The typicality measures of neither character in either film is predicted by the interaction of the prime and participants' interest in the film, their subjective sense of understanding of the film, their perception of the film's genre, or their sense of identification with the characters. Nor are there any significant interaction effects between the priming manipulation and the age, race or the gender of the participant, their frequency of general movie watching or the frequency of watching foreign movies or perceptions of the strength or goodness of the characters.

The results in relation to the unrepresentativeness measures are scattered and

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inconsistent. The interaction between the prime and identification with one of the US characters, Beth, is significant, $F_{(6, 45)}=2.84$, $p=.02$. This interaction term does not predict evaluations of the unrepresentativeness of the other US character, nor does it predict evaluations of the unrepresentativeness of either of the Taiwanese characters. Among the participants under the age of 23, the interaction between age and the prime is significant in terms of one of the Taiwanese characters, Jia-Ning, $F_{(1,46)}=8.46$, $p=.05$.[4] Among those in the priming group, older participants are more likely to evaluate the character as similar to her subgroup than younger participants are. This factor does not predict evaluations of the other Taiwanese character or either of the US characters. There are no significant main effects in terms of either of these cases. None of the other tested interaction terms were significant. These results do not provide consistent support for the prediction that the prime had any effect on the perceptions of the unrepresentativeness of the characters.

Impacts of Typicality on Perceptions of Real-world Groups

I predicted that the perceived typicality of a character would predict the degree to which the attributes of the character were applied to real-world groups. That is, the more typical a character is seen to be, the more likely the participants are to rate the characters' subgroups highly on the attributes associated with that character.[5] I will report the results

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[4] $n=50$; Participants older than 22 were excluded from this analysis. They were outliers in the age distribution and graphs of the interaction equation indicated that the effect of age on the unrepresentativeness measure after this point was inconsistent.

[5] I used only the measures of self-assessed typicality, which were derived from the Likert scales, for this analysis. Although the unrepresentativeness measure was initially conceptualized as a direct operationalization of the judgements that the Likert scales ask the participants to make, measurement artifacts make the use of this measure

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from the US film first. There were two characters evaluated in the US film, Beth and Nick. On an index that ranges from one to seven, the overall mean of representativeness evaluations for Beth is 4.07(SD=1.19), whereas the average for Nick is 4.10(SD=1.12).

Based on the results of Study 1,[6] the attributes that were significantly associated with Beth at the .01 level were polite, unambitious, self-controlled, practical, quiet, and serious. The means of these analyses are reported in Table 6-5. Using OLS regression, I sought to determine whether the typicality of this character predicts the degree to which these six attributes were used to describe the subgroup of young US women. I also examined whether there was an impact on the attributes that were only used in Study 2, confident/unconfident and shy/friendly. There were no significant associations. I tried controlling for how much the participant reported liking the character, their evaluations of the "goodness" of the character, and their level of identification with the character. These analyses did not reveal any significant associations.

The attributes that were significantly associated with Nick at the .01 level were impolite, modern, unambitious, impulsive, idealistic, and individualistic. I sought to see whether the perceived typicality of this character would be significantly associated with the degree to which these six attributes were applied to the audiences' evaluations of

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inappropriate in this analysis. The unrepresentativeness measure is calculated from the same items that are used to evaluate the participants' perceptions of the characters social group.

[6] These analyses included the members of the Study 1 experimental groups that saw these films as well as individuals in the Study 1 control groups who saw and evaluated the films as pre-testers after completing the society variability measures. Evaluations within the control and experimental groups are not different more often than one would expect from chance. The combined sample size was 43 for the US film and 23 for the Taiwanese film.

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young US men. I also tested for impacts on confident/unconfident and shy/friendly evaluations. The only significant association is that Nick's typicality negatively predicts the degree to which young US men were seen as individualistic, $B= -.397(SE=.20)$, $p=.05$. This effect is in the direction opposite of that predicted. Controlling for liking the character, evaluations of the goodness of the character, and identification with the character did not reveal any significant associations between typicality and evaluations of the character's subgroups.

Two characters in the Taiwanese film segment were evaluated. Each was a young woman. One was called Jia-Chien and the other was called Jia-Ning. The mean of the typicality index is $4.88(SD=1.03)$ for Jia-Chien and $4.22(SD=1.25)$ for Jia-Ning. According the results of Study 1, the attributes associated with Jia-Chien at the .01 level are impolite, modern, ambitious, individualistic, and serious. The means of these evaluations are reported in Table 6-5. I also examined the impact of typicality on confident/unconfident and shy/friendly. Using OLS regression, I checked to see whether the typicality of this character was associated with greater perceptions that people within these subgroups would carry these attributes. None of the associations between typicality and evaluations of the character's subgroups are significant.

The traits associated with Jia-Ning at the .01 level are polite, ambitious, talkative, and happy-go-lucky. The means of these evaluations are also reported in Table 6-5. I sought to determine if the typicality of this character predicted evaluations of her subgroup within the film setting society. There is only one significant result. The typicality of the character of Jia-Ning is positively associated with the evaluations of the

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friendliness of young Taiwanese women, $B=.333(SE=.15)$, $p=.03$. Friendliness is an attribute that was strongly associated with the character in the qualitative measures of the pretests, but which is not strongly associated with perceptions of her subgroup of Taiwanese society. The attribute is not stereotypical. Furthermore, this character was most liked, mean=5.39($SD=1.35$), and the most identified with, mean=4.05($SD=1.71$), of the four characters studied.[7]

The fact that this attribute, in relation to this character, represents the only significant result suggests some interesting avenues for investigating the circumstances under which media may have a positive, counter-stereotypical effect on audiences' perceptions of other countries.

There are several aspects of this situation that might have contributed to the relationship. The character was from a socially distant society, Taiwan, which is a small country that the audience will have heard relatively little about and will have had relatively little experience with. The data from the US participants of Study 1 show that the means of the participants' level of experience with Taiwan are the lowest of the three socially distant countries. The participants' perceptions of this society, therefore, are likely to have been rather tentative. The specific society from which the character came may have contributed to the increased likelihood that she affected the audiences' perceptions. The media may have the greatest impact on perceptions that are relatively unformed.

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[7] These scales range from one to seven. The means in relation to the other character are as follows: Jia-Chien, liking 4.52($SD=1.48$); identification 3.28($SD=1.87$); Nick, liking 3.31($SD=2.04$), identification 2.17($SD=1.76$); Beth, liking 4.81($SD=1.92$),

In addition, this character was from the same age group as much of the audience, which may have contributed to their attention to her. Furthermore, the primary actions in which the character was engaged in the film clip are likely to have resonated with the audiences' own concerns and experiences.[8] Jia-Ning was shown working in a fast-food restaurant and trying to negotiate between her obligations to her family and her work schedule. She interacted with a female peer, discussing ways with which to deal with men. Despite the differences in culture, there is a lot about the life of this specific character that this audience is likely to have found familiar.

In addition, the director of the film from which the segment came, Ang Lee, is widely respected for his skill at conveying character and working with actors. He has worked in several languages and film genres across a startling variety of settings. After making this film, he went on to make Sense and Sensibility, an adaptation of a Jane Austin novel, The Ice Storm, a drama about suburban angst and wife-swapping that takes place in the US of the 1970s, Ride with the Devil, US Civil War drama, and Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, a Chinese-language sword-fighting epic. With each film,

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identification 2.85($\underline{SD}$=2.07).

[8] As she works in the resturant, Jia-Ning reminds her friend and co-worker, Rachel, that Rachel was to cover for her so that she can get to her father's dinner. Rachel has forgotten. Her boyfriend is waiting outside to take her to the beach. Jia-Ning suggests that Rachel keep him waiting an hour, to make him appreciate her more. Rachel, giggling, agrees this is a good idea. As Jia-Ning leaves work, she stops to talk to Rachel's boyfriend, who is sitting on his parked moped reading as he waits for Rachel. When Jia-Ning informs him of the delay, he throws his book on the ground, exclaims over his girlfriend's neglect, and tips his bike over. Jia-Ning helps him right it and assures him that Rachel will not be long. Before walking away, Jia-Ning pauses, looks back toward him, and smiles. The participants' open-ended responses indicate that they interpreted the sequence to indicate that she had an interest in the young man, an interpretation that is borne out by the rest of the film.

however, Lee has been noted for his skill in presenting stories that portray well-developed characters.

This characteristic of his works arises in part from the material he chooses to work with. Lee has worked with the same scriptwriter, James Schamus, on six of his seven films. The work they have produced has shown a consistent concern with conveying character and a focus on the psychological motivations of character behavior. The audience members may have modified their perceptions of the group in response to this character because the script offered enough consistent details about her that she seemed to be a real and legitimate source of information, despite disconfirming some of the audiences' established perceptions.

The filmmaker's technical ability may have also contributed to the way the film conveys character. The sequence used in the study, for example, introduced each of the characters in the middle of their separate activities on the same Sunday afternoon. Then the story crosscut between images of the father and his daughters as they went about their afternoon routines. A viewer would recognize that the characters are linked, but would be unaware of the exact nature of their relationship until the family sat down to dinner at the final scene of the sequence. This technique of revealing the details of the characters' interests and daily lives, while withholding information about the highly salient issue of the characters' relationship to each other, is likely to have focused the audiences' attention on the characters.

I would emphasize, however, that although the investigation of what makes this character and this film different allows for some interesting lines of inquiry, given the

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number of statistical tests that these analyses represent, the confidence one can have in the results concerning this character is limited.

In running the analysis in regard to the Taiwanese film, I also tried controlling for liking the characters, the goodness of the characters, and identification with the characters. These analyses did not reveal any further associations between typicality and evaluations of the characters' subgroups. This analysis provided little support for the prediction that character typicality would be associated with the degree to which the characters' attributes are applied to their real-world groups.

Attribution Effects

Finally, I sought to determine if the type of attributions the participants made of the characters' behavior were correlated with degree to which the characters' attributes were used to describe the characters' subgroups. On an index of one to seven, the average of the internality of the causes of Nick's behavior, 4.32($\underline{SD}$=.85), is greater than that of the causes of Beth's behavior, 3.37($\underline{SD}$=1.38). This difference is statistically significant, $\underline{t}$(58)=-7.05, $\underline{p}$<.001. However, there are no direct priming effects on this measure in relation to either Beth, $\underline{t}$(57)= -1.86, $\underline{p}$=.08, or Nick, $\underline{t}$(57)=-.26, $\underline{p}$=.80.

Using OLS regression, I sought any associations between internality of the attributions of the characters' behavior and the application of their characteristics to their real-world subgroups. There are no significant associations in regards to either character. The prediction that internal attributions would be associated with a greater tendency to apply the attributes of the character to their real-world subgroup is not supported.

On an index ranging from one to seven, the mean of the stability of the causes of

Nick's behavior is 3.59($\underline{SD}$=1.52), whereas the stability of Beth's behavior is 3.66($\underline{SD}$=1.64). This difference is not statistically significant, $\underline{t}$(58)=.23, $\underline{p}$=.82. There are no direct priming effects on this measure in relation to either Beth, $\underline{t}$(57)= -.05, $\underline{p}$=.96, or Nick, $\underline{t}$(57)= -.14, $\underline{p}$=.90. Using OLS regression with listwise deletion, I sought any associations between the stability of the evaluations of the characters' behavior and the application of their characteristics to their subgroups. There are no significant associations in regards to either character. The prediction that the stability of attributions of the character's behavior would predict the relationship between the character and the character's subgroup is not supported.

I performed parallel analyses in regards to the Taiwanese film. The internal attribution index has a mean of 4.49($\underline{SD}$=1.23) for Jia-Chien, and 4.43($\underline{SD}$=1.39) for Jia-Ning. The difference in the ratings of the two characters is not significant, $\underline{t}$(60)= -.22, $\underline{p}$=.83. There were no priming effects on the attributions of the behavior of either Jia-Chien, $\underline{t}$(59)=.292, $\underline{p}$=.77, or Jia-Ning, $\underline{t}$(59)=-295, $\underline{p}$=.769.

Using OLS regression, I sought any associations between the internality of the evaluations of the characters' behavior and the application of their characteristics to their real-world subgroups. There is one significant effect. The stronger internal attribution of the behavior of the character of Jia-Ning, the less likely the participant is to evaluate young Taiwanese women as quiet, $\underline{B}$= .21($\underline{SE}$=.10), $\underline{p}$=.03. Talkativeness is a characteristic that was highly associated with this character and which was relevant to the evaluated behavior (talking with her friend's boyfriend). This characteristic, however, is counter-stereotypical in terms of the participants' evaluations of this subgroup of

Taiwanese society. This element points to the importance of asking the right questions in terms of which attributes of the group a particular character may affect. The attribute of talkativeness was explicitly revealed by the character's behavior.

Jia-Ning is the same character in relation to which typicality evaluations were associated with ratings of subgroup friendliness. The familiarity of many elements of the character's situation is likely to have aided the audience in interpreting her character. This idea receives support from the fact that several respondents indicated in their open-ended responses that the character had a romantic interest in her friend's boyfriend, a point that is only implicit at this point in the narrative. The audience had the previous experience that allowed them to make sense of her actions and deduce her motivations. In addition, the argument outlined above about the filmmakers' contributions to the audience responses also applies here. The audience's interpretation of the character is likely to have been shaped by the inclusion within the script of enough coherent information to make the character's motivations deducible from her behavior as well as by the filmmakers' skill in presenting this information to the audience.

I would note again, however, that although this particular result is interesting, the prediction that internal attributions would be associated with a greater tendency to apply the attributes of the character to their real-world subgroup receives only limited overall support from this analysis.

The mean of the evaluations of the stability of the participants' attributions is 3.67(SD=1.41) for Jia-Chien and 3.18(SD=1.30) for Jia-Ning. The difference between the means in relation to the two characters fell just short of significance, $t(60)$=1.99,

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$\underline{p}=.051$. There are no priming effects on the stability of the attributions of either Jia-Chien's, $\underline{t}(59)=.331$, $\underline{p}=.74$, or Jia-Ning's behavior, $\underline{t}(59)=-.668$, $\underline{p}=.51$.

I tested for any associations between the internality of the evaluations of the characters' behavior and the application of their attributes to the characters' subgroups. There are no significant associations in regards to either character. The prediction that the stability of the attributions of the characters' behavior would predict the relationship between the character and the characters' subgroup is not supported by this analysis.

<u>Discussion</u>

The results of this study hint at situations in which media representations may have the potential to shape audiences' perceptions of the real world. Specifically, one character affected perceptions of her society when the society was socially distant from the audience, the audience identified with and liked the character, and the character's attributes were different from the prevailing society stereotype. There were no other characters that met these criteria. Future research may benefit from investigations into the way cross-cultural media identification is established. These connections may be a means through which media representations could produce positive change on audiences' perceptions of their societies.

However, all things considered, the results of this study are sparse. There are several reasons why this study may have failed to support the hypotheses it examined. A factor that may speak to the lack of results in relation to of all three factors investigated (i.e., the priming manipulation, character representativeness, and attribution) is that audiences' perceptions of the film societies may have been too well established to be

affected by these brief film segments.

Other factors may have contributed to the lack of results in regard to specific foci of the study. When one considers category activation, perhaps the most obvious explanation of the lack of effect of the priming manipulation is that the primes were unsuccessful in activating the category of nationality or society membership.

When one considers the lack of effect of the audiences' perceptions of the representativeness of the characters, one returns the problem of the validity of the measures. As in Study 2, the two measures of representativeness, typicality and unrepresentativeness, were not significantly correlated with each other. The nature of this has been discussed in detail in Chapter 5, and will be further addressed in Chapter 7. However, the differences across films and across characters within films suggest that the participants' evaluations of the representativeness of the character may not be driven by logical calculations relating the characters to the real world, but rather by more holistic, film-specific judgments. The results throughout the study indicate that these evaluations may be more fluid and more strongly determined by cues from the media representation than previously anticipated. It reemphasizes the idea that further research on how the content and stylistic elements of a text interact with the audience members' perspective in the interpretive process.

Finally, the study could have failed to reveal an association between attribution and the application of the characters' attributes to the character's subgroups because the traits revealed by the character's actions were not captured in the measures of the characters' effect on the audiences' understandings of the real world. For example, if a

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participant felt that a character's action revealed his or her insensitivity, but the character's impact on the audiences' perceptions of the group's insensitivity was not measured, the study would have failed to capture an aspect of the representation's effect.

It may also be, of course, that the study's predictions are simply wrong. The literature from which the study hypotheses were developed comes primarily from theory and research that deals with intergroup perception in interpersonal contexts. The way individuals process information about the media may be different from the way they process interpersonal information in ways I did not anticipate.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

These studies provide little support for most of the primary hypotheses of this work. In the following pages, I will discuss why they may have failed and explore how the insights gained through this project could guide further research. The studies also revealed several unexpected but potentially interesting findings. I will close by explicating these findings and discussing the directions they suggest for future investigations.

Study Missteps

This project was designed to investigate a set of hypotheses about the relationships between audiences' social distances from a society portrayed in a text, their perceptions of the variability of those societies, and their perceptions of the representativeness of the text's characters. I predicted that the less familiarity audience members had with a society, the more likely they would be to see a society as homogenous. The more homogenous they saw the society to be, the more likely they would be to see individual media characters as representative of their real-world social groups. This perception of representativeness is of interest because previous work has shown that the attributes of representative exemplars are more likely to be applied to an observer's understanding of a group. If the studies had found evidence that the perceived representativeness of media characters functioned in the same way, it would have had implications for the media's role in the construction of audiences' beliefs about social groups and in the modification of established perceptions of social groups.

In the context of these studies, I predicted that characters from societies that were socially distant from the viewer would be seen as more representative than those from societies that were socially near to the viewer. Therefore, the US participants were predicted to evaluate characters in films of Taiwan, Mexico, and Australia as more representative than characters from films of the US. The Greater China participants, in contrast, were predicted to see characters in films of Mexico, Australia, and the US as more representative than characters from films of Taiwan. The results were erratic in regard to these predictions and did not provide consistent support for the hypotheses.

I also predicted that the relationships between social distance and perceived character representativeness would be mediated by perceptions of the variability of the characters' film societies. The differences between the participants' perceptions of the homogeneity of the near and distant film societies, therefore, would be associated with the differences between their perceptions of the representativeness of the characters from the near and distant societies. The study results, however, provided no support for this hypothesis.

Study 2 was designed to evaluate whether the perceived representativeness of the characters was associated with the characters' effect on the audience's beliefs about the characters' real-world counterparts. I predicted that the more typical a character was seen to be, the higher the character's subgroup would be rated on the character's attributes. Although there was one case in which this prediction held true, which will be discussed in detail below, the study results did not provide consistent support for this hypothesis.

Measurement Validity

There are several potential explanations of why this project failed to find support for its hypotheses. One of the most obvious explanations has to do with the way perceived character typicality or representativeness was assessed. I attempted to measure the audiences' perceptions of how common characters' attributes were among the characters' real-word groups in two ways. One technique was to ask the participants to evaluate this concept more or less directly on a trio of Likert scales. I report the results of these measures under the name of "self-assessed typicality". The second method of evaluating how common characters' attributes were seen to be within the characters' real-word groups was more indirect. Participants were asked to evaluate a character and the character's subgroup through two sets of scales that were located at different points in the questionnaire. These evaluations were then built into a single measure by taking the average, across attributes, of the absolute difference between the participants' evaluations of a character's attributes and their evaluations of the attributes of the character's subgroup. This "unrepresentativeness" measure was conceptualized as the operationalization of the cognitive evaluation that participants were asked to carry out in the typicality measure.

The two measures, however, are not significantly correlated with each other, indicating that they are not measuring the same underlying concept. This result points to measurement validity as a potential explanation of the failure to find substantive support for the hypotheses. There are several possible reasons why these two measures do not correlate with each other. Participants may have been evaluating the typicality of the characters through the Likert scales on different attributes than those used to construct the

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unrepresentativeness measure. The items from which the unrepresentativeness measures were calculated were based on a series of attributes generated from the literature and pretests. They have been found to characterize the different societies used in the study. However, the study participants may have evaluated the typicality of the characters in terms of other personality attributes, demographic attributes, stylistic attributes of the film, or more complex characteristics like behavior patterns. I may have simply selected the wrong characteristics to evaluate the characters and their subgroups.

It could also be that differences in the level of measurement complicate the association. The self-assessed typicality measures are general questions, whereas the researcher-calculated unrepresentativeness measures evaluate the concept on a set of specific personality attributes. The contrast between the general and specific items may have obscured associations.

Self-presentational concerns are another factor that may have clouded the participants' responses to the self-assessed typicality measures. The participants may have sought to avoid appearing to stereotype characters or to make overly hasty generalizations about the characters or the characters' subgroups. In the case of the evaluations of ingroup characters, the participants' emotional investment in their own group memberships may have shaped their evaluations of the typicality of the characters. For example, they may have rated pleasant characters of their own group as typical and unpleasant characters as atypical in order to protect their perceptions of the ingroup. These sorts of influences may have also complicated the participants' evaluations of the characters' typicality.

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A final possibility is that audiences' were not making cognitively based calculations at all, but rather were relying on more holistic impressions of the characters' realism. The judgements that audience members make when called upon for these assessments may bear no resemblance to the rather abstract calculations posited by the researcher.

Although I have investigated the study hypotheses using both the self-assessed measure of typicality and the researcher-calculated measure of unrepresentativeness, I focus on the unrepresentativeness measure. I made this choice, after much tearing of hair and gnashing of teeth, for three reasons. First, since the link between the evaluations of the character and the evaluations of the characters' social groups were calculated by the researcher, the measures are more indirect and are less likely to be affected by social desirability factors.

In addition, the behavior of this measure is more consistent with previous studies than that of the self-assessed typicality measure. Although none of the results provide overwhelming support for the study hypotheses, the researcher-constructed unrepresentativeness scale performs according to the predictions built from previous research in some circumstances. Among the US sample, for example, this measure supports the prediction that the characters in films of socially distant societies would be seen as more representative than characters in films of socially near societies. That is, the difference between the participants' evaluations of the characters and their evaluations of the characters' real-world subgroups is larger in relation to the socially distant film societies than in relation to the socially near society. Within the Greater China sample,

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the mean is in the correct direction, but the difference is not significant.

In contrast, self-assessed typicality, which was built directly from the Likert scale items, provides no support for the hypotheses. Among the US sample, the means of these measures are in the predicted direction, but are non-significant. Within the Greater China sample, they are significant in the direction opposite that predicted. The characters from the socially near society, Taiwan, are seen as more typical than the characters from the socially distant societies. The researcher-calculated unrepresentativeness measure's insulation from social desirability concerns and its relative consistency with previous work lend indirect support to the notion that it is the more valid of the two measures.

Finally, I argue that the researcher-assessed unrepresentativeness measure is more consistent with the theory underlying these hypotheses. The relationships investigated here assume that audiences' established perceptions and beliefs about the variability and central tendencies of social groups are cognitive structures shape their subsequent judgements and evaluations, often without their awareness. The hypotheses imply that the representativeness of a character shapes the character's impact on a viewers' real-world perceptions regardless of whether the viewer consciously makes and articulates an evaluation of realism or not. Their established beliefs about the portrayed groups are seen as the structures that limit their responses to particular texts.

However, the participants' interpretations of a how common a media character's attributes are among the character's social group are unrelated to the measurable associations between evaluations of the attributes of the character and of the attributes of the character's social group. This suggests that the participants' typically judgements are

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affected by other factors at some point during the process of recalling their impressions or of articulating the evaluation. Because the indirect measure taps the underlying cognitive belief structures rather than viewers' articulations, it more closely captures the theoretical construct of the message.

This begs the question, however, of what the self-assessed measure of typicality actually captures. The factor analysis of the Likert items of typicality and believability suggest that the two sets of measures capture different dimensions of audiences' assessments of how media portrayals relate to their real-world counterparts. Factor analyses of items designed to measure these concepts among the US sample indicate that they load consistently on two different factors. However, the failure of the typicality measure to correlate with the indirect operationalization of this cognitive judgement challenges the assumption that the cognitive evaluations of the participants matched the researcher's conceptualization of these factors.

It may be, as mentioned above, that perceived representativeness was assessed through criteria that were different from those the participants used to assess typicality. It is also possible that audience assessments were much more holistic than was anticipated or were more strongly determined by textual factors such as the content or stylistic elements of individual films. Further research to determine how audiences evaluate the realism of media texts would be beneficial.

The investigation of these interpretive elements is important in methodological terms. The majority of the research into media realism relies on audiences' self-reports of their perceptions. If audiences' conceptualizations of this term are influenced by

factors that are unrecognized by researchers, these investigations could be complicated by unnecessary measurement error. These results suggest that some of the variation of measures that ask participants to evaluate a text's realism in general terms may be attributable to differences across participants in the kinds of judgments that are being carried out. Understanding what, exactly, audiences do when they are asked to evaluate media realism would help researchers to better understand how these elements of interpretation are shaped by audience and by textual factors, as well as better evaluate how a text may shape attitudes and behavior.

This type of exploration would also be interesting in its own right. Documenting how audiences see a text's relationship to the real world could be a fascinating means of exploring the role that media characters and media narratives play in their view of the world. A potentially fruitful further study in this area would be open-ended discussions with media viewers about the realism of particular texts.

Another point is that I was unable to run a factor analysis on the Likert-scale items with the Greater China sample. Preliminary analyses indicate that factor loading on these items varied according to the participants' levels of English proficiency. This suggests that, among this sample, the items are an unreliable means of evaluating these dimensions. If one has access to resources that would allow one to translate the questionnaire and then reverse-translate it to insure accuracy, it would allow for more finely controlled cross-cultural analyses. A potentially fruitful project would be to investigate whether these evaluative dimensions are universal or whether they apply to a particular type of audience.

Comparability of Stimuli Materials

Another obvious explanation of the failure to find consistent support for the study hypotheses is that the different films were not comparable in terms of the characters' prototypicality. That is, the characters in the film clip were not equally similar to the audience members' established beliefs about the central tendencies of the characters' groups. This possibility is supported by the association between unrepresentativeness and counter-prototypically. Some of the results are likely to reflect characteristics of the specific films, rather than the universal cognitive mechanisms that were the focus of the study. The film segments may have also been different from each other in ways that affected the audiences' attention to and level of engagement with the text. Some of the film segments, for example, contained suggestive sexual situations, whereas others did not. The sexually themed films might have been attended to more closely than the others were.

These studies were designed to investigate some of the audience attributes and circumstances of media consumption that shape how media texts affect audiences' attitudes and beliefs about the real world. One of the goals of this study was to gain further insights into the mechanisms through which audience members learn about other groups from media texts. I hoped that by applying the insights gained from the study, one could better determine which texts, under which circumstances, are more likely to influence particular audiences' perceptions of what the world is like.

The variability introduced by the content of the films illustrates the difficulty of using real-world media materials to study the kinds of cognitive mechanisms under

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investigation here. The films themselves so strongly influenced audiences' reactions to them that I was unable to evaluate any underlying cognitive patterns that may have been shaping interpretation. What was gained in terms of generalizability did not offset what was lost in the form of control.

Some of the results of Study 2 offer a way forward, however. There were a few significant results in which audience's perceptions of the typicality of the characters was significantly associated with their tendency to rate the character's subgroup highly on the personality attributes associated with the character. The large number of statistical tests that these analyses represent prevent one from putting too much weight on individual results in absolute terms. However, examining which characters in which contexts were more likely to have affected viewers' beliefs offers hints about the textual characteristics that have the potential to shape the media's impact on audiences.

The design of Study 2 allowed for analyses that were specific to particular films and film characters. Since a large number of people were exposed to the same film clips, there were enough people evaluating the same characters to discern the effects that specific characters may have had on audiences' social perceptions. Examining which characters in which films influenced which elements of audience perceptions may offer a way forward. Seeking to identify the textual characteristics that may influence audience interactions is one means of discovering how audiences' interpret media representations.

The potential for measurement artifacts prevented me from using the researcher-calculated unrepresentativeness measures in this part of the study. These analyses are carried out with self-assessed typicality measures. These results are presented with the

caveat that, although the measure is reliable, the exact nature of the interpretive process that it captures is still uncertain.

The perceived representativeness of a character was associated with the audience's evaluations of the character's subgroup in only two cases. However, the direction of the relationship was consistent with prediction in only one of these two cases. The characteristics of these cases are suggestive as to the conditions under which media texts may alter audiences' perceptions of the central tendencies of portrayed social groups.

Jia-Ning. Among participants who saw the Taiwanese film, the audience-assessed typicality of the character of Jia-Ning is positively associated with the evaluations of the friendliness of young Taiwanese women. Since friendliness is an attribute that was associated with the character, this relationship is in the predicted direction.

This character's attribute of friendliness was not stereotypical of her group. Therefore, the representation was discrepant enough to change audience members' perceptions rather than reinforce them. In addition, the participants were unlikely to have well-established views about her particular society. The audience's evaluations of Taiwan may have been more susceptible to change than their evaluations of societies they felt they knew more about. These circumstances may have been the base conditions that made it more likely that she affected perceptions of her group.

The media texts' share in creating the audience's interpretation of meaning is shaped by both the text's content and the stylistic techniques through which the content is

presented. Each of these components may have influenced how the audience responded to this particular character.

The plot and script of the film were closely concerned with the personality and motivations of the characters. The audience members may have modified their perceptions of the group in response to the character of Jia-Ning because the script provided enough consistent details about her that she was felt to be a real and legitimate source of information, despite disconfirming some of the audiences' established perceptions.

The nature of the character is also likely to have shaped the way audiences responded to her. Most audience members seemed to like and identify with this character. A factor that may have contributed to the audience's attention to and identification with Jia-Ning is that she was from the same age group as much of the audience. She was shown dealing with relationships and situations that are likely to have resonated with this audiences' own concerns and experiences. The film segment showed her trying to balance her responsibilities to her family, friends, and job. It hinted that her own romantic interest conflicted with her loyalty to her friend. Despite the fact that the film took place in another culture, the emotions and relationships were such that the audiences' experience and knowledge is likely to have made her behavior and feelings seem recognizable and familiar. The audience's identification with the character may have focused their attention on her and the stereotype-disconfirming traits she exhibited, thus overcoming one of the primary barriers to stereotype change. Audience members often fail to attend to examples that disconfirm their established beliefs (Hewstone,

1989).

Stylistic elements may have also contributed to the audience's response to this character. The director is well respected for his attention to and ability to convey character. Furthermore, techniques like crosscutting between different characters' stories while withholding salient information about them may have contributed to the audience's involvement with the characters in this film segment.

Nick. The other significant result occurred in relation to one of the characters in the US film segment, a young man named Nick. However, this result was in the direction opposite that predicted. The more typical the character was seen to be, the less individualistic the participants rated the character's subgroup of young US men. Since this character was rated to be highly individualistic in the pretests, the direction of this result is opposite that predicted.

The relationship of the participants to US society was very different from their relationship to Taiwan. US society was very familiar to these participants; they are, after all, a part of it. Furthermore, this character was of the same subgroup as approximately half of the participants. All the young men in this sample were evaluating their ingroup when they were evaluating Nick's subgroup. This means that the participants' need to maintain a positive concept of the ingroup may have affected the way they responded to this character.

Unlike Jia-Ning, Nick was intensely disliked. He was seen as the least "good" character of the four that were evaluated in Study 2, mean=3.31(SD=1.25), was the least

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liked, mean=3.31($\underline{SD}$=2.04), and was the least identified with, mean=2.17($\underline{SD}$=1.76).[1]

Individualism, the attribute that showed the effect, was manifested in this character in a negative way. When the film segment opens, Nick has made what seems to have been a unilateral decision to move himself and his girlfriend to a new city. He has failed to tell the couple's closest friend about the move until two days before they are due to leave, and has apparently prevented his girlfriend from telling her either. He dismisses his girlfriend's objections to his flirting with other women and seems utterly indifferent to the needs, concerns or emotions of anyone but himself. Nick is individualistic in the sense that his behavior and decisions are unconstrained by other people, but he makes few positive contributions to his own happiness or to that of anyone else. By presenting the negative effects of this character's lack of connection or constraint, the film clip may have defined individualism in a negative light, which may have shaped the audience's application of this attribute to the character's real-world subgroup.

Individualism was neither stereotypical nor counter-stereotypical of Nick's subgroup. Control participants did not evaluate young US men to be either individualistic or group-oriented. This result, if reliable, may represent a defensive response on the part of the participants. The more plausible or recognizable the character seemed to them, the more of a chord he struck, the more likely the participants were to deny that the attribute applies to a subgroup that was close to them. In a context in which

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[1] These scales ranged from one to seven. The means in relation to the other characters are as follows: Jia-Chien, goodness, 4.39($\underline{SD}$=1.17); liking 4.52($\underline{SD}$=1.48); identification 3.28($\underline{SD}$=1.87); Jia-Ning, goodness, 4.93($\underline{SD}$=1.56); liking 5.39($\underline{SD}$=1.35), identification 4.05($\underline{SD}$=1.71); Beth, goodness, 5.51($\underline{SD}$=1.4); liking 4.81($\underline{SD}$=1.92), identification 2.85($\underline{SD}$=2.07).

the attribute of the character was not already closely associated with the group, the characteristics of the representation may have interacted with the audience's need to maintain a positive perception of the ingroup to produce the unpredicted result.

Outcome Variables

A final potential contributor to the study's failure is the choice of the outcome variable. This project examined character representativeness in the belief, subsequently unsupported by the results of Study 2, that it affected the degree to which the attributes of a character were applied to the audiences' understandings of the characters' real-world counterparts. However, several researchers have found that interpretive factors similar to those studied here affect audiences' confidence in their perceptions more strongly than, or in lieu of, the content of those perceptions themselves.

Ryan, et al. (1996) found that the perceived dispersion of a group was negatively associated with an observer's confidence that a newly-encountered group member would carry traits that were stereotypical of the group. Slater and Rouner (1992) found that involvement with a text influenced audiences' confidence in beliefs that were derived from the message. Similarly, Slater (1990) found that when individuals were evaluating media representations of a familiar social group, labeling the material as fictional or non-fictional affected the individuals' confidence in their beliefs about the group they derived from the materials. This distinction broke down, however, in regards to media about unfamiliar social groups. There were no differences in the participants' confidence in information derived from fictional and nonfictional sources. This suggests that although audience members may be able to identify a central tendency in relation to both in- and

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outgroups, the conceptualization of the ingroup may be less deterministic and more flexibly applied to real-world situations.

The finding that the reliability of the measures of audience attributions of characters' behavior is lower in reference to the socially distant film implies that information gathered from texts of socially distant societies may be more tentative and less coherent than information derived from texts of socially near societies. The lack of coherence may contribute to a lack of confidence in these perceptions.

Confidence in one's perceptions of a particular social group would not have been captured by the measures used here. However, this factor is meaningful in that it may influence the consequences of individuals' perceptions of social groups. An individual's confidence in his or her evaluations of a group is likely to affect the degree to which the characteristics of the group are applied to newly-met individuals and to shape the susceptibility of the perceived central tendency of the group to disconfirming information. Further work may benefit from investigating this outcome.

Secondary Findings

The results of the study included some unexpected but intriguing findings that were unrelated to the primary analyses. Although these results were not anticipated in the study design, they may be worth further investigation.

Film Viewership and Character Typicality

In Study 1, frequency of exposure to non-US films was found to be negatively associated with perceptions of the typicality of the characters in the US film segments. Frequency of general movie viewing is not associated with character typicality. Nor is

frequency of viewing non-US films associated with the perceived typicality of the characters from the non-US films.

There are several potential explanations for these results. It may be that ceiling effects obscured variation in relation to the measure of general movie going, making the effects of this factor more difficult to find. If this were so, movie exposure of any type may allow audiences to be more critical of the film representations. The effects of general movie watching were obscured by measurement error.

Another explanation of this pattern of results is that participants who view non-US and non-English-language films have developed a different attitude toward movies than those who see standard Hollywood releases. In the United States, films from other countries receive fairly limited distribution. These films have to be sought out, either through art-house theaters, specialty cable stations or video rental stores. Consumption of these materials may represent a qualitatively different attitude towards film than consumption of mainstream Hollywood fare. Therefore, the measures of participants' consumption of non-US films may capture a different concept than measures of general film viewership. The impact of film connoisseurship may be a factor affecting audience interpretation that merits further investigation.

Again, these results are preliminary and need to be replicated before they are given too much weight. However, these results hint that exposure to films from socially distant societies may cultivate skills and perspectives that change, in complex ways, how individuals' interpret other films. Investigating how film connoisseurship, as developed or marked by viewership of socially distant films, may shape interpretation patterns may

be a fruitful avenue for future research.

Cast Familiarity and Character Typicality

Within the US sample of Study 1, familiarity with the actor playing a character in the US films is negatively associated with perceptions of the typicality of the character. Film scholars have suggested than an actor's star persona, which is built up over the course of several films, can affect the way audiences' respond to a particular text featuring that actor (e.g., Prince, 1997). Furthermore, researchers into parasocial relationships have described how viewers can respond to media personalities in ways that parallel their responses to people in real life (e.g., Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). These findings suggest that the associations an audience has with a particular actor may affect how they respond to characters the actor portrays. This result may also be worth pursuing.

Cross-cultural Differences in Interpretive Mechanisms

The evaluation of the relationship of the perceived variability of the film societies is complicated by what seem to be cultural differences in the way members of the two samples evaluated the film societies. For each of the three variability measures, the Greater China sample evaluated each society as less homogenous than the US participants did. This suggests that the Greater China participants may be more attuned to within-group similarities, whereas the US participants are more attuned to within-group differences. This factor cannot explain the discordant results in the study. However, it suggests that future work on cross-cultural media interpretation should consider how cultural differences could affect the mechanisms though which

interpretation takes place. The very processes through which texts are evaluated may vary across societies.

Differences in Attributional Reliability

Finally, investigations of audience attributions of the film characters' actions in Study 2 found that the reliability of the attribution measures is lower for the participants evaluating a Taiwanese film than those evaluating a US film. Although it is impossible for one to come to concrete conclusions on the basis of two films, the pattern is suggestive. The participants were from the US, so Taiwan represents a socially distant society. It may by that the lack of reliability itself is a mark of social distance between the viewer and the film society. The audiences' attributions of a film character's behavior may lack coherence when their understanding of the social context in which the character is acting is uncertain. The reliability of an audience member's interpretations may be an outcome that it is fruitful to investigate when considering the differences between participants evaluating socially near and socially distant societies.

Conclusion

Although this study provides little support for the hypotheses it was designed to investigate, it does provide some means to find a way forward. There are, for example, some potentially interesting secondary findings that are worth pursuit.

Some of the more valuable insights, however, come of the form of lessons about what not to do next time. Throughout the course of project, for example, I responded to new concerns or challenges by adding to or complicating the design of the study. In retrospect, the opposite impulse, simplifying the design, may have been the more

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productive route. These results also illustrate that pretesting, especially if the pretests can be devised so that they are interesting in themselves, are well worth the effort they take to carry out.

Finally, the study results emphasize the importance of the content and composition of media texts in shaping the audiences' reaction to them. I remain frustrated by the need to balance the necessity of clear manipulations with the desire to work with materials that maintain some resemblance to the richness of the texts one encounters in everyday life. However, by allowing me to track when media characters seemed to influence the audience, parts of this project suggest characteristics of media texts and of the audiences' engagement with media texts that may shape the text's level of influence. One avenue that may be worth pursing is the audiences' level of engagement with the character, as shaped by having a common ground of experience. Another may be the stylistic techniques employed by the filmmaker and the structure through which information about the character is presented. Coming at the problem from the other side, that is, determining how specific textual attributes are interpreted specific audiences, may be a means of moving forward.

Table 2-1

Study Design

Sample	Condition	Socially Near Film Society *	Socially Distant Film Society
US Sample	Control Group	--	--
	Experimental Groups	US	Australia
		US	Mexico
		US	Taiwan
Greater China Sample	Control Group	--	--
	Experimental Groups	Taiwan	Australia
		Taiwan	Mexico
		Taiwan	US

Note. The order of the presentation of the film segments from the socially distant and

near societies was randomized.

Table 2-2

Film Descriptions and Summaries

Film Title Director	Society (Year)	Language (Subtitles)	Plot Summary	Evaluated Characters
Hotel de Love Craig Rosenberg	Australia 1996	English (none)	Seventeen-year-old Steven arrives at a party and sees Melissa. He falls for her, but his twin brother Rick starts talking to her before Steven can. Rick and Melissa fall in love, but she is leaving for England to go to school. The evening before she leaves, Rick gently suggests they have sex. Melissa refuses and they part on good terms. Later that night, Melissa returns to Rick's house and climbs through his window. Across town, Steven has an encounter of his own with a young woman that he met on the tennis courts. The next morning, Rick helps Melissa climb out the window while his parents argue with each other downstairs. They meet Steven as he is sneaking back in. Melissa gives Rick a locket before she leaves.	Rick Steven
Last Days at Chez Nous Gillian Armstrong	Australia 1992	English (none)	Vicky, returning from a trip to Europe, enters a house with her suitcase. No one else is there, but there is a cake on the kitchen table with "Welcome Home" on it in icing. Vicky eats a slice as she wanders through the house. She becomes nauseated and runs the bathroom. She hears voices and cleans up so that she can greet her sister, Beth, and her niece, Annie, who have just come home. A few minutes later, Beth's husband JP arrives home from work. Later that evening, the family makes and serves dinner while discussing neighborhood gossip. The next morning, a conversation between JP and Beth reveals that there is tension in their marriage. Beth encourages Vicky to start writing discusses her most recent manuscript with JP, who tells her he feels it is skillfully written, but unrealistically positive.	Beth Vicky

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Danzón María Novaro	Mexico 1991	Spanish (English)	Julia and Carmelo conclude a dance at the dance hall they frequent. Carmelo escorts Julia to the table where her friend Sylvia is sitting with her boyfriend Chucho. He wishes her good night and says he'll see her next week. Later, Sylvia, Julia, and Chucho leave for the evening. Chucho offers them a ride home. Sylvia, upset that he is going to be going home to his wife, refuses. Julia stays with Sylvia. The next morning, Julia shows her daughter, Perla, around the office where both she and Sylvia both work as telephone operators. Perla has just started a job there. Sylvia tells Julia that Chucho has decided to divorce his wife. Later the evening, Julia and Sylvia go the dance hall. Carmelo never arrives. Julia, visibly distressed, leaves early. The next day she surprises her friends at work by snapping at callers.	Julia Sylvia
Strange Ways Alfonso Corona	Mexico 1996	Spanish (English)	Bruno, a member of a student theatre troupe on the way to a performance, is driving a van through mountainous countryside at dawn. He stops at a crossroads, pulls out a map, and takes the smaller of the two roads. Later in the morning, he stops the van near a lake, gets out, and yells. The rest of the troupe, who had been asleep in the back of the van, wake up to discover that Bruno has taken an isolated scenic route during the night. That evening, another member of the group, Memo drives the van over an unpaved road in rainstorm. They hit a muddy patch. At Bruno's urging, he attempts to go through. The van bogs down and tips over. The students crawl out and search for help. They run across a convoy of tractors pulling logs. The men on the tractors are armed and refuse to stop or to acknowledge them. Later, they find refuge an isolated cottage with woman and a young boy.	Bruno Memo

<u>Dust in the Wind</u> Hsiao-hsien Hou	Taiwan 1986	Taiwanese (English, Chinese)	Two teenagers, Wan and Huen, are riding a train home from school. Huen informs Wan that she has not done well on a math examination. As Wan walks Huen home, they pick up some rice ordered by Huen's mother. When he drops Huen off, her mother asks when his father will be arriving home from the hospital. Wan's grandfather has been looking after the household and Wan's younger brothers. That evening, Grandfather attempts to cajole one of the brothers to eat and rebukes another for being greedy. The next day, Grandfather carves a crutch while Wan writes a letter for a neighbor. Wan and Grandfather go the train station to meet Wan's parents. Later, Wan returns his father's watch, gives him his report card, and tells him of his plan to go to work in the city. His father, who cannot afford to let him continue his schooling, is brusque. The pharmacist arrives and Wan's mother discovers that one of her younger sons overate while she was gone and had to have stomach medicine. She rebukes him.	Wan Grandpa
<u>Eat, Drink, Man,</u> <u>Woman</u> Ang Lee	Taiwan 1994	Mandarin (English)	As Chu, a professional chef, prepares an elaborate Sunday dinner, his three daughters go about their afternoon activities. Jia-Chien works in her office and then stops by an ex-boyfriend's apartment. They have sex and he drives her home. Jia-Jen attends church and is driven home by her friend. Jia-Ning finishes up her shift working at a fast-food restaurant. Her friend, Rachael, has agreed to cover for her so that Jia-Ning can make it home for dinner. On the way out, Jia-Ning stops to talk with her friend's discontented and melodramatic boyfriend, who is waiting for Rachael. At dinner that evening, Jia-Chien grimaces over the soup. She says the ham is over-smoked and that her father's taste is getting worse. Chu smashes his hands on the table and leaves the table abruptly.	Jia-Ning Jia-Chien

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<u>Bodies, Rest, and</u> <u>Motion</u> Michael Steinberg	USA 1993	English (none)	Nick and his ex-girlfriend Carol are drinking in her living room. He abruptly announces that he and his current girlfriend, Beth, are moving out of town in two days. They start roughhousing provocatively and Beth, arriving home from work, finds them in ambiguously suggestive circumstances. She ignores the situation then, but confronts Nick on the walk home, stating that she is embarrassed by his behavior with Carol, who is also her best friend. The next morning, Beth starts packing their belongings while Nick leaves for his last day of work as an electronics salesperson.	Beth Nick

<u>The Daytrippers</u>
  Greg Mottola
	USA
	1996
		English	Eliza and Stanley are driving home from Thanksgiving dinner with Eliza's family. They discuss Jo, Eliza's sister, and Carl, Jo's boyfriend, who were at the dinner. Eliza and Stanley make love that evening. The next morning, he advises her a social function at work will cause him to be home late. Later that morning Eliza finds a piece of paper stuck behind the bedside table as she cleans up.
			  At Eliza's parents' house, her mother, Rita, and father talk about the car and their children as they put away groceries, grind coffee, and vacuum. Jo slips into Carl's room. They complain about the noise her parents are making. Carl refuses to have sex, commenting that Rita has forbidden it in the house. Rita knocks on Jo's door, calling her to breakfast. Carl has to go and divert her. As the family is finishing breakfast, Eliza arrives with the paper she found, an un-addressed love-letter. She asks for advice. Rita advises her to go into the city to confront Stanley about the letter. The entire family gets into their station wagon to drive into the city.
				Eliza
				
				Carl

Table 2-3

Summary of Primary Study Measures

	Conceptualization	Operationalization
Character Interpretation Measures		
Character Typicality	A dimension of realism; The extent to which the character is seen as like a large proportion of people of his or her age and gender within his or her society.	Agreement on a 7-point scale with the statements that the character is "typical" of "[men/women] of [the character's] age or culture", that "[the character] is very different from other [men/women] of his or her age and culture", and that "many people of [the character's] age and background would behave like [the character]. For the initial analysis, one total is calculated for each type of film (those from socially distant and those from socially near societies) by averaging the items across the two evaluated characters. However, these measures are sorted into measures of specific characters for the factor analysis and for subsidiary analyses.
Character Unrepresentativeness	The extent to which participant's evaluations of the character match their evaluations of the people of the character's age and gender within his or her society.	The average absolute difference between the participant's ratings of the character and the participant's own ratings of the character's subgroup, including all the evaluated attributes. For the initial analysis, one total is calculated for each type of film by averaging the items across the two evaluated characters. One total is calculated for each of the two subsets of evaluated characters within the film types.
Character Believability	A dimension of realism; The extent to which the participant thinks a character's personality is coherent and behavior is plausible	Agreement on a 7-point scale with the statements that the character is "realistic" and that the character's behavior is "believable". One total is calculated for each of the two subsets of evaluated characters within the film types.

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Counter-Prototypicality	The extent to which the character is seen embody the defining characteristics of people of his or her age and gender within his or her society.	The average absolute difference between ratings of the character and the mean of the control-group ratings of the character's subgroup, including only on those attributes that were seen to significantly define the subgroup. One total is calculated for each of the two subsets of evaluated characters within the film types.
Identification	The extent to which the participant identifies with a particular character.	Agreement on a 7-point scale with the statement that one "identifies with" a character.

Society Variability Measures*

Range	A measure of perceived variability; the range of variation within a particular society.	Participants are presented with unnumbered linear scales labeled as very [attribute] at one end and not at all [attribute]. They were asked to mark where the average person in a society fell on the particular attribute, and where the person with the most of the attribute and the person with the least of the attribute would fall. The distances, in millimeters, from the marks indicating the position of the person with the least and most of the attribute are averaged across attributes to create this measure.
Probability of Differentiation	A measure of perceived variability; the probability that two randomly chosen group members will be perceived to differ.	One minus the sum of the square of the proportions of a society that the participant sees as falling into each value of an attribute. This item measured by the dot scales and the total scores are averaged across attributes.
Perceived Variability	A measure of perceived variability; the extent to which category members	The average, across attributes, of the variation of the participant's evaluations of the distribution of the attributes within a society using the dot-scales.

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	are viewed as widely dispersed about the mean of an attribute.	
Subgroup Distinctiveness	A measure of subgrouping; how much evaluations of the different subgroups within a society resemble each other.	The average, across attributes, of the absolute difference between ratings of the four different subgroups.
Attribute Count	A measure of subgrouping; how many attributes the observer sees as distinguishing subgroups from each other.	The average, across subgroups, of the number of attributes that are seen as valid descriptors of the subgroups (i.e., those that were not evaluated at the neutral point).

Note. One total is calculated for evaluations of each type of society (socially near and socially distant). However, these aggregate scores are broken down into evaluations of individual societies for subsidiary analyses.

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Table 2-4

Means of US Sample Evaluations of Society Subgroups *

Attribute	Australia (n=14)			Mexico (n=15)			
	Young Men	Young Women	Mature Women	Young Men	Mature Men	Young Women	Mature Women
Polite /Impolite	*3.46(1.08)	**3.14(.86)	***2.36(.74)	4.07(1.22)	3.57(1.34)	3.40(1.30)	**2.73(1.22)
Traditional /Modern	***5.43(1.02)	***5.50(1.16)	*3.36(1.01)	***5.20(1.15)	**2.93(1.28)	**5.20(1.08)	***2.20(1.08)
Unambitious /Ambitious	***5.64(1.01)	*** 5.50(.76)	**4.79(.80)	**5.13(1.30)	*4.60(.83)	**5.07(1.10)	3.60(1.24)
Impulsive /self-controlled	***2.43(.94)	** 3.00(.88)	4.36(1.28)	** 2.87(1.13)	4.13(1.30)	**3.13(1.13)	**5.13(1.25)
Practical /Idealistic	*4.86(1.23)	***5.22(.89)	*3.56(1.08)	***5.27(1.03)	*3.13(1.25)	**4.80(1.01)	***2.27(.70)
Talkative /Quiet	***2.64(.93)	**2.71(1.38)	*3.56(1.01)	***2.80(.94)	***2.87(.83)	***2.53(.99)	3.80(1.57)
Group-oriented /Individualistic	3.79(1.63)	3.71(1.14)	3.56(1.09)	3.87(1.60)	3.93(1.03)	3.60(1.68)	***2.45(1.25)
Happy-go-lucky /Serious	***2.64(.75)	***2.64(.74)	4.00(.96)	***3.07(.80)	4.13(.74)	***2.93(.88)	4.07(1.10)

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Attribute	Taiwan (n=16)			United States (n=15)			
	Young Men	Mature Men	Young Women	Young Men	Mature Men	Young Women	Mature Women
Polite /Impolite	3.69(1.20)	**3.06(1.18)	**3.00(1.32)	4.07(1.39)	3.80(1.57)	3.60(1.35)	**3.07(1.10)
Traditional /Modern	4.56(1.50)	**2.50(1.59)	4.44(1.67)	**5.20(1.32)	*3.07(1.44)	***5.80(1.08)	3.47(1.46)
Unambitious /Ambitious	***5.94(.68)	***5.88(1.15)	***5.44(1.15)	**5.40(1.59)	***5.40(.63)	***5.60(.74)	4.67(1.35)
Impulsive /self-controlled	3.75(1.29)	**4.75(1.00)	4.00(1.51)	*3.27(1.22)	4.27(1.54)	**3.20(.94)	**4.93(1.23)
Practical /Idealistic	4.13(1.36)	***2.81(1.17)	4.50(1.26)	4.60(1.83)	3.27(1.62)	**4.93(.96)	3.47(1.89)
Talkative /Quiet	3.78(1.26)	4.00(1.55)	3.38(1.26)	**3.27(.96)	3.60(.83)	*3.13(1.30)	*3.40(.91)
Group-oriented /Individualistic	4.06(1.57)	3.88(1.45)	4.06(1.48)	4.27(1.44)	*4.80(1.08)	3.67(1.29)	3.76(1.13)
Happy-go-lucky /Serious	3.81(1.11)	***5.19(.98)	3.81(1.11)	*3.33(1.16)	**4.87(.92)	*3.33(.90)	4.47(.92)

Note. Only subgroups that are represented by at least one character in the film clips are reported. Scales ranged from 1 (first attribute) to 4 (neutral point) to 7 (second attribute). Values less than 4 were associated with the first-listed attribute, whereas values greater than 4 were associated with the second attribute. Attributes with 2 asterisks (**) were used to construct counter-prototypicality measures.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 2-5

<u>Means of Greater China Sample Evaluations of Society Subgroups</u> *

Attribute	Australia (n=12)			Mexico (n=14)			
	Young Men	Young Women	Mature Women	Young Men	Mature Men	Young Women	Mature Women
Polite /Impolite	3.58(1.51)	3.42(1.62)	**2.33(1.23)	3.64(1.15)	*3.36(1.08)	**3.07(1.00)	*3.29(1.14)
Traditional /Modern	**5.33(1.23)	***5.92(.90)	3.25(1.48)	***5.21(.89)	*3.00(1.36)	4.50(1.34)	***2.43(.85)
Unambitious /Ambitious	***5.64(.92)	**5.50(1.31)	3.42(1.62)	4.71(1.38)	3.93(1.27)	3.93(1.14)	**3.07(1.07)
Impulsive /self-controlled	**2.67(1.44)	*2.83(1.75)	*5.08(1.51)	*2.86(.86)	3.93(1.33)	*3.21(1.12)	4.14(1.66)
Practical /Idealistic	3.92(1.73)	4.58(1.51)	3.25(1.42)	4.00(1.75)	**2.64(1.15)	3.86(1.56)	***2.50(.76)
Talkative /Quiet	**2.82(7.17)	***2.25(1.06)	**2.67(1.37)	***2.64(1.00)	**2.93(1.27)	***2.50(.94)	3.43(1.40)
Group-oriented /Individualistic	4.00(1.91)	4.08(1.73)	4.25(1.29)	4.00(1.75)	3.79(1.31)	3.36(1.60)	**3.07(1.07)
Happy-go-lucky /Serious	***2.25(.75)	***2.33(1.23)	4.00(1.60)	***2.43(1.16)	3.36(1.22)	***2.79(.98)	4.00(1.36)

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Attribute	Taiwan (n=12)			United States (n=12)			
	Young Men	Mature Men	Young Women	Young Men	Mature Men	Young Women	Mature Women
Polite /Impolite	**2.67(1.23)	***2.25(.75)	***2.50(1.67)	3.42(1.68)	**2.33(1.31)	3.67(1.50)	*2.67(1.56)
Traditional /Modern	4.75(1.54)	*3.00(1.35)	*5.00(1.54)	***5.92(1.31)	3.67(1.23)	***6.33(.78)	4.00(1.35)
Unambitious /Ambitious	***6.17(.72)	4.50(1.57)	4.83(1.53)	*** 6.08(.51)	***5.75(.97)	***5.50(1.17)	4.42(1.24)
Impulsive /self-controlled	3.58(1.31)	* 5.25(1.66)	3.50(1.78)	***2.08(.90)	**5.50(1.45)	***1.92(.79)	5.00(1.60)
Practical /Idealistic	4.42(1.62)	***1.92(1.00)	3.75(1.91)	4.92(1.62)	3.17(1.64)	4.92(1.73)	**2.50(1.45)
Talkative /Quiet	*3.08(1.24)	*3.00(1.35)	3.33(1.50)	***2.42(1.16)	3.42(1.51)	***1.67(.78)	**2.50(1.24)
Group-oriented /Individualistic	3.83(1.53)	3.83(1.34)	3.58(1.56)	4.08(1.88)	4.33(1.67)	4.58(1.62)	3.83(1.47)
Happy-go-lucky /Serious	3.42(1.24)	* 4.83(1.27)	**2.83(1.27)	***2.33(1.37)	3.83(1.90)	***2.50(1.09)	3.50(1.51)

Note. Only subgroups that are represented by at least one character in the film clips are reported. Scales ranged from 1 (first attribute) to 4 (neutral point) to 7 (second attribute). Values less than 4 were associated with the first-listed attribute, whereas values greater than 4 were associated with the second attribute. Attributes with 2 asterisks (**) were used to construct counter-prototypicality measures.

$p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 3-1

Factor Loading of Typicality and Believability Measures with the US Sample

Measure	US Character 1		US Character 2		Non-US Character 1		Non-US Character 2	
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2
How typical?	.385	.801	.839	.205	.842	.170	.120	.932
Different from group?	-.024	.911	.907	.070	.855	.047	.212	.838
Many people?	.488	.457	.175	.761	.711	.447	.523	.500
Realistic Character?	.856	.124	.558	.914	.344	.833	.886	.171
Believable behavior?	.871	.121	.566	.566	.034	.890	.896	.150

Table 3-2

ANOVA of Perceptions of the Typicality of non-US characters

Source	df	F
Film Society Familiarity	1	.28
Society of Film	2	** 6.27
Society of Film X Familiarity	2	* 3.26
Error	49	(.523)*

Note. Value enclosed within parentheses represents mean square error.

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 3-3

Impact of Character Prototypicality on Perceived Character Typicality

	Bodies, Rest, and Motion		Daytrippers	
	Beth	Nick	Carl	Eliza
Character Counter-Prototypicality	* .591(.27)	-.498 (.37)	.222 (.32)	.102(.24)
R^2	.156	.067	.019	.007
F	* 4.82	1.86	.472	.422
N	28	28	27	27

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 3-4

Predictors of the US Participants' Perceptions of the Typicality of US characters*

Predictors	$\underline{B}$ (SD)
Cast Recognition	* -.203 (.10)
Non-US Movie Watching	* -.159(.08)
$\underline{R}^2$	.162
$\underline{F}$	* 4.95
$\underline{N}$	55

Note. OLS regression with listwise deletion

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 3-5

Differences in the Variability of US and non-US Societies

Measure	US Means (SD)	Non-US Means (SD)
Range **	11.8(2.13)	11.03(2.27)
Probability of Differentiation *	.774(.12)	.754(.15)
Perceived Variation **	2.17(.65)	1.93(.63)
Subgroup differentiation	1.44(.49)	1.32(.46)
Attribute Count	6.59(1.47)	6.56(1.52)

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 3-6

Differences in the Perceived Subgrouping of US and non-US Societies

Measure	US Means (SD)	Non-US Means (SD)
Attribute Count	6.59(1.47)	6.56(1.52)
Subgroup distinctiveness ±	1.44(.49)	1.32(.46)

± p < .06; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 4-1

Differences in the Perceived Variability of Taiwan and non-Taiwanese Societies

| | Taiwan | Non-Taiwan |
Measure	Means (SD)	Means (SD)
Range	10.30(2.39)	9.92(2.35)
Probability of Differentiation	.733(.17)	.730(.17)
Perceived Variation	1.70(.63)	1.75(.72)

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 4-2

Differences in the Subgrouping of Taiwan and non-Taiwanese Societies

| | Taiwan | Non-Taiwan |
Measure	Means (SD)	Means (SD)
Attribute Count	6.96(.79)	6.82(1.04)
Subgroup differentiation ***	1.77(.57)	1.41(.54)

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

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Table 5-1

Means of Film Society Familiarity within Greater China Sample

Society	n	Mean(SD)
Australia	15	3.57(2.59)
Mexico	14	2.67(1.88)
United States	16	3.63(2.33)
Taiwan	44	5.21(1.81)

Table 5-2

Means of Variability Perceptions of Socially Distant and Near Societies

	Australia		Mexico		Taiwan		United States	
	US	GC	US	GC	US	GC	US	GC
Range	±10.81(2.52)	9.83(1.74)	***11.49(2.45)	8.74(2.20)	10.70(2.56)	10.20(2.35)	*11.86(2.02)	10.88(2.47)
Prob. of Differen.	.77(.07)	.71(.22)	.71(.23)	.70(.16)	.77(.06)	.73(.18)	.77(.14)	.76(.04)
Perceived Variation	2.02(.55)	1.77(.86)	*1.81(.71)	1.43(.71)	1.95(.57)	1.75(.64)	±2.17(.66)	1.90(.56)

± Pairs of means (horizontal pairs) are different, p < .10; * Mean are significantly different p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001

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Table 5-3

Mean Differences from Midpoint of Society Evaluation Scales among US

Participants

	Australia (n= 34)	Mexico (n=32)	Taiwan (n= 34)	US (n=70)
Polite/impolite	*** -1.26	* -.50	***-1.26	* .27
Traditional/modern	.21	*** -.94	***-1.88	*** .97
Unambitious/ambitious	** .65	-.03	**.85	*** 1.14
Impulsive/self-controlled	*** -.74	-.09	***1.47	** -.36
Practical/idealistic	.24	-.22	*** -1.44	.00
Talkative/quiet	*** -1.03	*** -.97	***1.03	***-.86
Group-orient./individualistic	.13	*** -.88	** -.79	.27
Happy-go-lucky/serious	*** -.75	***-.75	*** 1.24	.07

Note. Negative scores indicate that the mean was on the side of the neutral

point associated with the attribute listed first, whereas positive scores indicates

that the mean was on the side of the attribute listed second. The scales ranged

from 1 (first attribute) to 4 (neutral point) to 7 (second attribute).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

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Table 5-4

Mean Differences from Midpoint of Society Evaluation Scales among the Greater
China Participants *

	Australia (n= 26)	Mexico (n=29)	Taiwan (n= 57)	US (n=28)
Polite/impolite	*** -1.38	* -.55	*** -1.53	*** -1.61
Traditional/modern	.15	-.48	***-1.02	*** 1.50
Unambitious/ambitious	.00	-.37	.26	*** 1.36
Impulsive/self-controlled	-.08	* -.72	*** .91	** -.71
Practical/idealistic	**-.58	-.24	***-1.68	* -.64
Talkative/quiet	***-.96	*** -1.17	-.14	*** -1.79
Group-orient./individualistic	.19	* -.76	-.40	.36
Happy-go-lucky/serious	* -.69	*** -1.34	* .46	*** -1.00

Note. Negative scores indicate that the mean was on the side of the neutral point

associated with the attribute listed first, whereas positive scores indicates that the

mean was on the side of the attribute listed second. The scales ranged from 1

(first attribute) to 4 (neutral point) to 7 (second attribute).

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 5-5

<u>Mean Differences in Society Evaluation Scales across the US and Greater China Samples*</u>

	Australia (n=60)		Mexico (n=60)		Taiwan (n=91)		US (n=98)	
	US	GC	US	GC	US	GC	US	GC
Polite /impolite	2.74(.96)	2.62(.94)	3.50(1.14)	3.45(1.24)	2.74(1.38)	2.47(1.23)	***4.27(.98)	2.39(1.37)
Traditional /modern	4.21(1.18)	4.15(1.43)	3.06(1.01)	3.52(1.43)	**2.12(1.01)	2.98(1.43)	*4.97(1.09)	5.50(1.04)
Unambitious /ambitious	±4.65(1.10)	4.00(1.41)	3.67(1.06)	3.62(1.32)	4.85(1.40)	4.26(1.37)	5.14(.94)	5.36(1.22)
Impulsive /self-controlled	*3.26(1.11)	3.92(1.32)	±3.91(1.12)	3.28(1.51)	*5.47(1.02)	4.91(1.31)	3.64(1.05)	3.29(1.33)
Practical /Idealistic	**4.24(1.30)	3.42(.97)	3.78(1.07)	3.76(1.64)	2.56(1.02)	2.31(1.02)	4.00(1.23)	3.36(1.66)
Talkative /quiet	2.97(1.06)	3.04(1.18)	3.03(1.06)	2.83(1.54)	***5.03(1.03)	3.85(1.41)	***3.14(.73)	2.21(1.29)
Group-oriented /individualistic	4.15(1.26)	4.19(1.63)	3.13(1.18)	3.24(1.50)	3.21(1.59)	3.60(1.60)	4.27(1.41)	4.36(1.99)
Happy-go-lucky /serious	3.09(1.00)	3.31(1.29)	*3.25(1.02)	2.66(.97)	**5.24(.92)	4.46(1.39)	***3.92(.91)	3.00(1.52)

<u>Note.</u> Negative scores indicate that the mean was on the side of the neutral point associated with the attribute listed first, whereas positive scores indicates that the mean was on the side of the attribute listed second. The scales ranged from 1 (first attribute) to 4 (neutral point) to 7 (second attribute).

± Means (horizontal pairs) are different, $p < .08$; * Means are significantly different $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

Table 6-1

Priming Differences in Perceived Variability Indices of the United States

Measure	Prime	Control
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Range	12. 51(1.62)	12.60(1.50)
Probability of Differentiation	.78(.15)	.79(.06)
Perceived Variation	2.26(.55)	2.49(.39)

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 6-2

Priming Differences in Perceived Variability Indices of Taiwan

Measure	Prime	Control
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Range	10.89(2.36)	11.06(2.39)
Probability of Differentiation	.775(.117)	.773(.148)
Perceived Variation	2.16(.65)	2.11(.53)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

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Table 6-3

Priming Differences in Subgrouping Measures of the United States

Measure	Prime	Control
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Attribute Count	8.29(1.24)	8.41(1.55)
Subgroup Differentiation	1.47(.50)	1.53(.51)

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 6-4

Priming Differences in Subgrouping Measures of Taiwan.

Measure	Prime	Control
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Attribute Count	7.87(2.00)	8.20(1.42)
Subgroup Differentiation	1.51(.64)	1.63(.58)

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 6-5

Attributes Used to Describe Film Characters

Attribute	US Film (n=42)		Taiwan Film (n=24)	
	Char 1 (Beth)	Char 2 (Nick)	Char 1 (Chien)	Char 2 (Ning)
Polite /Impolite	*** 2.26(.79)	*** 5.60(.93)	*4.67(1.31)	*** 2.58(1.38)
Traditional /Modern	* 3.44(1.37)	*** 4.95(4.59)	*** 5.71(1.20)	4.29(1.46)
Unambitious /Ambitious	** 3.33(1.51)	*** 2.70(2.70)	*** 6.33(.56)	*** 4.79(1.02)
Impulsive /Self-controlled	*** 5.02(1.22)	*** 1.88(.82)	* 3.21(1.47)	4.08(1.35)
Practical /Idealistic	** 3.40(1.26)	*** 4.98(1.08)	3.88(1.48)	4.33(1.31)
Talkative /Quiet	*** 5.14(.92)	** 3.42(1.16)	3.50(1.25)	*** 2.83(1.13)
Group-oriented /Individualistic	4.23(1.15)	*** 5.16(1.29)	*** 5.75(.79)	3.83(1.43)
Happy-go-lucky /Serious	*** 4.67(1.17)	3.95(1.40)	** 4.83(1.34)	*** 2.79(.93)

Note. Scales ranged from 1 (first attribute) to 4 (neutral point) to 7 (second attribute).

Significantly different from neutral point (4), * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

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APPENDIX A

Example Questionnaire, Study 1

Please answer the questions in the order in which they were written.

Please do not go back and change your answers.

You may be unsure of the answers to some of the questions. When this happens please answer as best as you can.

The first questions are about specific characters within the film segment. The order of the questions about the characters may not be the order in which the characters appeared in the film clip.

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Steven is the character who was first seen walking through a door at a party, wearing a red and white checked shirt. He is thin and has short, brown hair. Later in the scene his brother started talking to a girl Steven liked before Steven was able to. In a few sentences, please describe his _personality_ as you would to a friend who hasn't seen the movie yet.

What do you think is the most meaningful thing Steven did in this film clip?

Please circle the appropriate number.

Please think of men of Steven's age and culture. How typical is Steven of this group?

Not at all typical			Neither atypical or typical			Very typical
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Steven has a weak personality.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Steven is a good person.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Steven is very different from other men of his age and culture.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Steven reminds me of people I've known.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Many men of Steven's age and culture would behave like he did if they were in his situation.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Steven's behavior was believable.

Agree | | | | | | Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I identified with Steven.

Agree | | | | | | Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I would <u>not</u> like Steven, if I met him.

Agree | | | | | | Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Steven is a realistic character.

Agree | | | | | | Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

The film made fun of Steven.

Agree | | | | | | Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

How old do you think the character of Steven is? _____

Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe Steven.

			Neither polite or impolite			Impolite
Polite						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			Modern
Traditional						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			Ambitious
Unambitious						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			Self-controlled
Impulsive						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			Idealistic
Practical						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			Quiet
Talkative						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			Individualistic
Group-Oriented						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			Serious
Happy-go-lucky						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Rick is the character who was first seen approaching a woman at a party. He was wearing a denim jacket and a maroon T-shirt. He is heavily-built and has short, dark-brown hair. He started dating the woman he met at the party. In a few sentences, please describe his personality as you would to a friend who hasn't seen the movie yet.

What do you think is the most meaningful thing Rick did in this film clip?

Please circle the appropriate number.

Please think of men of Rick's age and culture. How typical is Rick of this group?

			Neither atypical or typical				
Not at all typical						Very typical	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Rick has as weak personality.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Rick is a good person.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Rick is very different from other men of his age and culture.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Rick reminds me of people I've known.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Many men of Rick's age and culture would behave like he did if they were in his situation.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Rick's behavior was believable.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I identified with Rick.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I would not like Rick, if I met him.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Rick is a realistic character.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

The film made fun of Rick.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

How old do you think the character of Rick is? _____

Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe Rick.

			Neither polite or impolite			
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The following questions are about content the film clip as a whole.

Please circle the appropriate number:

The film made fun of its subject matter.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

This film was made with people like me in mind as an audience.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I am familiar with the culture in which the film was set.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I'm not very interested in seeing the rest of the film.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I thought the film was humorous.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I think that the film was intended to be humorous.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I felt that the film was in bad taste.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I understood what was happening in the film clip.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Did you understand the language the characters spoke in the film?

1 Yes, I am fluent in this language.
2 Somewhat, I have some familiarity with the language, but not enough understand everything the characters said.
3 No, I am not familiar with this language.
4 Don't know

If you answered "1" or "2" to the question directly above, please answer the following question: Some accents are easy for viewers to understand, some are more difficult. How easy or difficult do you think these characters' accents, on average, were to understand?

Very easy   Very difficult
      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

What kind of film did the clip come from?

1 Action Adventure
2 Comedy
3 Drama
4 Romance
5 Satire
6 Science Fiction
7 Thriller
8 Other
9 Don't Know

The next questions are about events that happened in the clip.

Please circle the correct answer.

What is the relationship between Steven and Rick?

   1 They are twins. Steven is a few minutes older.
   2 They are twins. Rick is a few minutes older.
   3 They are brothers.
   4 They are cousins.
   5 Don't Know

What is happening to Melissa and Rick's relationship?

   1 They have decided to get married.
   2 It is ending because Melissa has to leave to go to school.
   3 Melissa is leaving to go to school and Rick is going with her.
   4 It is ending because Melissa's parents found out about it.
   5 Don't Know

What are Rick's parents like?

   1 They are very supportive.
   2 They don't like Melissa.
   3 They are worried about Rick's grades.
   4 They argue continuously.
   5 Don't Know

What does Rick say about Steven's tennis game?

   1 He is too slow.
   2 He is too defensive.
   3 He has a lousy backhand.
   4 He stays too far from the net.
   5 Don't Know

Some films are widely distributed and are seen by many people. Some have a very limited distribution and have not been seen by many people. Some actors or crewmembers have worked with many films. Others have worked with only a few. In the following questions you will be asked about any previous exposure you may have had to the film and about your familiarity with the cast and crewmembers.

Please circle the answer.

Can you identify this film's title?

        1 No
        2 No, but I remember hearing something about it.
        3 Yes, it's _____ (please specify as closely as you can,
        4 Not sure   even if you can recall only part of the title)

Have you seen this film before?

        1 No
        2 I've seen part of it, but not the whole thing.
        3 Yes, I've seen the whole thing.
        4 Not sure

Have you seen any of the cast members before?

        1 No
        2 Yes, that was: _____(please list the names of any actors you
                   _____ recognized)

        3 Yes, but I don't remember their names. _____ (please list or describe the
                                      _____ characters played by
                                      _____ actors you recognized)
        4 Not sure

Did you recognize any of the crew names that were listed in the opening credits? (Crew names would include the director, the screenwriter and anyone else who helped make the movie, but was not an actor or actress)

        1 No
        2 Yes, I'm familiar with _____ (please list the names of any crew
                          _____ members you were already
                          _____ familiar with)
        3 There were no crew names shown in this clip.
        4 Not sure

* STOP! *

Please do not turn the page.

Wait for further instructions before continuing.

Nick is the character who was first seen sitting on a couch, smoking and drinking. He has longish, brown hair and was wearing a white shirt and dark pants. He started talking and goofing around with Carol, whose house they were in. In a few sentences, please describe his personality as you would to a friend who hasn't seen the movie yet.

What do you think is the most meaningful thing Nick did in this film clip?

Please circle the appropriate number.

Please think of men of Nick's age and culture. How typical is Nick of this group?

			Neither atypical or typical			Very typical
Not at all typical						
1	2	3	4 · 5	6	7

Nick has a weak personality.

| Agree | | | | | | Disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Nick is a good person.

| Agree | | | | | | Disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Nick is very different from other men of his age and culture.

| Agree | | | | | | Disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Nick reminds me of people I've known.

| Agree | | | | | | Disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Many men of Nick's age and culture would behave like he did if they were in his situation.

| Agree | | | | | | Disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Nick's behavior was believable.

        Agree   Disagree
         1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I identified with Nick.

        Agree   Disagree
         1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I would <u>not</u> like Nick, if I met him.

        Agree   Disagree
         1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Nick is a realistic character.

        Agree   Disagree
         1   2   3   4   5   6   7

The film made fun of Nick.

        Agree   Disagree
         1   2   3   4   5   6   7

How old do you think the character of Nick is?_____

Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe Nick.

			Neither polite or impolite			Impolite
Polite						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			Modern
Traditional						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			Ambitious
Unambitious						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			Self-controlled
Impulsive						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			Idealistic
Practical						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			Quiet
Talkative						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			Individualistic
Group-Oriented						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			Serious
Happy-go-lucky						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth is the character who was first seen driving a VW convertible. She has short, brown hair and was wearing a white blouse and skirt with ruffles. Next, she arrived at the door of Carol's house. In a few sentences, please describe her personality as you would to a friend who hasn't seen the movie yet.

What do you think is the most meaningful thing Beth did in this film clip?

Please circle the appropriate number.

Please think of women of Beth's age and culture. How typical is Beth of this group?

Not at all typical			Neither atypical or typical			Very typical
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth has as weak personality.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth is a good person.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth is very different from other women of her age and culture.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth reminds me of people I've known.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Many women of Beth's age and culture would behave like she did if they were in her situation.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Beth's behavior was believable.

Agree   Disagree

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I identified with Beth.

Agree   Disagree

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I would <u>not</u> like Beth, if I met her.

Agree   Disagree

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Beth is a realistic character.

Agree   Disagree

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

The film made fun of Beth.

Agree   Disagree

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

How old do you think the character of Beth is?_____

Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe Beth.

			Neither polite or impolite			
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The following questions are about content the film clip as a whole.

Please circle the appropriate number:

The film made fun of its subject matter.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

This film was made with people like me in mind as an audience.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I am familiar with the culture in which the film was set.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I'm <u>not</u> very interested in seeing the rest of the film.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I thought the film was humorous.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I think that the film was intended to be humorous.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I felt that the film was in bad taste.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I understood what was happening in the film clip.

Agree   Disagree
  1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Did you understand the <u>language</u> the characters spoke in the film?

     1 Yes, I am fluent in this language.
     2 Somewhat, I have some familiarity with the language, but not enough understand everything the characters said.
     3 No, I am not familiar with this language.
     4 Don't know

If you answered "1" or "2" to the question directly above, please answer the following question: Some accents are easy for viewers to understand, some are more difficult. How easy or difficult do you think these characters' accents, on average, were to understand?

Very easy   Very difficult
       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

What kind of film did the clip come from?

     1 Action Adventure
     2 Comedy
     3 Drama
     4 Romance
     5 Satire
     6 Science Fiction
     7 Thriller
     8 Other _____
     9 Don't Know

The next questions are about events that happened in the clip.

Please circle the correct answer.

What is the relationship between Carol and Beth?

       1 They are best friends.
       2 They are sisters.
       3 They are cousins.
       4 They went to high school together.
       5 Don't Know

How is Nick doing at his job?

       1 He just got a raise.
       2 He's been transferred to another branch of his company.
       3 He's just been fired.
       4 His company is in trouble and everyone is worried about their jobs.
       5 Don't Know

What is the relationship between Nick and Carol?

       1 They are cousins.
       2 They used to live together.
       3 They went to high-school together.
       4 Carol is Nick's sister-in-law.
       5 Don't Know

Where does Nick work?

       1 At a computer programming firm
       2 In an electronics/appliance store
       3 In a clothing store
       4 At a bank
       5 Don't Know

Some films are widely distributed and are seen by many people. Some have a very limited distribution and have not been seen by many people. Some actors or crewmembers have worked with many films. Others have worked with only a few. In the following questions you will be asked about any previous exposure you may have had to the film and about your familiarity with the cast and crewmembers.

Please circle the answer.

Can you identify this film's title?

    1 No
    2 No, but I remember hearing something about it.
    3 Yes, it's _____ (please specify as closely as you
    4 Not sure   can even if you can recall only part of the title)

Have you seen this film before?

    1 No
    2 I've seen part of it, but not the whole thing.
    3 Yes, I've seen the whole thing.
    4 Not sure

Have you seen any of the cast members before?

    1 No
    2 Yes, that was: _____(please list the names of any actors you
                            _____   recognized)
                            _____

    3 Yes, but I don't remember their names. _____ (please list or describe the
                                   _____ characters played by
                                   _____ actors you recognized)
    4 Not sure

Did you recognize any of the crew names that were listed in the opening credits? (Crew names would include the director, the screenwriter and anyone else who helped make the movie, but was not an actor or actress)

    1 No
    2 Yes, I'm familiar with _____ (please list the names of any crew
                           _____ members you were already
                           _____ familiar with)
    3 There were no crew names shown in this clip.
    4 Not sure

The next questions are about your perceptions of what the places depicted in the film clips are like.

The first film clip was set in Australia. Please think about people in Australia. Estimate the proportion of Australians who fall into each level of the characteristics listed below, using the stick-on dots that are included with the questionnaire. Use the larger dots to indicate that a relatively large number of people from the place occupy this position, the medium dots to indicate a medium number of people occupy the position, and the smallest dots to indicate a relatively few people occupy this position. Leaving a box empty indicates that zero or almost no people occupy that point. Use as many or as few dots as you need.

For example, if you felt that:

      1) A small number of people in Australia liked hot dogs very much.
      2) A large number of people liked hot dogs somewhat.
      3) A medium number of people liked hot dogs slightly
      4) A medium number of people disliked hot dogs slightly.
      5) A small number of people disliked hot dogs somewhat, and,
      6) finally, almost no one disliked them very much.

Then, a chart of Australia's liking of hot dogs would look like this:

The proportion of people in Australia who LIKE HOT DOGS:
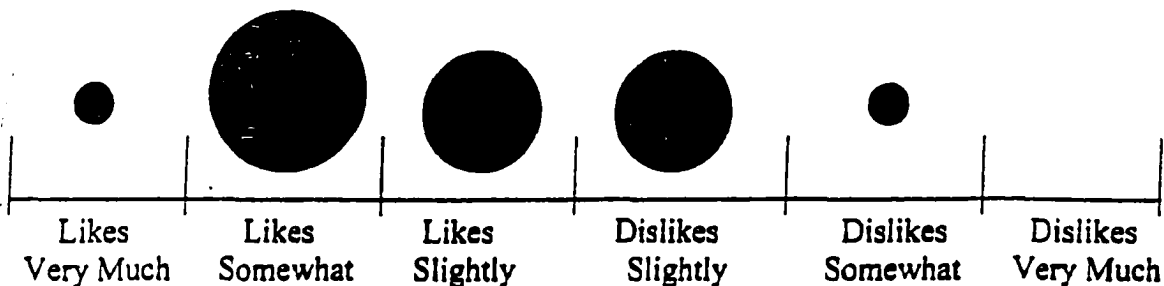
Likes Very Much	Likes Somewhat	Likes Slightly	Dislikes Slightly	Dislikes Somewhat	Dislikes Very Much

Please complete the scales for the following characteristics:

The proportion of people in Australia who are ADVENTUROUS:

Very Adventurous	Moderately Adventurous	Slightly Adventurous	Slightly Unadvent.	Moderately Unadvent.	Very Unadvent.

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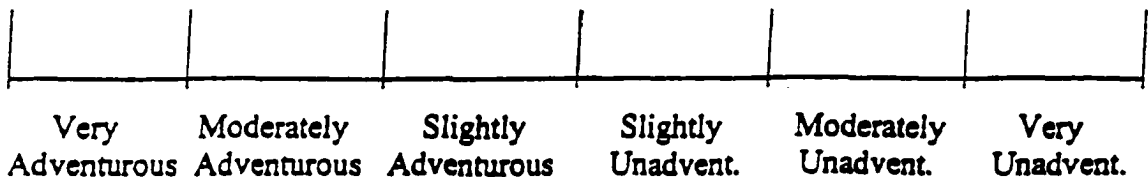
The proportion of people in Australia who are COMPETITIVE:

|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|

Very   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Very
Competitive   Competitive   Competitive   Uncomp.   Uncomp.   Uncomp.
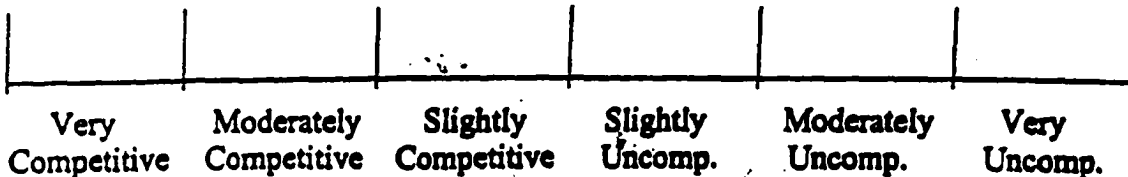
The proportion of people in Australia who are INDEPENDENT:

|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|

Very   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Very
Independent   Independent   Independent   Dependent   Dependent   Dependent
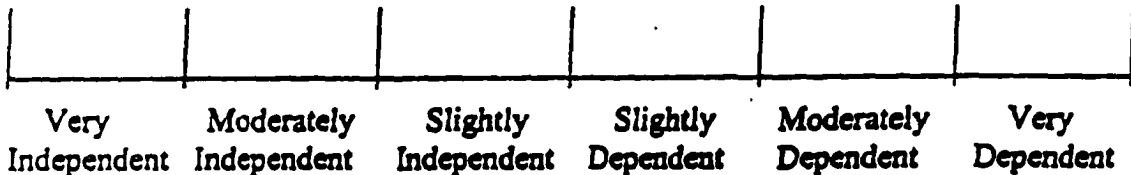
The proportion of people in Australia who are OUTGOING:

|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|

Very   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Very
Outgoing   Outgoing   Outgoing   Reserved   Reserved   Reserved
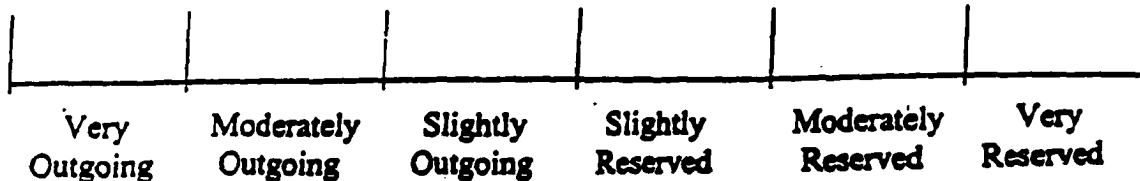
Please think about people in Australia. Below are four scales, marked with four different characteristics. On each of the following scales, please:

1) Indicate where the <u>average</u> person in Australia would be on each of the following attributes with an X.
2) Then, indicate with two slashes (/) where the two most extreme people in Australia would be, that is, the person who shows the characteristic most strongly and the person who shows the characteristic least strongly.

For example, if you felt that 1) the average person in Australia is very little interested in politics, 2) that the person who was the most interested in politics was a bit more than moderately interested and that the least interested person was not at all interested, the scale about Australia's interest in politics would look something like this:

Very Interested in Politics   Not at all Interested in Politics

Please complete the scales for the following characteristics.

Very Self-sufficient   Not at all Self-sufficient

Very Reserved   Not at all Reserved

Very Cautious   Not at all Cautious

Very Competitive   Not at all Competitive

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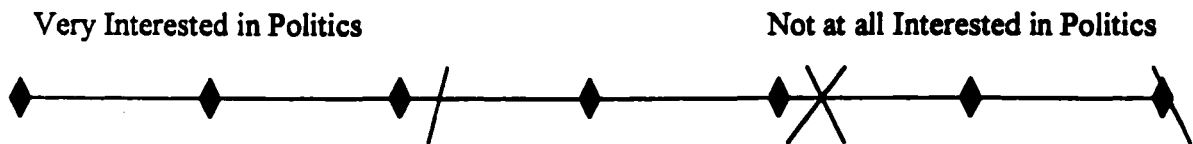
Please think about what an average person in Australia is like. Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe the average person in Australia.

			Neither polite or impolite			Impolite
Polite						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			Modern
Traditional						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			Ambitious
Unambitious						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			Self-controlled
Impulsive						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			Idealistic
Practical						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			Quiet
Talkative						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			Individualistic
Group-Oriented						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			Serious
Happy-go-lucky						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please think about what young men (17-34 years old) in Australia are like. Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average young man in Australia.

		Neither polite or impolite				
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither traditional or modern				
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither unambitious or ambitious				
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither Impulsive or self-controlled				
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither practical or idealistic				
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither talkative or quiet				
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither group-oriented or individualistic				
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither happy-go-lucky or serious				
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please think about what young women (17-34 years old) in Australia are like. Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average young woman in Australia.

			Neither polite or impolite			Impolite
Polite						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			Modern
Traditional						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			Ambitious
Unambitious						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			Self-controlled
Impulsive						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			Idealistic
Practical						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			Quiet
Talkative						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			Individualistic
Group-Oriented						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			Serious
Happy-go-lucky						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please think about what mature women (35-68 years old) in Australia are like. Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average mature woman in Australia.

Neither polite
Polite   or impolite   Impolite
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Neither traditional
Traditional   or modern   Modern
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Neither unambitious
Unambitious   or ambitious   Ambitious
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Neither Impulsive
Impulsive   or self-controlled   Self-controlled
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Neither practical
Practical   or idealistic   Idealistic
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Neither talkative
Talkative   or quiet   Quiet
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Neither group-oriented
Group-Oriented   or individualistic   Individualistic
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Neither happy-go-lucky
Happy-go-lucky   or serious   Serious
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Please think about what mature men (35-68 years old) in Australia are like. Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average mature man in Australia.

			Neither polite or impolite			
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The second film clip was set in the United States. Please think about people in the US. Estimate the proportion of Americans who fall into each level of the characteristics listed below, using the stick-on dots that are included with the questionnaire. Use the larger dots to indicate that a relatively large number of people from the place occupy this position, the medium dots to indicate a medium number of people occupy the position, and the smallest dots to indicate a relatively few people occupy this position. Leaving a box empty indicates that zero or almost no people occupy that point. Use as many or as few dots as you need.

For example, if you felt that:

        1) A small number of people in the US liked hot dogs very much.
        2) A large number of people liked hot dogs somewhat.
        3) A medium number of people liked hot dogs slightly
        4) A medium number of people disliked hot dogs slightly.
        5) A small number of people disliked hot dogs somewhat, and,
        6) finally, almost no one disliked them very much.

Then, a chart of the United States' liking of hot dogs would look like this:

The proportion of people in the United States who LIKE HOT DOGS:

| Likes Very Much | Likes Somewhat | Likes Slightly | Dislikes Slightly | Dislikes Somewhat | Dislikes Very Much |

Please complete the scales for the following characteristics:

The proportion of people in the United States who are ADVENTUROUS:

| Very Adventurous | Moderately Adventurous | Slightly Adventurous | Slightly Unadvent. | Moderately Unadvent. | Very Unadvent. |

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The proportion of people in the United States who are COMPETITIVE:

| Very Competitive | Moderately Competitive | Slightly Competitive | Slightly Uncomp. | Moderately Uncomp. | Very Uncomp. |

The proportion of people in the United States who are INDEPENDENT:

| Very Independent | Moderately Independent | Slightly Independent | Slightly Dependent | Moderately Dependent | Very Dependent |

The proportion of people in the United States who are OUTGOING:

| Very Outgoing | Moderately Outgoing | Slightly Outgoing | Slightly Reserved | Moderately Reserved | Very Reserved |

Please think about people in the United States. Below are four scales, marked with four different characteristics. On each of the following scales, please:

1) Indicate where the **average** person in the US would be on each of the following attributes with an X.
2) Then, indicate with two slashes (/) where the two most extreme people in the US would be, that is, the person who shows the characteristic most strongly and the person who shows the characteristic least strongly.

For example, if you felt that 1) the average person in the United States is very little interested in politics, 2) that the person who was the most interested in politics was a bit more than moderately interested and that the least interested person was not at all interested, the scale about the United States' interest in politics would look something like this:

Very Interested in Politics   Not at all Interested in Politics

Please complete the scales for the following characteristics.

Very Self-sufficient   Not at all Self-sufficient

Very Reserved   Not at all Reserved

Very Cautious   Not at all Cautious

Very Competitive   Not at all Competitive

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Please think about what the average person in the United States is like. Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe the average person in the US.

			Neither polite or impolite			
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please think about what young men (17-34 years old) in the United States are like. Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average young man in the US.

			Neither polite or impolite			
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please think about what young women (17-34 years old) in the United States are like. Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average young woman in the US.

			Neither polite or impolite			Impolite
Polite						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			Modern
Traditional						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			Ambitious
Unambitious						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither Impulsive or self-controlled			Self-controlled
Impulsive						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			Idealistic
Practical						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			Quiet
Talkative						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			Individualistic
Group-Oriented						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			Serious
Happy-go-lucky						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Please think about what mature men (35-68 years old) in the United States are like. below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average mature man in the US.

| | | | Neither polite or impolite | | | Impolite |
Polite 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Polite — Neither polite or impolite — Impolite
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Traditional — Neither traditional or modern — Modern
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Unambitious — Neither unambitious or ambitious — Ambitious
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Impulsive — Neither Impulsive or self-controlled — Self-controlled
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Practical — Neither practical or idealistic — Idealistic
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Talkative — Neither talkative or quiet — Quiet
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Group-Oriented — Neither group-oriented or individualistic — Individualistic
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Happy-go-lucky — Neither happy-go-lucky or serious — Serious
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Please think about what mature women (35-68 years old) in the United States are like. Below are eight pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average mature woman in the US.

	Polite		Neither polite or impolite				Impolite
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Traditional		Neither traditional or modern				Modern
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Unambitious		Neither unambitious or ambitious				Ambitious
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Impulsive		Neither Impulsive or self-controlled				Self-controlled
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Practical		Neither practical or idealistic				Idealistic
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Talkative		Neither talkative or quiet				Quiet
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Group-Oriented		Neither group-oriented or individualistic				Individualistic
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Happy-go-lucky		Neither happy-go-lucky or serious				Serious
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The next questions are about your experiences with Australia. Please circle the correct answer.

There are some places with which you are likely to have a lot of personal experience. You may be from the place. You may have lived in or visited the place. There are other places with which you are likely to have little or no personal experience. How much personal experience have you had with Australia?

No personal experience   A lot of personal experience

              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

There are some places that you are likely to know a lot about. You may have studied them in classes or learned about them from news reports. There are other places you are likely to know only a little about. How much do you feel you know about Australia?

Know very little   Know quite a lot

              1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Do you have any close friends or family members that are from Australia?

1 Yes, I have 3 or more friends or family members from Australia.
2 Yes, I have 2 friends or family members from Australia.
3 Yes, I have a friend or family member from Australia.
4 No
5 Don't Know

The next questions are about how often you watch movies. By movies, I mean films that you see in the theater, on television, on video, on laserdisc or on DVD.

Please circle the correct answer:

About how often do you watch a movie?

1 Every 1-2 weeks
2 Every 3-4 weeks
3 Every 2-3 months
4 Every 4-6 months
5 Less than twice a year
6 Never

About how often do you watch a movie that was produced outside of the US?

    1 Every 1-2 weeks
    2 Every 3-4 weeks
    3 Every 2-3 months
    4 Every 4-6 months
    5 Less than twice a year
    6 Never

About how often do you watch a movie that has subtitles or is dubbed?

    1 Every 1-2 weeks
    2 Every 3-4 weeks
    3 Every 2-3 months
    4 Every 4-6 months
    5 Less than twice a year
    6 Never

About how often do you watch a movie in a language other than English that has not been subtitled or dubbed into English?

    1 Every 1-2 weeks
    2 Every 3-4 weeks
    3 Every 2-3 months
    4 Every 4-6 months
    5 Less than twice a year
    6 Never

The last questions are about yourself.

Please circle or fill in the answer:

Age: _____

Gender: Male   Female

Race: 1 Asian or Asian American
         2 Black or African American
         3 White
         4 Other: _____

Are you of Hispanic or Latino background, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background?

                Yes   No

What is your occupation? _____

Are you a student?   Yes   No

If you are a student, what is your year in school?

1 First-year Student
2 Sophomore
3 Junior
4 Senior
5 Graduate – # of Years in Graduate School _____
6 Other _____

If you are student, what is your major or concentration?   _____

In what country were your born? _____

If you were born in a country other than the United States, how long have you been living in the United States?

1 Six months or less
2 Six months – a year
3 1-2 years
4 3-4 years
5 5-10 years
6 more than ten years

What is your first language, that is the language (or languages) spoken in your home when you were young?

If you did not speak English in your home when you were young, how long ago did you begin to learn English?

1 Six months or less
2 Six months – a year
3 1-2 years
4 3-4 years
5 5-10 years
6 more than ten years

If you did not speak English in your home when you were young, how would you evaluate your English skills, in comparison to native speakers?

1 No difference
2 Very good
3 Good
4 Fair
5 Poor

How many languages do you <u>currently</u> speak well enough to carry out a routine conversation in?

    1 One
    2 Two
    3 Three or more
    4 Don't know

Of what country are you a citizen? _____

If you are a citizen of a country <u>other</u> than the United States, what are your long-term plans about living in the United States?

    1 I plan to live in the US permanently.
    2 I plan to live in both the US and another country.
    3 I plan to live in another country.
    4 Other: _____
    5 Don't Know

Were there any questions in this questionnaire that were difficult to understand or did not make sense to you? If so, which ones and how? (Please be specific)

Thank you for your participation!

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APPENDIX B

Priming Manipulation

Primed Versions

US film: <u>Bodies, Rest and Motion</u>

Bodies, Rest, and Motion (1993) ★ ★ ★
(R) Nick, an unmotivated and under-challenged retail clerk, has decided to move himself and his girlfriend from Arizona to Butte, Montana. In the days before the move, they and their friends struggle to connect with each other and with their own feelings. Another product of the revival of American independent film movement, this meditation on ambition, love and emotional survival in modern America can be slow in spots. However, appealing performances give it some spark, while innovative editing adds visual interest. *(adapted from the stage play of the same name)*. 94 min. United States, Fine Line Features.

Taiwanese Film: <u>Eat, Drink, Man, Woman</u>

Eat, Drink, Man, Woman (1994) ★ ★ ★ (R) In Taiwan, a widowed master chef serves a weekly feast of traditional Chinese delicacies and familial guilt to his three grown daughters. The daughters spend their time sorting out professional and romantic difficulties. There is a lot going on, but the handling of the action is dexterous and the entire cast is winning. A charming and comic tale of love, family, and tradition that testifies to the recent renaissance of the Taiwanese film industry. *(in Mandarin with English subtitles)*. 123 min. Taiwan: Central Motion Pictures Corporation.

Control Versions

Bodies, Rest, and Motion (1993) ★ ★ ★
(R) Nick, an unmotivated and under-challenged retail clerk, has decided to move himself and his girlfriend to another city. In the days before the move, they and their friends struggle to connect with each other and with their own feelings. A rueful meditation on ambition, emotional survival and the nature of friendship and romance, this slice-of-life drama can be slow in spots. However, appealing performances give it some spark while innovative editing provides visual interest. *(adapted from the stage play of the same name)*. 94 min.

Eat, Drink, Man, Woman (1994) ★ ★ ★ (R) A widowed master chef serves a weekly feast of elaborate food and familial guilt to his three grown daughters. The daughters spend their time sorting out professional and romantic difficulties. There is a lot going on, but the handling of the action is dexterous and the entire cast is winning. A charming, comic tale of generational drift and the challenges and rewards of family relationships. *(subtitled)*. 123 min.

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APPENDIX C

Example Questionnaire, Study 2

For the first part of this study, you will see a ten-minute segment from a mainstream, commercially-released film. The segment comes from the very beginning of the film, just after the opening credits. Since you will only see a short segment of the film, a newspaper summary-review is provided below to give you some sense of what the film is about.

██████████████████ (1993) ★ ★ ★ (R) Nick, an unmotivated and under-challenged retail clerk, has decided to move himself and his girlfriend to another city. In the days before the move, they and their friends struggle to connect with each other and with their own feelings. A rueful meditation on ambition, emotional survival and the nature of friendship and romance, this slice-of-life drama can be slow in spots. However, appealing performances give it some spark while innovative editing provides visual interest. *(adapted from the stage play of the same name)*. 94 min.

Please answer the questions in the order in which they were written.

Please do not go back and change your answers.

You may be unsure of the answers to some of the questions. When this happens please answer as best as you can.

The first questions are about specific characters within the film segment. The order of the questions about the characters may not be the order in which the characters appeared in the film clip.

Nick is the character who was first seen sitting on a couch, smoking and drinking. He has longish, brown hair and was wearing a white shirt and dark pants. He started talking and goofing around with Carol, whose house they were in. In a few sentences, please describe his personality as you would to a friend who hasn't seen the movie yet.

Please circle the appropriate number.

Please think of men of Nick's age and culture. How typical is Nick of this group?

Not at all typical			Neither atypical or typical			Very typical
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Nick has a weak personality.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Nick is a good person.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Nick is very different from other men of his age and culture.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Nick reminds me of people I've known.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Many men of Nick's age and culture would behave like he did if they were in his situation.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Nick's behavior was believable.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I identified with Nick.

     Agree   Disagree
       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I would <u>not</u> like Nick, if I met him.

     Agree   Disagree
       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Nick is a realistic character.

     Agree   Disagree
       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

The film made fun of Nick.

     Agree   Disagree
       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

How old do you think the character of Nick is? _____

Below are ten pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe Nick.

			Neither polite or impolite			
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither impulsive or self-controlled			
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither introverted or extroverted			
Introverted						Extroverted
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither shy or friendly			
Shy						Friendly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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In this film clip Nick has decided that he and Beth are moving. What are the causes or reasons for his decision?

People do things for many reasons. They may do something because it is in their nature or character. They may do something because it is expected or necessary in a particular situation. They may do something because they are responding to other people.

The reasons a person does something may be temporary. This means the reason has the potential to change and the person could do things differently at another time. The reasons may be permanent. This means the person would act in the same way at another time.

Please think about the causes or reasons for Nick's decision to move. The next questions are about your opinions of the cause or causes of this action.

Please circle one number for each of the following questions.

Is the cause(s) something that reflects an aspect of Nick or something that reflects an aspect of the situation?

Reflects an aspect of Nick						Reflects an aspect of the situation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Is the cause(s) permanent or temporary?

Permanent						Temporary
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Is the cause(s) outside of Nick or inside of Nick?

Outside Nick						Inside Nick
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Is the cause(s) something about Nick or something about other people?

Something about Nick						Something about other people
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Is the cause(s) changeable or unchangeable?

Changeable						Unchangeable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth is the character who was first seen driving a VW convertible. She has short, brown hair and was wearing a white blouse and skirt with ruffles. Next, she arrived at the door of Carol's house. In a few sentences, please describe her personality as you would to a friend who hasn't seen the movie yet.

Please circle the appropriate number.

Please think of women of Beth's age and culture. How typical is Beth of this group?

Not at all typical			Neither atypical or typical			Very typical
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth has as weak personality.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth is a good person.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth is very different from other women of her age and culture.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth reminds me of people I've known.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Many women of Beth's age and culture would behave like she did if they were in her situation.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Beth's behavior was believable.

Agree						Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I identified with Beth.

Agree   Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I would <u>not</u> like Beth, if I met her.

Agree   Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Beth is a realistic character.

Agree   Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

The film made fun of Beth.

Agree   Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

How old do you think the character of Beth is?

Below are ten pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe Beth.

		Neither polite or impolite				
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither traditional or modern				
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither unambitious or ambitious				
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither impulsive or self-controlled				
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither introverted or extroverted				
Introverted						Extroverted
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither practical or idealistic				
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither talkative or quiet				
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither group-oriented or individualistic				
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither happy-go-lucky or serious				
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither shy or friendly				
Shy						Friendly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In this film clip Beth told Nick that she was sometimes embarrassed by his behavior with Carol. What are the causes or reasons for her action?

People do things for many reasons. They may do something because it is in their nature or character. They may do something because it is expected or necessary in a particular situation. They may do something because they are responding to other people.

The reasons a person does something may be temporary. This means the reason has the potential to change and the person could do things differently at another time. The reasons may be permanent. This means the person would act in the same way at another time.

Please think about the causes or reasons for Beth's telling Nick that she is embarrassed by his behavior with Carol. The next questions are about your opinions of the cause or causes of this action.

Please circle one number for each of the following questions.

Is the cause(s) something that reflects an aspect of Beth or something that reflects an aspect of the situation?

Reflects an aspect of Beth						Reflects an aspect of the situation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Is the cause(s) permanent or temporary?

Permanent						Temporary
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Is the cause(s) outside of Beth or inside of Beth?

Outside Beth						Inside Beth
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Is the cause(s) something about Beth or something about other people?

Something about Beth						Something about other people
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Is the cause(s) changeable or unchangeable?

Changeable						Unchangeable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The following questions are about content the film clip as a whole.

Please circle the appropriate number:

The film made fun of its subject matter.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

This film was made with people like me in mind as an audience.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I am familiar with the culture in which the film was set.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I'm not very interested in seeing the rest of the film.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I thought the film was humorous.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I think that the film was intended to be humorous.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I felt that the film was in bad taste.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I understood what was happening in the film clip.

Agree   Disagree
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Based on what you've seen so far, how would you describe this film to friend who hasn't seen it yet?

Did you understand the <u>language</u> the characters spoke in the film?

       1 Yes, I am fluent in this language.
       2 Somewhat, I have some familiarity with the language, but not enough understand everything the characters said.
       3 No, I am not familiar with this language.
       4 Don't know

If you answered "1" or "2" to the question directly above, please answer the following question: Some accents are easy for viewers to understand, some are more difficult. How easy or difficult do you think these characters' accents, on average, were to understand?

Very easy   Very difficult
       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

What kind of film did the clip come from?

       1 Action Adventure
       2 Comedy
       3 Drama
       4 Romance
       5 Satire or Parody
       6 Science Fiction
       7 Thriller
       8 Other _____

Where was this film set?

Some films are widely distributed and are seen by many people. Some have a very limited distribution and have not been seen by many people. Some actors or crewmembers have worked with many films. Others have worked with only a few. In the following questions you will be asked about any previous exposure you may have had to the film and about your familiarity with the cast and crewmembers.

Please circle the answer.

Can you identify this film's title?

> 1 No
> 2 No, but I remember hearing something about it.
> 3 Yes, it's _____ (please specify as closely as you can,
> 4 Not sure _____ even if you can recall only part of the title)

Have you seen this film before?

> 1 No
> 2 I've seen part of it, but not the whole thing.
> 3 Yes, I've seen the whole thing.
> 4 Not sure

Have you seen any of the cast members before?

> 1 No
> 2 Yes, that was: _____ (please list the names of any actors you
> _____ recognized)
> _____
> _____
>
> 3 Yes, but I don't remember their names. _____ (please list or describe the
> _____ characters played by
> _____ actors you recognized)
> 4 Not sure

The next questions are about the film summary you read before you saw the film.

Based on what you've seen of the film so far, how accurate do you think the summary is? That is, do you think the summary is correct in its evaluation of the film?

Not at all accurate   Very accurate
      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Based on what you've seen of the film so far, how relevant do you think the summary is? That is, do you think the summary discusses the most important things about the film, or does it discuss things that were relatively unimportant?

Not at all relevant   Very relevant
      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

The next questions are about events that happened in the clip.

Please circle the correct answer.

What is the relationship between Carol and Beth?

  1 They are best friends.
  2 They are sisters.
  3 They are cousins.
  4 They went to high school together.
  5 Don't Know

How is Nick doing at his job?

  1 He just got a raise.
  2 He's been transferred to another branch of his company.
  3 He's just been fired.
  4 His company is in trouble and everyone is worried about their jobs.
  5 Don't Know

What is the relationship between Nick and Carol?

  1 They are cousins.
  2 They used to live together.
  3 They went to high-school together.
  4 Carol is Nick's sister-in-law.
  5 Don't Know

Where does Nick work?

  1 At a computer programming firm
  2 In an electronics/appliance store
  3 In a clothing store
  4 At a bank
  5 Don't Know

The next questions are about your perception of what the country in which the film was set is like. This film was set in the United States.

Please think about people in the US. Estimate the proportion of Americans who fall into each level of the characteristics listed below, using the stick-on dots that are included with the questionnaire. Use the larger dots to indicate that a relatively large number of people from the country occupy this position, the medium dots to indicate a medium number of people occupy the position, and the smallest dots to indicate a relatively few people occupy this position. Leaving a box empty indicates that zero or almost no people occupy that point. Use as many or as few dots as you need.

For example, if you felt that:

        1) A small number of people in the US liked hot dogs very much.
        2) A large number of people liked hot dogs somewhat.
        3) A medium number of people liked hot dogs slightly
        4) A medium number of people disliked hot dogs slightly.
        5) A small number of people disliked hot dogs somewhat, and,
        6) finally, almost no one disliked them very much.

Then, a chart of the United States' liking of hot dogs would look like this:

The proportion of people in the United States who LIKE HOT DOGS:

| Likes Very Much | Likes Somewhat | Likes Slightly | Dislikes Slightly | Dislikes Somewhat | Dislikes Very Much |

Please complete the scales for the following characteristics:

The proportion of people in the United States who are ADVENTUROUS:

| Very Adventurous | Moderately Adventurous | Slightly Adventurous | Slightly Unadvent. | Moderately Unadvent. | Very Unadvent. |

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The proportion of people in the United States who are COMPETITIVE:

Very Competitive	Moderately Competitive	Slightly Competitive	Slightly Uncomp.	Moderately Uncomp.	Very Uncomp.

The proportion of people in the United States who are INDEPENDENT:

Very Independent	Moderately Independent	Slightly Independent	Slightly Dependent	Moderately Dependent	Very Dependent

The proportion of people in the United States who are OUTGOING:

Very Outgoing	Moderately Outgoing	Slightly Outgoing	Slightly Reserved	Moderately Reserved	Very Reserved

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Please think about people in the United States. Below are four scales, marked with four different characteristics. On each of the following scales, please:

1) Indicate where the average person in the US would be on each of the following attributes with an X.
2) Then, indicate with two slashes (/) where the two most extreme people in the US would be, that is, the person who shows the characteristic most strongly and the person who shows the characteristic least strongly.

For example, if you felt that 1) the average person in the United States is very little interested in politics, 2) that the person who was the most interested in politics was a bit more than moderately interested and that the least interested person was not at all interested, the scale about the United States' interest in politics would look something like this:

Very Interested in Politics   Not at all Interested in Politics

Please complete the scales for the following characteristics.

Very Self-sufficient   Not at all Self-sufficient

Very Reserved   Not at all Reserved

Very Cautious   Not at all Cautious

Very Competitive   Not at all Competitive

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Please think about what the average person in the United States is like. Below are ten pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe the average person in the US.

			Neither polite or impolite			Impolite
Polite						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			Modern
Traditional						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			Ambitious
Unambitious						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither impulsive or self-controlled			Self-controlled
Impulsive						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither introverted or extroverted			Extroverted
Introverted						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			Idealistic
Practical						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			Quiet
Talkative						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			Individualistic
Group-Oriented						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			Serious
Happy-go-lucky						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither shy or friendly			Friendly
Shy						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please think about what young men (17-34 years old) in the United States are like. Below are ten pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average young man in the US.

		Neither polite or impolite				
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither traditional or modern				
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither unambitious or ambitious				
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither impulsive or self-controlled				
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither introverted or extroverted				
Introverted						Extroverted
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither practical or idealistic				
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither talkative or quiet				
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither group-oriented or individualistic				
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither happy-go-lucky or serious				
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither shy or friendly				
Shy						Friendly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Please think about what young women (17-34 years old) in the United States are like. Below are ten pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average young woman in the US.

			Neither polite or impolite			
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither impulsive or self-controlled			
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither introverted or extroverted			
Introverted						Extroverted
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither shy or friendly			
Shy						Friendly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please think about what mature men (35-68 years old) in the United States are like. Below are ten pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average mature man in the US.

		Neither polite or impolite				
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither traditional or modern				
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither unambitious or ambitious				
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither impulsive or self-controlled				
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither introverted or extroverted				
Introverted						Extroverted
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither practical or idealistic				
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither talkative or quiet				
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither group-oriented or individualistic				
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither happy-go-lucky or serious				
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Neither shy or friendly				
Shy						Friendly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Please think about what mature women (35-68 years old) in the United States are like. Below are ten pairs of adjectives. Please circle the number that indicates how well you think the adjectives describe an average mature woman in the US.

			Neither polite or impolite			
Polite						Impolite
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither traditional or modern			
Traditional						Modern
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither unambitious or ambitious			
Unambitious						Ambitious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither impulsive or self-controlled			
Impulsive						Self-controlled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither introverted or extroverted			
Introverted						Extroverted
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither practical or idealistic			
Practical						Idealistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither talkative or quiet			
Talkative						Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither group-oriented or individualistic			
Group-Oriented						Individualistic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither happy-go-lucky or serious			
Happy-go-lucky						Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

			Neither shy or friendly			
Shy						Friendly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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When were you first aware of where the film was made?

    1 Before seeing the clip
    2 During the opening scenes of the film clip
    3 Later in the film clip
    4 Never

The next questions are about how often you watch movies. By movies, I mean films that you see in the theater, on television, on video, on laserdisc or on DVD.

Please circle the correct answer:

About how often do you watch a movie?

    1 Every 1-2 weeks
    2 Every 3-4 weeks
    3 Every 2-3 months
    4 Every 4-6 months
    5 Less than twice a year
    6 Never

About how often do you watch a movie that was produced outside of the US?

    1 Every 1-2 weeks
    2 Every 3-4 weeks
    3 Every 2-3 months
    4 Every 4-6 months
    5 Less than twice a year
    6 Never

About how often do you watch a movie that has subtitles or is dubbed?

    1 Every 1-2 weeks
    2 Every 3-4 weeks
    3 Every 2-3 months
    4 Every 4-6 months
    5 Less than twice a year
    6 Never

About how often do you watch a movie in a language other than English that has not been subtitled or dubbed into English?

    1 Every 1-2 weeks
    2 Every 3-4 weeks
    3 Every 2-3 months
    4 Every 4-6 months
    5 Less than twice a year
    6 Never

The last questions are about yourself.

Please circle or fill in the answer:

Age: _____

Gender: Male   Female

Race: 1 Asian or Asian American
          2 Black or African American
          3 White
          4 Other: _____

Are you of Hispanic or Latino background, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background?

                        Yes   No

What is your occupation? _____

Are you a student?   Yes   No

    If you are a student, what is your year in school?

        1 First-year Student
        2 Sophomore
        3 Junior
        4 Senior
        5 Graduate -- # of Years in Graduate School _____
        6 Other _____

    If you are student, what is your major or concentration?   _____

In what country were your born? _____

    If you were born in a country other than the United States, how long have you been living in the United States?

        1 Six months or less
        2 Six months -- a year
        3 1-2 years
        4 3-4 years
        5 5-10 years
        6 more than ten years

What is your first language, that is the language (or languages) spoken in your home when you were young?

If you did not speak English in your home when you were young, how long ago did you begin to learn English?

1 Six months or less
2 Six months – a year
3 1-2 years
4 3-4 years
5 5-10 years
6 more than ten years

If you did not speak English in your home when you were young, how would you evaluate your English skills, in comparison to native speakers?

1 No difference
2 Very good
3 Good
4 Fair
5 Poor

How many languages do you <u>currently</u> speak well enough to carry out a routine conversation in?

1 One
2 Two
3 Three or more
4 Don't know

Of what country are you a citizen? _____

If you are a citizen of a country other than the United States, what are your long-term plans about living in the United States?

1 I plan to live in the US permanently.
2 I plan to live in both the US and another country.
3 I plan to live in another country.
4 Other: _____
5 Don't Know

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX D

Attribution Items

US film: <u>Bodies, Rest and Motion</u>

Nick: In this film clip Nick has decided that he and Beth are moving. In a sentence or two, please indicate what you think is the cause (or causes) of Nick's decision.

Beth: In this film clip Beth told Nick that she was sometimes embarrassed by his behavior with Carol. They were just leaving Carol's house. In a sentence or two, please indicate what you think is the cause (or causes) of Beth's embarrassment.

Taiwanese film: <u>Eat, Drink, Man, Woman</u>

Jia-Chien: In this film clip Jia-Chien indicates that she is planning to move into an apartment. In a sentence or two, please indicate what you think is the cause (or causes) of Jia-Chien's decision to move.

Jia-Ning: In this film clip Jia-Ning stopped on her way home from work and spoke to her friend's boyfriend. What you think is the cause (or causes) of her action?

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