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China in the Media: Effects on American Opinion

Abstract

I explore how the tone of media coverage affects opinions of foreign countries by studying a particular case: the People's Republic of China. I exploit the fact that recent presidential campaigns have focused a great deal of attention on China. Indeed, before the 2012 presidential election, media coverage of China was particularly high and largely negative due to campaign rhetoric about how China was stealing American jobs and ruining the U.S. economy. Using a nationally representative, pre- and post- election panel, I explore how these changes in media valence affect opinions of China. I use an original content analysis of mentions of China on U.S. political television to examine whether changes in the way the country is depicted in the media lead individuals to change their opinions of it. Results indicate that media valence does affect opinion; the increase in negatively-valenced coverage of China in advance of the U.S. presidential election increased the degree to which individuals perceived China to be a threat. I also find that an increase in positively-valenced coverage of China increases perceived threat from China. I also use an original survey experiment to offer causal evidence that negativelyvalenced media about foreign countries negatively affects opinions toward those countries—and their citizens. Here, I focus on political advertisements, examining whether exposure to presidential ads, aired as part of the 2012 campaign, cause individuals to have more unfavorable opinions of both China and Chinese people. I also test whether these ads cause people to discriminate against Chinese citizens and Asians, more generally. Results indicate that negatively-valenced media about a country causes people to perceive it as more threatening and to view it—and the people dwelling in it—less favorably. I also find that it causes people to discriminate against Chinese and Asians on an individual level (rather than broadly as a group), evaluating Chinese and Asian college applicants less positively. These studies highlight the power that media can have on American opinion of foreign countries and show how negatively-valenced media used during the course of ordinary campaigning can affect discrimination and Sino-U.S. relations.

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ABSTRACT

CHINA IN THE MEDIA: EFFECTS ON AMERICAN OPINION

Laura R. Silver

Diana C. Mutz, Ph.D.

I explore how the tone of media coverage affects opinions of foreign countries by studying a particular case: the People's Republic of China. I exploit the fact that recent presidential campaigns have focused a great deal of attention on China. Indeed, before the 2012 presidential election, media coverage of China was particularly high and largely negative due to campaign rhetoric about how China was stealing American jobs and ruining the U.S. economy.

Using a nationally representative, pre- and post- election panel, I explore how these changes in media valence affect opinions of China. I use an original content analysis of mentions of China on U.S. political television to examine whether changes in the way the country is depicted in the media lead individuals to change their opinions of it. Results indicate that media valence *does* affect opinion; the increase in negatively-valenced coverage of China in advance of the U.S. presidential election increased the degree to which individuals perceived China to be a threat. I also find that an increase in *positively*-valenced coverage of China increases perceived threat from China.

I also use an original survey experiment to offer causal evidence that negatively-valenced media about foreign countries negatively affects opinions toward those countries—and their citizens. Here, I focus on political advertisements, examining whether exposure to presidential ads, aired as part of the 2012 campaign, cause individuals to have more unfavorable opinions of both China and Chinese people. I also

test whether these ads cause people to discriminate against Chinese citizens and Asians, more generally. Results indicate that negatively-valenced media about a country causes people to perceive it as more threatening and to view it—and the people dwelling in it—less favorably. I also find that it causes people to discriminate against Chinese and Asians on an individual level (rather than broadly as a group), evaluating Chinese and Asian college applicants less positively.

These studies highlight the power that media can have on American opinion of foreign countries and show how negatively-valenced media used during the course of ordinary campaigning can affect discrimination and Sino-U.S. relations.

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CHAPTER 1 – UNITING THE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA VALENCE AND AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION

Does media coverage affect American views of foreign countries? Foreign countries regularly operate in a manner that suggests that they *think* American media have a strong influence. Governments have poured money into public diplomacy campaigns to affect how their country is covered in American media, with activities ranging from billboards (Elliott, 2011) to cultural tours (J. Zhang & Cameron, 2003) to the expansion of domestic media outlets in foreign countries. These include Russia Today, which broadcasts across Europe and the United States and was designed to serve as a “soft-power tool to improve Russia’s image abroad and to counter the anti-Russian bias the Kremlin saw in Western media” (Ioffe, 2010). China’s Central Television (CCTV) also set up headquarters in downtown Washington D.C. in 2012 to “capture the attention and perhaps the hearts and minds of viewers throughout the United States” (Farhi, 2012). This past spring, the Chinese government even interviewed global public relations firms, seeking expertise about how to combat what they see as “unfair” treatment by the foreign media (Tham & Miller, 2016).

Yet despite these presumed effects, there is limited evidence that media coverage affects Americans’ opinion of foreign countries. This is particularly true with regard to media *valence*—defined here as how positive or negative the media coverage is, or the affective elements of the coverage. Instead, two still largely unconnected streams of research have dominated the field. First, communication research shows that foreign governments and their sponsored public relations campaigns can influence how their

country is covered in foreign media (Kioussis & Wu, 2008; S. Lee & Hong, 2012; Manheim & Albritton, 1984; X. Wang & Shoemaker, 2011; J. Zhang & Cameron, 2003). Public diplomacy activities, such as billboards in Times Square, foreign politicians appearing on *60 Minutes*, and foreign government-sponsored dance programs overseas, can change the amount and tone of American media coverage about the sponsor country (J. Zhang & Cameron, 2003; X. Wang & Shoemaker, 2011). But this research stops short of examining whether the media content, in turn, affects opinions of the foreign countries sponsoring the public relations campaigns.

Second, political science research does show that public opinion of foreign countries matters, affecting individuals' policy preferences and purchasing habits (Amine, Chao, & Arnold, 2005; Berinsky, 2009; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1990; Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998; Page & Bouton, 2008; Sides & Gross, forthcoming). For instance, people are more likely to purchase goods from countries they look on favorably (Amine et al., 2005; Klein et al., 1998), and when they have negative opinions of a country, they are more likely to support aggressive policies toward that country (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1990). Still, this scholarship ignores the antecedent: namely, how do people form their opinions of these foreign countries?

The connection between these two streams—whether the media affect how individuals think about specific foreign countries—has not been adequately explored. Research indicates that media influence whether individuals think a country is *important*—an agenda-setting effect. The ways in which a country is covered affect the criteria individuals use to think about it—a priming effect. But do the media *persuade*

people to think more positively or negatively about a foreign country? Does the tone in which a country is covered affect whether people have favorable opinions toward it?

Despite limited evidence, there are a number of reasons why one might *expect* media valence to affect public opinion of foreign countries. First, the media are the primary means through which individuals get information about foreign affairs. Whereas there are myriad ways to acquire information when forming opinions about the domestic context, individuals typically have limited personal contact or information from which to draw when forming opinions about issues beyond their own borders. An individual can decide whether or not the economy is improving by looking at a paycheck, the cost of gas, the person next door who can't find a job, or any number of other factors. However, a person cannot draw on these sources to figure out how to feel about South Korea or Albania. Instead, as suggested by *media dependency theory*, one must rely on media for these impressions, looking to images like those on the nightly news to form opinions. Dependency theory literature suggests that the mass media influence people's conceptions of social reality more when they have less personal experience with it—especially when the domain is foreign, like views of foreign conflicts (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Cohen, Adoni, & Drori, 1983; Tsfati & Peri, 2006). Particularly with regard to distant events with uncertain implications for an individual's daily life, citizens generally lack the time and incentive to inform themselves and thus are primarily dependent on the media—as well as elites—to tell them what they need to know about foreign policy (Baum & Groeling, 2009; Berinsky, 2009; Brody, 1991; Potter & Baum, 2016).

Yet despite presumed effects, it is difficult for scholars to *document* media effects in this domain. First, while Americans are primarily media-dependent for information about foreign affairs, they now opt out of news at higher rates than in the past (Prior, 2007). During the broadcast era, even those with little interest in public affairs tended to hear key headlines and be exposed to breaking global stories; today, this is no longer the case. Large segments of the population may choose not to expose themselves at all to the news.

Second, the growth of channels as well as the expansion of online sources mean that people may be looking in very different places for their information about foreign countries (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2007). It likely would have been easier to find persuasive media effects when most foreign coverage came from the same overseas bureaus and wire services: a country would then have been covered in one, relatively unified way. But today an individual who wants to find information about China can watch the nightly news, CNN, CCTV, or even log onto Weibo and communicate with Chinese foreign nationals with ease. These two changes in the media environment—less overall exposure to foreign news and greater diversity in the sources to which people may be exposed—mean that people are likely to see very different amounts and types of content, complicating the analyst’s ability to link exposure to opinion.

Third, there have also been concurrent improvements to transportation, giving Americans more firsthand experience overseas. According to the Department of Commerce, more than 60 million Americans have traveled abroad each year for most of the past decade (Martin, 2015). While this segment still represents a relatively small percentage of the overall population—and most are headed to only a handful of nearby

countries like Mexico, Canada, and Caribbean islands—it nonetheless complicates the ability to determine media effects, since these visits likely have a very large effect on people’s opinions of the places they visit.¹

Moreover, Americans tend to know and care little about foreign affairs—a consistent finding for decades (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1997; Pew Research Center, 2007; Rosenau, 1961). Even if people are dependent on the media for information about foreign countries, if they aren’t interested, people may not pay enough attention to the information to be affected by it, which may mitigate any persuasive effects. Instead, views of foreign countries may be formed in part by initial impressions in schools or by static images and stereotypes. For example, pluralities mention the Eiffel Tower, Great Wall, and maple leaves, when asked what springs to mind for them in considering France, China, and Canada, respectively (Committee of 100, 2012). These images are not front-page news; almost no one mentions political relationships, trade deficits, or even current politicians as items they consider when evaluating these remote places. When the question was asked about China in 2007 and 2012, despite major changes in the country’s global position vis-à-vis America, its successful hosting of the Olympics, and other key events, Americans had nearly identical top-of-mind considerations (Committee of 100, 2012). This suggests that opinion of foreign countries may be based on more long-term, fundamental opinions and less on short-term news stories.

¹ While the literature about study-abroad tends to rely on small-scale, qualitative research, evidence suggests that studying overseas affects people’s opinions of the country in which they study, as well as the citizens of that country (Alreshoud & Koeske, 1997; Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Kumagai, 1977; Sell, 1983).

The importance of media effects on public opinion toward other countries

Why is it important to understand whether and how the media affect American opinion of foreign countries? First, to understand how Americans may be susceptible to overseas influence. Countries spend millions of dollars both to try to boost and also to monitor their favorability in the United States. If there is clear evidence that changes in the valence of media coverage affects how favorably people view foreign countries, it means that countries may be able to alter how Americans see them. This suggests that well-targeted public diplomacy efforts, such as country-branding, opening media outlets overseas, or even advertisements in the U.S., may have an effect on foreign policy attitudes. Properly understanding this connection is imperative in an era when foreign countries may be purchasing media outlets covertly, broadcasting in the United States without revealing the foreign sponsorship, as required in the Foreign Agents Registration Act (Qing & Shiffman, 2015).²

Moreover, public opinion of foreign countries can affect foreign policy attitudes related to that country (Hartley and Russett, 1992; Hill, 1998; Sobel, 2001; Wlezien, 1996). For example, when individuals have positive attitudes toward a country, they are

² In the United States, the clearest example of covert broadcasting is a radio station that broadcasts over the D.C. area and is majority-controlled by China's overseas propaganda radio station, despite not being registered as such (Qing & Shiffman, 2015). More recently, a similar case in Australia, suggests that this may be a growing problem. At the end of May, Australian and Chinese media outlets signed a series of "cooperation agreements" and memorandums of understanding. Deals include promises by Sky News Australia to share video and online news content for *People's Daily* (the Chinese Communist Party's flagship newspaper) and to publish China Watch, an eight-page insert sponsored by Communist Party in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, and *Australian Financial Review* (Wen, 2016). However, the first insert that ran carried a full-page article supporting China's claims in the South China Sea and was presented with no indication that it was paid content, let alone purchased by the CCP. Moreover, these deals—reported widely in the Chinese press—were not covered at all in the Australian mainstream media (Fitzgerald, 2016). In an era of growing embedded and native advertising and when traditional revenue streams are faltering, these types of deals raise concerns about the ways in which China's overseas propaganda arm may be influencing global media coverage and the ways in which this influence may be hidden from news consumers.

more likely to support humanitarian engagement and trade with that country; and positive opinions of a country may lead to more willingness to intervene on their behalf (Berinsky, 2009). Favorability toward Afghanistan was a key predictor of Americans' willingness to commit troops to be part of a United States international peacekeeping force in the country in the mid-2000s (Page & Bouton, 2008). Negative opinions are related to supporting more aggressive policies toward that country (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1990; Sides & Gross, forthcoming). While politicians may at times ignore these opinions while formulating policy, it is nonetheless worth understanding the relationship.

History also suggests that unfavorable opinion of a country can negatively affect individual people from that country. While there are extreme instances, like the Japanese internment during World War II, there are also more recent occurrences. For example, the 1980s in the United States were an era of "Japan bashing" (Morris, 2013). Fears of Japan's economic rise led to the mistreatment of Japanese and Japanese-Americans in the United States. In one particular case, tensions boiled over in Detroit, and a man—thought to be Japanese—was bludgeoned to death for his perceived role in the decline of the auto industry (F. H. Wu, 2012). The period immediately following September 11, 2001 was also one of intense mistreatment of Arabs and Arab-Americans due to unfavorable opinions and fears emanating from Middle Eastern countries (Cainkar, 2004). Understanding how the media affect opinions of foreign countries—and, in turn, citizens from that country or people who share that cultural heritage—is extremely important in an increasingly globalized world and in a country like the United States, which is home to many immigrants and their descendants.

The case of China

In this dissertation, I explore how media valence affects opinions of foreign countries by studying a particular case: the People's Republic of China (PRC). There are a number of reasons that this is a useful domain in which to study contemporary media effects. First, the economic strength of a country, bilateral trade flows, and a country's size and military power are all strong predictors of American news coverage (Jones, Van Aelst, & Vliegenthart, 2011; Kim & Barnett, 1996; S. Lee, 2007; H. D. Wu, 2000). As the world's second largest economy, its most populous country, and one of the fastest growing military powers, China is one of the most reported-on countries in the U.S. media. Moreover, few Americans have traveled to China, so there is likely to be a high degree of media dependency (Committee of 100, 2007). Attention to news about China and interest in the country may also be higher than for other countries, because China makes people anxious and anxiety is known to heighten attention (Byrne & Eysenck, 1995; Huddy, Feldman, & Cassese, 2007; Lerner & Keltner, 2001; MacLeod & Mathews, 1988). For example, more than half of Americans currently consider China a major threat according to the Pew Research Center, and more name China as a danger to the United States than any country other than Iran (Pew Research Center, 2015).

However, these same factors also make China a *difficult* case through which to study how media valence affects opinion change. The fact that China is covered more by the media than many other countries and that individuals perceive a great deal of threat emanating from it suggest that opinion toward China may be less *malleable* than opinions toward lesser-known countries. Whereas minimal media exposure to information about a country like Azerbaijan or Guinea might sway American attitudes,

the public likely has clearer impressions of China and may therefore be less influenced by media valence. Americans may have limited specific information about China, but they have clear impressions of aspects of Chinese history and culture, such as the cuisine, the Great Wall, and the size of both the landmass and population (Committee of 100, 2012). This limited knowledge base is particularly true among older Americans, who tend to be more negative toward China, likely influenced by their recollections of the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident (Aldrich, Lu, & Kang, 2015; Tien & Nathan, 2001; Xie & Page, 2013). Thus China provides a “hard test” for documenting media effects.

But outside of these reasons, the China case is also extremely important because of the significance of the Sino-U.S. relationship. Prominent China scholars bemoan the “mutual strategic distrust” between Chinese and American publics, calling it the greatest threat to the bilateral relationship—arguably the most important bilateral relationship in the contemporary world (Lieberthal & Wang, 2012). The policy community is concerned that anti-China rhetoric causes foreign publics to view China more suspiciously. They argue that this may, in turn, create a self-fulfilling prophecy; rhetoric condemning China as an aggressive power may cause it to *be* more aggressive if foreign leaders see its strength as suspicious and take actions to block its peaceful rise (Dwoskin & Zhao, 2012). Moreover, growing evidence suggests that Chinese and Chinese-Americans in the United States are being mistreated because of a sense that China poses a threat to the United States. Actions range from high-profile arrests of Chinese-Americans, wrongfully accused of spying for Beijing (Bhattacharjee, 2015; Perlroth, 2015) to increased rejection of Chinese investment deals in the United States (Hanemann & Rosen, 2016; Solomon,

2016) to heightened racialized comments (“China Joins Furor Over Fox News Host’s ‘Chinaman’ Comments,” 2014).

Overview of dissertation

This dissertation explores the question of how media valence affects opinions of foreign countries, by focusing on the case of China. I explore the effects of media valence across two types of coverage: (1) television content featuring the country and (2) political advertisements aired by the presidential candidates in the 2012 election. Using both panel survey data and experiments, I test the proposition that 1) media valence of China influences opinions of the country, and 2) that these opinions are consequential for the treatment of Chinese people and Asians, more broadly. In lieu of a separate methods chapter, I explain the methodology for each individual study as part of the chapter in which it is covered. These studies are united by a shared independent variable—media valence about China—operationalized in distinct ways, and influencing multiple outcomes.

In Chapter 2, I explore what is known from previous research about whether the media affect opinions of foreign countries. I focus on the gaps in the literature, demonstrating that nearly all the work to date has been on agenda-setting, priming or framing. I elaborate on the limitations of existing studies, highlighting how the work relies primarily on cross-sectional analysis, stopping short of offering causal evidence that media valence affects public opinion of foreign countries.

In Chapter 3, I exploit the fact that recent presidential campaigns have focused a great deal of attention on China. Before the 2012 election, media coverage of China was

particularly high and largely negative due to campaign rhetoric about how China is stealing American jobs and ruining the U.S. economy. I use a nationally representative panel survey that straddled the 2012 election and an original content analysis to explore how these naturally occurring changes in the valence of coverage of China affect opinions of the country.

In Chapter 4, I use an original survey experiment to explore whether negatively-valenced media about foreign countries *cause* negative opinions toward those countries and their citizens. Here, I focus on political advertisements, examining whether exposure to presidential ads, aired as part of the campaign, cause individuals to have more unfavorable opinions of both China and Chinese people. I further test whether this relationship is mediated by anxiety—an emotion the campaigns sought to play up with regard to China (Caldwell, 2012; Harwood, 2012).

In Chapter 5, I rely on this same experiment to trace the downstream consequences of these changes in opinion. In particular, I examine whether the negatively-valenced media coverage of China in political ads, which cause people to feel more negatively about China, also cause people to discriminate against Chinese citizens and Asians. I test this proposition in the context of university admissions.

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes by discussing the limitations of the dissertation as well as the larger implications of how media valence about China affects Sino-U.S. relations and prejudice toward Asians in the United States. It also focuses on how this dissertation may help to narrow the gap between the fields of communication and political science.

CHAPTER 2 – NOT PERSUASIVE: PAST STUDIES OF MEDIA AND AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES

The question of how media affect perceptions of foreign countries has interested scholars for at least a century. In 1922, one of the fathers of communication, Walter Lippmann, offered a seminal observation that continues to be prescient: “the only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event” (1922, p. 13). In the midst of the Cold War, Kenneth Boulding similarly contended that it is one nation’s *image* of the hostility of another, not the ‘real’ hostility which determines its reaction (1959). However, these scholars—and most of their contemporaries—were journalists and theorists, focused primarily on explaining how individuals *might* form opinions of things distant from themselves, rather than testing their propositions. While they all believed that media played a, if not *the*, crucial role in opinion formation about foreign countries, it was up to future scholars to offer evidence.

The empirical researchers who have followed in their footsteps have focused primarily on agenda-setting, priming, and framing. Agenda-setting is the theory that the public perceives topics as more important when they are more heavily emphasized by the media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Priming is typically defined as “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987); in other words, the media suggest to people which factors they should use to think about particular issues. Framing is a theory that posits that how an issue is characterized in the media can influence how the public understands it (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The emphasis on these three types of media effects rather than persuasion is likely due to the fact these effects tend to be easier to document (and, for quite some time, scholars thought that persuasion was unlikely and that these were the *only* real media effects). Little is known about the *persuasive* effects of media on opinions of foreign countries. Few studies have attempted to measure and examine the valence with which a country is covered. Those that have done so have been primarily correlational studies or addressed non-American populations. In the sections that follow, I highlight the most relevant existing literature on media coverage and opinion of foreign countries while focusing on the absence of strong causal inferences about how media valence affects perceptions of foreign countries. I begin by discussing studies on agenda-setting, priming, and framing, then discuss the existing persuasion studies and their limitations. I conclude with a discussion of persuasion studies in the non-American context.

Agenda-setting effects

Rather than looking at *what* the media cover about a given country or *how* they cover it, most scholars to date have focused on the effects of sheer amounts of coverage. For example, there is a correlation between the number of stories about a given country in the newspaper and the perceived importance of that country in public opinion surveys (McNelly & Izcaray, 1986; Reilly, 1979).³ While it makes sense that if a country is covered more in the news, the public is likely to find it more important, these studies

³ While not directly related to favorability of foreign *countries*, a corollary in the agenda-setting literature is the relationship between the amount of foreign affairs coverage in the newshole and the perceived importance of foreign affairs in general. A content analysis of major newspapers and the percentage of Americans who report foreign affairs topics as the most important problem facing the country shows a strong correlation between the two (Soroka, 2003). However, there is no examination of particular countries.

typically lack sufficient controls to ensure that the relationship is not simply a legacy of omitted variables. For example, the American media cover countries more when they have stronger economies, larger militaries, or greater landmass (Kim & Barnett, 1996; S. Lee, 2007)—all of which are likely related to perceptions of importance, regardless of the amount of coverage they receive (their key independent variable) or media valence (my key independent variable).

This early research also focused on the amount of news coverage a country received without taking into account whether people were actually *exposed* to the coverage. Subsequent studies attempted to remedy this omission by incorporating people's news consumption into the models, examining whether more media exposure is related to perceived importance and opinion of foreign countries. For example, scholars looked at how many hours a week an individual reported consuming the news and his or her opinion of West Germany (Semetko, Brzinski, Weaver, & Willnat, 1992). They used amount of news consumption as the key independent variable (the hours an individual reported watching the nightly news and reading the newspaper), rather than how much an individual saw about West Germany, arguing that West Germany was covered extensively on the media because the study was set around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Using this measure, they found no relationship between amount of exposure and favorability toward West Germany. On the other hand, the authors *did* find a relationship between reported *attention* to the news and favorability, though this relationship could as easily be the result of higher education levels (known to be related to lower levels of ethnocentrism and isolationism)—which was not controlled for in the model.

Priming and framing effects

There has also been priming research on media coverage and opinion of foreign countries, showing that the context in which countries are covered affects how individuals evaluate them (Brewer, Graf, & Willnat, 2003). Undergraduate students who read articles about terrorism featuring Iran and Libya have a closer relationship between their anti-terrorist attitudes and their opinions of Iran and Libya than students who did *not* read these articles. Similarly, after reading stories about Mexico and Colombia and their respective drug cartels, favorability of these two countries is more closely linked to anti-drug attitudes, indicating that the media can influence the criteria people use to evaluate countries. However, these studies stop short of demonstrating that the media valence persuades individuals to hold particular opinions of countries.

Scholars have also done framing experiments to look at whether coverage showing countries as having either cooperative or conflictual relationships with the United States affects opinions of those countries (Brewer, 2006). In one such study, manipulations featured headlines, such as “U.S., China Agree on Little Beyond Fighting Terrorism” or “U.S., China Stress Common Interests.” When the U.S. is presented as cooperating with China, favorable attitudes increase relative to the control. The opposite holds true when the relationship is depicted as conflictual. However, much more than just the nature of described relationships varied across the manipulations, so differences may be due to factors other than variation in the way bilateral relations are presented. Moreover, treatments were generated by the author, rather than actual, real world media content, which may affect the study’s external generalizability. Additionally, all of the treatments involved references to the United States, raising the issue of whether the

observed effects are due to media valence, differences in bilateral relations, or something else entirely. Nonetheless, such studies offer suggestive evidence that the content and valence of media coverage about China may well affect American favorability of China.

The limits of persuasion-focused studies

Few studies in the American context have focused on persuasion—essentially, the media influencing not just what people think about (agenda-setting) or the context in which to think about it (priming and framing), but rather *how* to think about it, positively or negatively. Studying persuasion requires examining how countries are depicted—the valence of coverage—as well as how this valence affects favorability toward the countries.

Such research is relatively limited, though there are a few notable examples. First, in one study of media valence, individuals were asked to rate 26 countries on a feeling thermometer ranging from 0 to 100 (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). The scholars then looked at all references to those 26 countries in major periodicals, coding them as positive, neutral, or negative. While negative coverage of countries correlated with negative views of the countries, the same was not true for positive or neutral coverage. While the authors argue that the relationship between the negative coverage and negative ratings suggests a persuasive media effect, this conclusion does not account for factors that might lead to both negative coverage of a country and negative public opinion. For example, past or present wars with a country may lead journalists to write about the country negatively and also for individuals to hold negative opinions of it—even if individuals are never personally exposed to negatively-valenced media. Indeed, there is

no accounting for *what* an individual was exposed to. Additionally, the authors treated the amount of positive, negative, and neutral valence separately, despite the fact that a given individual would be likely to encounter all of these various types of coverage in his or her media diet. It is also unclear why the authors found an effect for negative, but not positive coverage. Ultimately, the rudimentary way in which the relationship between media valence and opinion was tested and the extremely likely omitted variable bias inherent in this study mean that it stops short of providing a compelling demonstration of how media valence affects opinion of foreign countries.

Another, still unpublished study offers some suggestive evidence that media valence is related to public opinion about foreign countries (Willnat, Metzgar, Tang, & Lodato, 2013). Here, the authors conduct a detailed content analysis of how China is depicted in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and on CNN, CNN.com, and NBC. Using an opt-in, online survey, they asked respondents how many minutes they spend a day, on average, (1) watching TV news, (2) reading printed newspapers, (3) reading online news, and (4) listening to radio news. Notably, this measure obscures the major differences they found across outlets on a given platform in their own content analysis, including between CNN and NBC and *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*.⁴ They also asked people how interested they were in China, with responses ranging on a four-point Likert scale from “not at all interested” to “very interested”. They then modeled the effects of self-reported exposure to various media on opinions of China.

⁴ One other study that uses similar media measures (and no content analysis) to examine favorability of China does so by modeling whether knowledge mediates the relationship between exposure and attitudes. They find that media exposure increases knowledge about China, which in turn increases negative opinion of the Chinese government, albeit not the country itself (Gries, Crowson, & Cai, 2011).

They find that those who consume more online news are more likely to believe that China is an adversary to the United States and that it poses a military threat to the U.S., and those who listen to more frequent radio news are more likely to believe that the United States shares values with China. But there is no relationship between media exposure and internet or newspaper consumption, even though they theorized that media valence on any of the various news platforms should have similar effects on public opinion.⁵

However, the study suffers from a number of key limitations. First and foremost, while they measure the tone of the media, this information is never incorporated into the models of how media affect opinions. Second, these results are cross-sectional, leaving open the possibility of a spurious relationship or reverse causality. For example, the relationship between greater media consumption and perceiving more threats from China could be driven by differences in political interest or knowledge. Moreover, individuals who feel more threatened by China or who hold more negative opinions of it may be seeking out more information about it, rather than having media exposure *cause* those opinions. Third, the differences that the authors find across media platforms are under-theorized.⁶ While they argue that this effect is likely due to the differences in the way

⁵ Media valence for certain platforms is found to be related to some dependent variables and not others, yet the differences are under-explored.

⁶ The findings also contrast with another study of public opinion of China, though no content analysis was conducted in this secondary case. Rather, individuals were asked whether they had read or heard news about China from newspapers, TV, radio, or websites in the week prior to the survey. Those following “broadcast media—either radio or television, or both” had more negative feelings about China. There was no discernable relationship between newspapers and websites on opinion—yet the differences, once again, were under-theorized (Aldrich, Lu, & Kang, 2015). This paper was singled out by a subsequent scholar, who declared, “it is important to understand the factors that influence the news in order to appropriately consider the potential effects of the news on public opinion. It is a problem to draw conclusions about media effects on China’s image in the news from a cross-sectional survey of public opinion without any

China is discussed across the particular outlets that they code, they know little about how China is covered on the programs that individuals actually *watch*, because they never *ask* which outlets people watch, looking instead at a few exemplars. Without actually focusing on exposure, it is difficult to conclude that the media are affecting different opinions about China, rather than other factors causing people to seek out information from different platforms.

Another study focused on how media valence affects Americans' opinions of foreign countries also focuses on China (X. Wang & Shoemaker, 2011). In this study, the unit of analysis is an opinion poll (group-level), rather than an individual's opinion (respondent-level), and the authors look at changes in the valence of coverage and Americans' aggregate opinion of China over time. They examine all references to "China," "Chinese," or "Beijing" in headlines in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today* and code whether the stories are negative, neutral, or positive. These scores are then averaged across all three outlets for every three-month period of time and matched to each public opinion poll. However, the authors argue that U.S. media coverage of China should be a *mediating* factor—influencing Americans' opinions of China, but also influenced by China's public relations efforts, as well as its country characteristics, including both economic strength and political freedom. Examining this mediated relationship, they find only a weak relationship (outside the conventional bounds of statistical significance) between valence and Americans' favorability of China.

accompanying analysis of the news conducted in the period leading up to the survey and even then, any suggestion of a causal relationship is untenable without panel data" (Semetko, 2016).

Not only is the strength of the relationship limited, but the unit of observation is at the group-level, so anything that affects both aggregate opinion toward China and valence of media coverage could explain away the relationship. For example, there are events and changes—country characteristics, as the authors call them—which affect both coverage and opinion of China, and there is a stronger relationship between these characteristics and favorability over time than between media valence and opinion.⁷ In fact, it is possible that the relationships documented in this study are not due to the media, but to changes in Sino-U.S. relations, the way China is taught in history classes, or other factors entirely.⁸ While there are theoretical reasons to believe that the media valence of an individual’s media diet should also lead to these changes in opinion of China, the aggregate data used in this study stop short of demonstrating that relationship.

Persuasion in a non-American context

Although evidence within the U.S. context is weak, a body of “anti-Americanism” literature examines how the valence of coverage of the United States in the Middle East affects views of the country among foreigners. Before proceeding, it’s important to note that while these studies suggest the potentially powerful persuasive effects of the media, there are nonetheless at least three key differences between Middle Eastern media systems and that of the United States. First, although satellite usage has grown markedly across the region in recent years, the average number of channels that individuals receive remains significantly lower than in the U.S. (Kraidy, 2002; Sakr, 2001). Second,

⁷ As the timing of their study encompasses the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, this is not surprising.

⁸ Subsequent scholars have criticized this study for the possible “ecological fallacy” built into the design, arguing that research focused on aggregated views of China in the U.S. cannot provide reliable information on how the American people’s views of China may change (Aldrich et al., 2015).

particularly at the time of some of these studies, those who watched TV—especially those who had access to satellite and cable TV stations—comprised a higher socioeconomic group than those who did not, suggesting that much of the variation found when looking across different groups of media users may actually have been due more to educational differences (Nisbet & Myers, 2010). Third, some of the most well-known, widely accessible channels across the pan-Arab media market have *known* biases with regard to their coverage of the United States and other foreign countries (Nisbet & Myers, 2010). This bias is important, since it means that individuals may be able to expose themselves selectively to foreign-affairs coverage that agrees with their existing opinions of foreign countries in a way that may not be possible in the U.S. media context. The United States also occupies a higher percentage of the newshole in Arab media than most foreign affairs coverage does in the United States, suggesting that this type of selection may be easier for overseas audiences than for American ones.

In fact, how foreign countries are covered is so well-known that the scholars of one particular study did not do a content analysis of their channels of interest: CNN, BBC, and *Al-Jazeera*. Instead, they simply looked at the differences between those who opted to expose themselves to Western media channels or independent, pan-Arab news channels and made assumptions about the content (Nisbet, Nisbet, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2004). They argue that coverage of the United States on *Al-Jazeera* is significantly more negative than on BBC or CNN and that Middle Eastern Muslims (located in the nine countries polled as part of the Gallup Poll of Islamic Countries) who watch *Al-Jazeera* as their primary news channel are likely to have more negative perceptions of the United States. While they found their hypothesized relationship

confirmed, they note that even with controls, the relationship is unlikely to be causal because of the selection effects inherent in choosing to watch the different stations.

Building upon this work, a subsequent study sought to account for selective exposure by looking at how transnational Arab television exposure to *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya* affected anti-American sentiment as a function of political identification (Nisbet & Myers, 2011). These authors argue that political identity moderates the relationship between media exposure and opinion formation—and thus model both *preference* for watching a given station and *exposure* to that station. After controlling for *preference* for these stations and looking at how opinion varies as a function of the number of days that individuals report watching these transnational media, they find that a preference for *Al-Jazeera* is associated with greater anti-American sentiment, and the opposite is true for *Al-Arabiya*—a station with a relatively more pro-U.S. orientation. While these findings, once again, suggest a persuasive media effect, controlling for self-reported preference cannot eliminate the possibility of selective exposure.

Taken together, it is clear that there are few studies in the American context that can compellingly demonstrate a link between the valence of media coverage of foreign countries and public opinion toward those countries. Moreover, *no* studies show a causal relationship between media valence and favorability of foreign countries—a surprising lacuna, given that Americans are heavily dependent on the media to form opinions about foreign affairs and remote places more generally. In the chapters that follow, I use a nationally representative panel survey and content analysis, as well as two unique survey experiments, to offer new evidence about how media valence affects American views of China.

CHAPTER 3 – HOW COVERAGE OF CHINA DURING THE COURSE OF THE 2012 ELECTION CHANGED OPINIONS OF THE COUNTRY: A PANEL STUDY

Despite Americans' dependency on the media to form opinions of foreign countries, little is known about whether the valence of media coverage of a foreign country causes Americans to feel differently about it. Yet foreign countries are spending millions of dollars trying to influence the American media landscape, opening their own television stations, launching public relations campaigns, and more. The underlying strategy presumes that if foreign countries can change the way they are presented, that Americans will change their opinions and that policy toward the country will become more favorable in some way. This raises the question: *Do* changes in the valence of how a foreign country is covered cause Americans to feel differently about it?

Drawing upon a unique content analysis and a representative panel survey of Americans, I offer some of the first evidence that the valence of coverage of foreign countries in the media affects the way those countries are perceived. I do so by exploiting a moment when the People's Republic of China was heavily covered in the U.S. media accompanied by a notable shift in the valence of coverage: before and after the 2012 American presidential election. In the sections that follow, I review what is known about how media valence affects peoples' opinions of foreign countries and explain the factors that make my selected case particularly advantageous for exploring this research question. After describing the methodology and analyzing the results, I conclude with a discussion of the implications for foreign public relations and propaganda campaigns in the United States.

The difficulties of finding persuasive media effects

The vast majority of studies that have examined how the media affect American opinions of foreign countries have examined agenda-setting, priming, or framing, rather than persuasion. Studies have demonstrated that increased coverage of a foreign country leads Americans to believe that the country is more important to the United States than prior to the enhanced coverage (McNelly & Izcaray, 1986; Reilly, 1979; Wanta et al., 2004). Further, experiments show that when countries are presented in a certain way—such as written about in the context of the drug trade or terrorism—they are then evaluated more in the context of individuals' pre-existing attitudes about these issues (Brewer et al., 2003). Opinions are also affected by whether countries are presented as in conflict or cooperation with the United States (Brewer, 2006). Results suggest that media priming and framing affect public perceptions of foreign countries, even if persuasion studies remain limited.

So why does persuasion evidence remain relatively spare? This is likely due to the difficulty of studying persuasion in a non-experimental context, given problems of selection bias and statistical power. First, with regard to selection bias—or “selective exposure,” as it is typically known in the communication context—it is difficult to establish convincingly that media exposure *caused* particular effects if individuals sought out particular media because they were consonant with existing beliefs (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Stroud, 2010). For example, while there is evidence that exposure to positively-valenced news about America is related to more favorable opinions of the country, and more negatively-valenced news is related to the opposite in the Middle East, this may be because audiences of *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya* select their news source on the basis of

the tone of its coverage of the United States (Nisbet & Myers, 2011; Nisbet et al., 2004). If individuals are simply seeking consonant information, that choice limits the ability to demonstrate that media valence has effects on opinion.

Second, observational studies of media effects often suffer from insufficient power to detect media effects if they are present, since media effects tend to be small in magnitude (Zaller, 2002). Moreover, effects are often non-monotonic, meaning that the effects of more media may not be linearly related to the dependent variable (Zaller, 1992). Outside of choosing the proper relationship, there is often insufficient change in the content of an individual's media diet over time to be able to detect effects, particularly without precise media measures that can capture the existing variance (Zaller, 1996). This is particularly likely to be the case with regard to media coverage of foreign countries, because international news typically makes up a relatively small segment of the American newshole (Van Dijk, 2013). For example, studies have shown that China is covered more than most others on American media because of its size, military strength, and economy (Kim & Barnett, 1996; S. Lee, 2007). Yet, even as one of the most covered countries, it typically occupies no more than 2% of prime-time nightly newscasts (Seib & Powers, 2010; Willnat & Luo, 2011).

Selecting a case study: The PRC

For methodological reasons, it is important for me to choose a time period when the valence in coverage changed, as my focus is on documenting how valence affects opinion. If there is no *change* in valence, it cannot explain any observed changes in opinion. Changes in the *amount* of coverage are not theoretically necessary. But, given

the limited attention foreign countries receive in the American newshole, finding a time period with higher rates of coverage of foreign countries also helps, as it makes it more likely that ordinary Americans will have been exposed to at least some coverage about a foreign country.

Anecdotal accounts of the 2012 presidential election suggest that coverage of China was substantially higher prior to election day and that valence was primarily one-sided: negative (“Bill for China Ads in U.S. Election: \$54.3 Million,” 2012; Harwood, 2016). I will explain the theoretical importance of these particular factors below in more detail. I will then confirm that these anecdotal accounts were correct in the results section, before turning to how media valence affected American opinion.

Increased coverage

Journalists, scholars, and pundits alike all noted that China attracted a great deal of attention during the 2012 election. Both President Barack Obama and former Governor Mitt Romney focused extensively on how the country was “stealing American jobs” and “ruining America’s economy.” In all three presidential debates, for example, China was mentioned more than any other country. Campaign speeches by both candidates frequently referenced China, as candidates vociferously argued over who would be “tougher,” making assorted promises about forcing China to play by international trade rules, standing up to cheating, and branding the country a currency manipulator (Paletta & Davis, 2012). The country also featured prominently in campaign ads; those referencing the country totaled nearly \$55 million (“Bill for China Ads in U.S. Election: \$54.3 Million,” 2012).

Because of its prominence in campaign rhetoric and the increased attention during this period, China was covered outside the typical “foreign policy” segments—including channels that rarely feature foreign countries. For example, presidential debates were widely quoted in snippets on the news. Campaign ads featuring China were aired during entertainment programs. Candidate debates and speeches featuring China even aired on talk shows and were pilloried on *The Daily Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, and other satirical programs, as well as highlighted on “softer” news programs like *The View*. Thus even with declining news viewership (Prior, 2007), most Americans were likely exposed to *some* content about China over the course of the 2012 campaign.

Changes in valence

In order to document whether the valence of coverage of China affects opinions of the country, it is imperative to locate a moment when valence *changes*. One recent content analysis of American media coverage of China found, for example, that three-in-four headlines about China were neutral, while the remainder were primarily negative and almost none were positive (Willnat et al., 2013).⁹ Most of this coverage also tended to be about the country’s internal politics and foreign policy (Willnat & Luo, 2011; Willnat et al., 2013).

Yet, during the campaign season in advance of national elections, there appears to have been substantially more negative coverage. Referencing the pre-election rhetoric,

⁹ A more recent, unpublished content analysis confirms that there is substantially more negative coverage of China than positive on CBS, NBC, and Fox television. However, this study follows a different methodology than most others, focusing not on all references to China, but on those where China is the *protagonist* in the news story. Results indicate that of the 9,070 stories focused on China in the past five years, 27-52% of CBS stories, 22-60% of NBC stories, and 25-55% of Fox stories were neutral or positive, and the rest were negative, with percentages representing the amount per year on each outlet (Semetko, 2016).

Robert Kapp, former president of the U.S.-China Business Council, declared that China had never before been used as such an obvious punching bag for American politicians (“It’s China Bashing Time Again,” 2012). Republican and Democratic strategists alike emphasized that ads featuring China were purposefully designed to play into the public’s sense of economic anxiety (Harwood, 2012). Ads routinely featured music to heighten anxiety, and their content focused on how Americans were being duped, manipulated, and cheated. Romney, for example, mentioned “cracking down” on China whenever they “cheat” four separate times in the first two presidential debates (Paletta & Davis, 2012).

One-sided valence

In addition to increased coverage, China’s relationship with the United States and the threat it poses to the American economy were among the very few campaign issues on which Romney and Obama espoused similar opinions. While the candidates disagreed vociferously about *who* would be tougher on China, nearly all statements about China, from both campaigns, had a similar, negatively-valenced message: that China was threatening the United States economically and that America needed to “stand up” to the Chinese. Whether or not Americans know what type of *policy* would actually constitute “standing up” to China, the sentiment underlying the message is clear: China is bad, taking advantage of America, even lording over it from a higher position. Many pundits observing the campaign described the policy prescriptions offered by the candidates as a form of “outbidding,” where they progressively pulled one another toward more militant stances about China (Kadlec, 2012). For example, following Romney’s declaration that

he would brand China a currency manipulator on his first day in office, Obama filed suit in the World Trade Organization against China (Kadlec, 2012).

The dominance of negativity and its relative one-sidedness suggests that this is an issue on which we should expect persuasive influence. While typically individuals are exposed to contrasting sides of an issue or counterbalanced valence, in the case of China before the 2012 election, there was more of a “one-sided flow,” with individuals largely hearing negatively-valenced messaging. According to Zaller’s seminal theory (1992), this should lead to a “mainstreaming,” with public opinion shifting in the direction of the message consensus (here, negative valence). Moreover, the political “outbidding” over China means that even if more partisan media outlets like Fox News and MSNBC differed with regard to *who* they said would be tougher on China—Obama or Romney—across these outlets there was still a unified, singular message: America needs to stand up to China.¹⁰ As a result, even in a time of heightened coverage, it would be difficult for individuals to select their media on the basis of how the outlets covered China.

Hypotheses

Heightened coverage, more negatively-valenced coverage, and relatively one-sided negative coverage of China during the 2012 election should provide a fertile ground for documenting media effects. This convergence leads to the key question addressed by this study: Did changes in the valence of media coverage of China during the 2012

¹⁰ An illustrative microcosm of this type of political outbidding is taking place in the 2016 Ohio senate election. Incumbent Senator Portman has accused Governor Strickland of being “weak on China” and set up a website—weakonchina.com—to highlight Strickland’s failures. Concurrently, Governor Strickland has produced an ad in which Senator Portman’s face is superimposed on the body of a Chinese gymnast performing a “triple-aerial flip-flop” and described Portman as “the best Senator China’s ever had”. He also built the website makingchinagreatagain.com to redirect visitors to Senator Portman’s website (Watson, 2016).

election cycle cause changes in opinion about China? If there was a period of negatively-valenced coverage of China in advance of the election, were those who were exposed to this negatively-valenced media coverage more likely to hold negative opinions about China? Negatively-valenced media about China encompasses any media which presents China primarily in a negative light: as a poor actor on the world stage, as a human rights abuser, or as a country which hurts American economically, among other depictions. Conceptually, it's the type of media coverage that causes individuals to *feel* badly about China and to worry about China's effect on America or on their own lives. A raised sense of anxiety about China and a heightened belief that China *harms* the United States are natural results of coverage that fixates on the problems China poses to the United States and the need to more aggressively "stand up" to the country. Essentially, this is a sense of *threat*, and leads me to my first hypothesis:

H1: An increase in the proportion of negatively-valenced coverage about China in an individual's news diet will cause that individual to feel more threatened by China.

Although likely a much smaller segment of the newshole about China, does positive coverage—and changes in it—affect opinions in the same way as negative coverage? Here, positively-valenced coverage encompasses all coverage where China is presented as a responsible, helpful world power on the global stage, as bringing positive economic changes and developments to the United States, and the like. Essentially, this type of coverage is that which causes individuals to feel positively about China and to sense that China brings *benefits* to the United States. This leads me to my second hypothesis:

H2: An increase in the proportion of positively-valenced coverage about China in an individual's news diet will cause that individual to feel less threatened by China

Notably, these hypotheses are about *valence*, not about *amount* of coverage. Nonetheless, I expect media effects to be easier to locate in this particular time period because of the increased likelihood that average Americans are exposed to China-related content. However, my hypotheses presume that media valence is likely to have an effect on opinion, whether individuals see a lot of references to China or only a few.

Data and methods

Survey sample

To test this hypothesis, I rely on the Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics (ISCAP) 2012 election study data. These data were collected using GfK's probability-based online panel. GfK recruits a nationally representative sample of adults, ages 18 and older, using address-based sampling methods, providing the vast majority of the non-institutionalized population a known chance of selection into the sample. Participants who lack internet access are provided access for free, along with the necessary hardware, in exchange for answering periodic surveys. After joining the panel, participants answer a series of demographic questions and become a part of the pool from which samples are drawn for particular studies. When they are selected for a given survey, respondents are contacted via email with the invitation and, if they have not completed the survey within three days, re-contacted to encourage participation. Rewards such as raffles and financial remuneration are used to incentivize cooperation.

I used a two-wave panel, with the first wave collected before the 2012 presidential election (October 19-29) and the second wave between the election and the inauguration (November 14- January 29). The pre-election survey had a cooperation rate of 72%, with a total of 2,606 completes.¹¹ Whereas the first wave of the ISCAP panel was released to all respondents at one moment (and completed within 10 days of the release), the second wave was randomly released over a 10-week period to those who had completed the pre-election survey; 10% of the respondents were contacted every two weeks for a period of 10 weeks (e.g., roughly 260 people were contacted on November 14 and given two weeks to complete the survey, then another 260 people were contacted on November 28 and given two weeks to complete the survey, and so on until all original respondents were contacted).¹² The cooperation rate for the post-election survey (N=2,471) was 95%, meaning that 95% of the pre-election survey (wave 1) participated in the second wave.^{13,14} The median time to complete each wave of the survey was 23 and 22 minutes, respectively.

¹¹ GfK online surveys compare quite well with telephone and face-to-face surveys in terms of the representativeness of the samples with the American adult population (Chang & Krosnick, 2009). Moreover, online surveys may provide higher quality responses, including lower levels of social desirability bias, compared to telephone surveys (Chang & Krosnick, 2009). The ISCAP sample compares favorably with the Current Population Survey, conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (see Appendix IV). Applying population weights to the descriptive analyses does not change the results appreciably. The design effect due to weighting is 1.45 and 1.44 for each wave, respectively.

¹² From a domestic standpoint, the election was the key event in the United States between the two survey waves. Aside from this, the most notable event in the time period was the Newton, Massachusetts school shooting and subsequent discussions of gun legislation. Work by Pew corroborates that the shooting was the event that Americans were following most closely on the news (Pew Research Center, 2013), and it is unlikely to have affected attitudes toward China. Yet, while the election was the key event in the United States, in China events were unfolding as well. Critically, China underwent a leadership transition from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping. However, with the exception of this major change in power, there were no other dramatic events in the bilateral relationship, nor changes in Chinese foreign policy or trade policy. While it is reasonable to be concerned about differences between the waves, any changes in how *China* is covered will be measured by my coding the media content between the two waves.

¹³ The cooperation rate across periods in wave 2 varied slightly from a low of 90% in week 9 to a high of 97% in weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6.

Dependent variable

My hypotheses predict that negatively-valenced coverage of China will cause individuals to hold more negative opinions of the country. In this particular case, I look at whether or not negatively-valenced coverage of China increases the *threat* that people perceive from the country. I do this for two reasons. First, this outlook is closely related to favorability; those with more unfavorable views of China tend to see it as more of a threat to the United States, to think that trade with China does not benefit the United States, and to think that the United States should get tougher on China (Pew Research Center, 2015). Second, one of the greatest problems in Sino-U.S. relations is the growth of mutual distrust (Lieberthal & Wang, 2012). In particular, some analysts have contended that *fear* of a rising China may narrow the options available for elites in their negotiations with China and may contribute to more aggressive policies or even put the two countries on a path toward war (G. Allison, 2015; Gilsinan, 2015; Johnston, 2013).

The research relies on two key dependent variables. Both measures—HIGH THREAT and THREE-PART CHANGE IN PERCEIVED CHINA THREAT—are created using the same question, which measures perceived threat from China. The survey question is a seven-point scale, asked in both waves: “There are different views about China. Some people see China as more of an opportunity for new markets and economic investment, while others see it as a threat to our jobs and security. Still others are somewhere in

¹⁴ The 5% who did not complete the post-election survey look comparable to the rest of the sample with regard to their wave 1 opinion of China: 10% say China is more of an opportunity for new markets and investment (scale points 1, 2, 3), 20% choose the middle point (4), 49% say China is more of a threat to jobs and security (scale points 5, 6, 7), and 17% say they don't know. These differences are within the margin of error for the survey.

between. Which view is closest to your own?”¹⁵ Respondents then placed themselves on the scale using an interactive slider or responded that they did not know, with higher values indicating a greater degree of perceived threat. Both of the endpoints on the scale were labeled, but not the midpoint.

I use this seven-point variable to create a binary dependent variable HIGH THREAT. The dependent variable HIGH THREAT equals 1 when an individual says China is “more of a threat to our jobs and security” (scale points 5, 6, 7) and equals 0 in all other cases, including “don’t know” (Table 3.1). This binary dependent variable treats those who express low or medium threat and those who express no opinion as conceptually equivalent.¹⁶ I do this for theoretical reasons. When people feel threatened, they tend to know it. On a question like this, which is not sensitive (and is unlikely to make people feel uncomfortable and thus to back away from answering it), offering a “don’t know” response suggests low cognitive engagement with the idea of threat from China. Given that Americans are relatively more negative toward China than most other countries (Pew Research Center, 2014) and the likely preponderance of negative coverage in the pre-election period, anyone who is unable or unwilling to offer an opinion about China seems much more likely to perceive little or no threat from China than high threat. There is a

¹⁵ Similar measures have been used previously. For instance, on the Transatlantic Trends 2012 Survey (fielded in June of that year), Americans were able to choose, using a dichotomous scale, between the two statements that form the *endpoints* of the seven-point scale used here. They were also able to volunteer “both,” which was not a possible response option on the ISCAP panel. By a two-to-one margin in the Transatlantic Trends data, Americans believed China represented more of an economic threat (59%) than an economic opportunity (30%); 5% volunteered that it was both and 5% did not know or had no opinion.

¹⁶ A substantial percentage of the sample (16% in each wave, respectively) does not have a clear opinion on China or is unwilling to answer the question. This is consistent with many other questions about foreign policy attitudes, as well as with past research on American opinion of China, which indicates a great deal of ambivalence and a low degree of knowledge about the country (Gries, Crowson, & Cai, 2011; Tien & Nathan, 2001).

statistically significant difference between the means of the pre-election and post-election levels of HIGH THREAT, based on a paired t-test ($p < 0.01$). Nonetheless, the actual difference is relatively small.

Table 3.1. High Threat from China, Pre- and Post-2012 Presidential Election		
<i>Question wording: "There are different views about China. Some people see China as more of an opportunity for new markets and economic investment, while others see it as a threat to our jobs and security. Still others are somewhere in between. Which view is closest to your own?"</i>		
Not high threat (1-4, 9)	49.8% (N=1,297)	51.6% (N=1,276)
High threat (5, 6, 7)	50.2% (N=1,309)	48.4% (N=1,195)
<i>Note: HIGH THREAT is measured using the seven-point interactive scale with labeled endpoints and the question above. Individuals are coded as "high threat" if they select values above the midpoint of the scale (5,6, 7) and as "not high threat" otherwise (1-4, and don't know). There is a statistically significant difference between the means of the pre-election and post-election levels of perceived China threat, based on a paired t-test ($p < 0.01$). The data shown is unweighted; post-stratification weights do not significantly alter the marginal distribution.</i>		

I create a second dependent variable, THREE-PART CHANGE IN PERCEIVED CHINA THREAT, in order to explore not only whether perceived threat from China changed at all during the electoral period, but, if so, in what *direction* (Table 3.2). This is important, as my second hypothesis predicts that individuals will become *less* threatened if positively-valenced coverage increases. This variable takes on values of -1 for those whose perceived threat *decreased* from pre-election to post-election, a value of 0 for those whose perceived threat remained constant from pre- to post-election, and 1 for those whose perceived threat from China *increased* during the election season. Notably, this THREE-PART CHANGE IN PERCEIVED CHINA THREAT is based directly on the seven-point survey question and the accompanying raw scores, *not* on the binary variable HIGH THREAT introduced above. For example, if an individual responded with a "4" in wave 1 and then a "3" in wave 2 on the seven-point scale, they would be coded as perceiving *less*

threat from pre- to post-election.¹⁷ Examining the dependent variable in this way, I see that 4-in-10 Americans decreased in their perceived threat over-time.

It is also worth noting that most of the shifts in perceived threat were relatively minor. The vast majority (87%) of those who perceived *less* threat from China from pre- to post-election slipped only one or two scale points on the seven-point scale. The same pattern holds for those who perceived *more* threat: 85% changed in their threat perception only one or two points. Nonetheless, these minor shifts can be substantively significant; 13% shifted over the midpoint of the scale, from perceiving China as more of a threat to American jobs and security to more of an opportunity for new markets and economic investment.

Table 3.2. Three-Part Change in Perceived China Threat, Pre- and Post-2012 Presidential Election	
<i>Question wording: "There are different views about China. Some people see China as more of an opportunity for new markets and economic investment, while others see it as a threat to our jobs and security. Still others are somewhere in between. Which view is closest to your own?"</i>	
Perceive <i>less</i> threat from pre- to post-election (-1)	38.5% (N=952)
No change in perceived threat (0)	41.7% (N=1,031)
Perceive <i>more</i> threat from pre- to post-election (+1)	19.7% (N=488)
<i>Note: Three-part change in perceived China threat is measured using the seven-point interactive scale with labeled endpoints and the question above. It is a difference score, where a person is given a 1 if they have a higher perceived threat post-election than pre-election, a 0 if their perceived threat remains unchanged between the waves, and a -1 if they have a lower perceived threat post-election than pre-election. The data shown is unweighted; post-stratification weights do not significantly alter the marginal distribution.</i>	

Independent variable: media valence

Most previous persuasion studies have used media measures that cannot reliably account for individual media exposure. For example, many studies have relied simply on

¹⁷ In contrast, this individual would be scored as “not high threat” in both waves using the binary dependent variable, HIGH THREAT.

self-reported measures of how much an individual watches television (Semetko et al., 1992). Others have asked people how many minutes they spend a day, on average, watching news about a *particular* country (Willnat et al., 2013). But, self-reported media measures of this sort—particularly about a given country (e.g., “How much do you read news about China?”)—are much more likely to be measures of general political interest, or specific interest in China. While there remains some debate in the literature about the *best* way to measure media exposure (Dilliplane, Goldman, & Mutz, 2013; LaCour & Vavreck, 2014; Prior, 2009a, 2009b) one thing is clear: without a measure that takes into account *what* people watch, rather than just the *amount* of news they consume, it is impossible to investigate how the *content* an individual sees affects his or her opinions.

To address this concern, I rely upon a program-level, list-based measure to capture exposure to 45 individual political TV programs (Dilliplane et al., 2013). As part of the ISCAP panel, respondents were shown four different lists, each containing 13 television shows, and asked: “Which of the following programs do you watch regularly on television? Please check any that you watch at least once a month.” The listed programs were selected based on their rating as the most popular according to Nielsen Media Research, yielding a variety of potential sources, from traditional network newscasts to cable programs, political talk shows, and political satire (see Appendix III for a full list of included programs).¹⁸ Previous studies demonstrate that this measure has high levels of predictive validity as a measure of exposure to political news (Dilliplane et

¹⁸ While this program list includes a number of non-traditional political news shows, such as *Ellen*, *The View*, *Saturday Night Live*, *The Daily Show*, and others, it does not include strictly fictional shows, which may depict China. Future work would benefit from examining these shows, as well, as there may be references to the country or Chinese stereotypes on these types of media.

al., 2013). Changes in this measure of exposure predict changes in candidate knowledge over the course of a campaign. Further it demonstrates high reliability based on the more exacting Heise measure (Heise, 1969).¹⁹ There is also a strong positive relationship between the number of shows individuals report watching and the total amount of news they consume, according to viewership data (LaCour & Vavreck, 2014).²⁰

To create the ultimate independent variable of valence, I merge information about which programs individuals report watching with an original content analysis. To do this, I use the program STAT!—Searchable Television as Text—to query a database that contains the closed-caption text of 23 of the 45 television shows individuals were asked about on the ISCAP panel. Because not all of the 45 programs were available via closed captioning and accessible via STAT!, I downloaded transcripts of the remaining shows from three additional sources: LexisNexis, Newsbank, and Factiva.²¹ I examined all transcripts for the two-week period prior to wave 1 and wave 2, respectively.

¹⁹ Using the Heise (1969) method, Dilliplane, Goldman, and Mutz found that the program list measure had a true-score reliability as good or better than previous media measures, including total number of political TV programs watched per week, total minutes of TV watched per week, and total days of TV watched per week. The average true-score reliability across all 49 political programs was 0.88 (2013).

²⁰ Some have criticized the measure for its continued reliance on self-reported data, the cognitive burden imposed on the respondent to figure out what “news” is, and its exclusion of many types of political news content because of the limited shows included on the lists (Prior, 2013). For purposes of this project, however, these limitations are somewhat tempered because I am comparing individuals *to themselves*. Individuals are likely to consistently over- or under-report exposure over time, and their fundamental understanding of the question is unlikely to differ in the months between the two waves. While these flaws may add a great deal of *noise* to the independent variables, as individuals may have seen China-related content that I do not capture via this measure, they likely report viewership similarly at both points in time—meaning that the bias is consistent. Another criticism of the measure is that it treats individuals who watch the same number of programs but very different *amounts* of the program the same (Prior, 2013). However, again, as I am not interested in comparisons across viewers, but rather changes in one individual’s opinions as content changes, this is not a significant problem for this study.

²¹ Even using these four different sources, there were four shows for which there were no transcripts available: *The View*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, and the *Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson*.

I chose to use three key search terms: China, Chinese, and Beijing—the same three terms that nearly all content analyses focused on China have already used (X. Wang & Shoemaker, 2011; Willnat & Luo, 2011; Willnat et al., 2013).²² Using STAT! for the programs available via SnapStream and hand-coding for the others, I captured 50 words on either side of one of these three keywords (see Appendix II for the full coding scheme). The word China, Chinese, or Beijing plus the adjacent 100 words is considered a single China reference. If there were multiple references within a given program, even as part of the same news segment (e.g., a five-minute story about a new campaign ad related to China), I coded the valence of each reference separately, as long as the keywords were more than 50 words apart from one another. In each case, the valence was coded as negative (-1), neutral (0), or positive (1).²³ A second independent coder coded a randomly selected 10% of the references, yielding a Krippendorff's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.83.

I use these coded references to create a number of independent variables that take into account a given individual's media diet. Because each individual was asked to name the television programs that he or she watched, I used the content of those programs to create a COUNT OF CHINA REFERENCES that were aired during the two weeks prior to the survey period on the programs that each individual reported watching. For example, if an individual reported watching *60 Minutes* and *The Colbert Show*, his or her COUNT OF

²² These three terms are highly precise at generating only references that are relevant to the question at hand—coverage of the country, China—with one notable exception: the expression “a bull in a china shop.” This reference, which occurred only 18 times over the course of the study period, was excluded.

²³ For example, if one news program featured a five-minute discussion of a new advertisement and mentioned the word China three times, I would code each one of those three references, even though they were all part of the same general news segment, as long as they were separated from one another by more than 50 words. Each score would then be summed and contribute to an individual's COUNT OF CHINA REFERENCES.

CHINA REFERENCES would be all of the references to China aired on those two particular programs, and not on the other programs.²⁴ I choose a period of two weeks because I expect these effects to be relatively short-term. Not only are *most* media effects relatively short-term (Zaller, 1996, 2002), but it is especially likely in this type of domain, as individuals typically know and care little about foreign affairs (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1997; Pew Research Center, 2007; Rosenau, 1961). As a result, they are likely to have relatively more malleable attitudes toward foreign countries, influenced heavily by the media climate of the day. In many ways, this resembles Zaller's model of opinion formation, wherein attitudes are viewed as a sample of what individuals have received and accepted (1992). In this instance, if negative media coverage of China has declined, then there will be less reception of that narrative, and this shift should be reflected in attitudes.

In this same manner, I created scores for the PERCENT OF POSITIVE CHINA REFERENCES, PERCENT OF NEUTRAL CHINA REFERENCES, and the PERCENT OF NEGATIVE CHINA REFERENCES an individual may have seen as part of the total count of references to China that aired on the programs that he or she typically watched (Table 3.3). If individuals had *no* references as part of their news consumption (e.g. COUNT OF CHINA REFERENCES for that individual equals zero), the individual was also assigned a zero for his or her percentages.

²⁴ In contrast to studies that use set-top boxes or viewership data (e.g., LaCour and Vavreck, 2014), I am only able to examine the valence of *all* references to China across the programs an individual reports watching, rather than narrowing it to only the China-related references when a given individual had his or her TV on.

Independent variable	Wave	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SE
<u>Count</u> of China references*	<i>Pre-election</i>	15.18	3	0	253	0.65
	<i>Post-election</i>	3.78	0	0	181	0.22
Percent of <u>positive</u> China* references	<i>Pre-election</i>	3.01	0	0	100	0.20
	<i>Post-election</i>	4.66	0	0	100	0.30
Percent of <u>negative</u> China references*	<i>Pre-election</i>	19.65	0	0	100	0.54
	<i>Post-election</i>	12.89	0	0	100	0.57
Percent of <u>neutral</u> China references*	<i>Pre-election</i>	46.63	50	0	100	0.89
	<i>Post-election</i>	28.64	0	0	100	0.85

Note: A “China reference” is any reference to China, Chinese, or Beijing. For each individual, the count of China references are all those that aired two weeks before his or her survey date on the television programs that he or she reported watching. The valence of each reference was coded as positive (+1), negative (-1), or neutral (0). The percent of positive, neutral, and negative China references are the total number of positive, negative, or neutral over the count that the individual may have seen. * indicates a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) from pre- to post-election using a two-tailed t-test.

Finally, in order to test my hypotheses, it is necessary to create each of these variables at two points in time. For the first wave—collected before the 2012 election—this was straightforward. All individuals were surveyed at the same time, so I coded references to China in the two weeks preceding the election. However, because the second wave was randomly released to respondents over more than two months, I need to account for changes in the media environment during that period. Thus each of the variables described above is calculated using the references to China on the programs that he or she watched in the two weeks preceding when he or she took the second wave of the survey.

Even when the topic was the same, the valence of references often varied. For example, in the lead-up to the election, one event that received a great deal of coverage was a series of ads that Mitt Romney aired, suggesting that a Chrysler automotive factory

was leaving Ohio and moving to China.²⁵ Many references were explicitly negative. For example, Rachel Maddow, host of *The Rachel Maddow Show*, on October 26, discussed Romney's policy as projected in the Chrysler ads, declaring: "He has a stance on China, which is a country that is ripping our heart out. We do nothing to protect ourselves, and so we're being trampled..."

The valence with which China was covered in other segments was more neutral, simply discussing the facts of the misleading ads—even if the valence of the *candidate* coverage was sometimes substantially more negative. One example is *The Ed Show* on October 26:

It's not surprising Mitt Romney would lie about car manufacturing jobs going to China. If he admits the truth, he's finished in Ohio. So, he's out there actually creating a story, telling people that a plant is going to be shut down by Chrysler and the jobs are going overseas. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is just falling right into the hands of the Obama campaign.

While a minority, some references to the issue were even positive, discussing how factories opening in China indicate economic progress for the United States.²⁶ On

MSNBC Live on October 26, the hosts declared:

This is a misreading of a Bloomberg Report that was reporting *good* news. Global demand for Jeeps has risen to the point where they can sell *more* in China and they want to build Jeeps over there. This is good news for American companies, not bad news. They are not shipping American jobs overseas. This doesn't mean less work for Americans. This means they are adding, that they are expanding overseas. Thanks to the auto bailout, Chrysler stuck around to win again.

²⁵ This claim proved to be false, as Chrysler was opening a factory in China to cater to the increasing Chinese demand, rather than shuttering its Ohio factory and outsourcing jobs.

²⁶ Notably, even neutral and positive references that *refute* the claims in the ads still mention China in conjunction with issues like job loss and outsourcing.

Fixed effects models

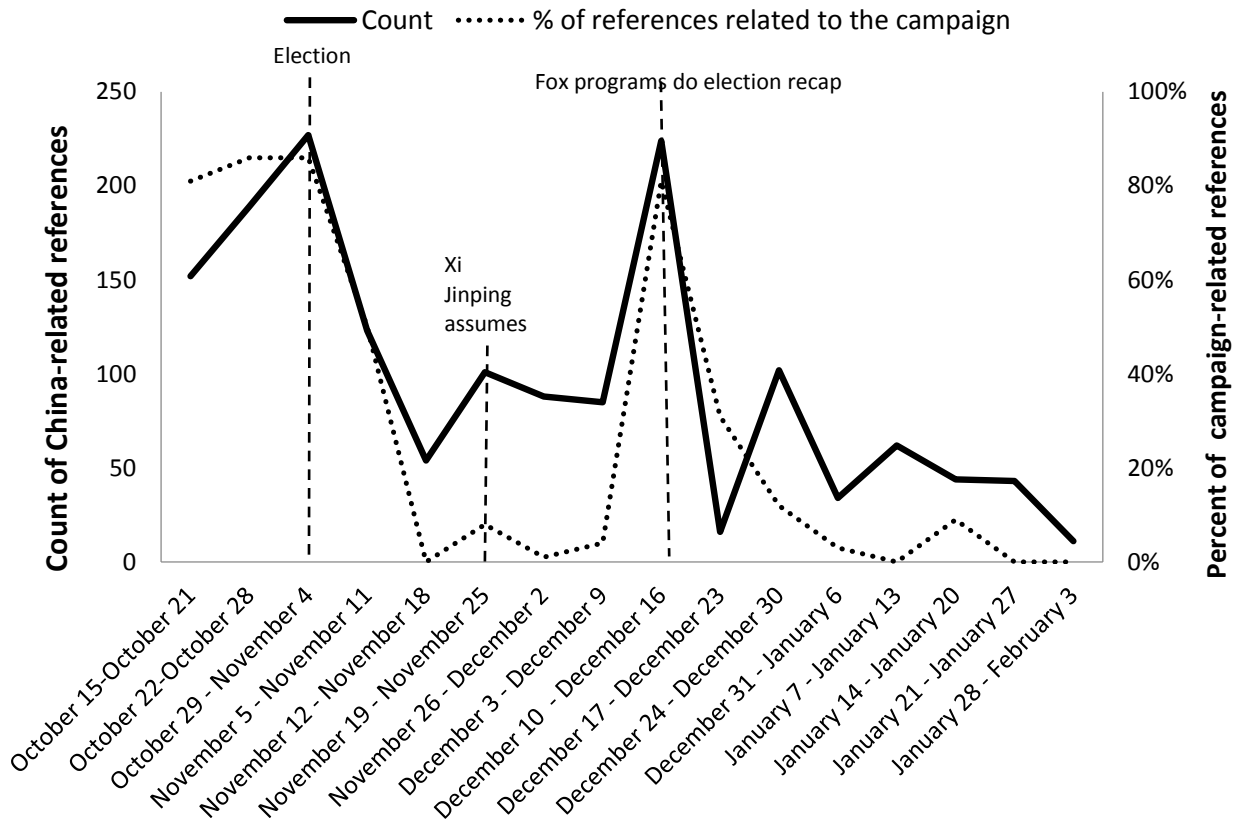
In order to examine how the PERCENT OF POSITIVE CHINA REFERENCES, PERCENT OF NEUTRAL CHINA REFERENCES, and the PERCENT OF NEGATIVE CHINA REFERENCES affect HIGH THREAT and THREE-PART CHANGE IN PERCEIVED CHINA THREAT, I rely upon the panel data described above, specifically testing how changes in valence of coverage of China is related to change in perceived threat from China. Outside of an experiment, fixed effects models of within-person change are the strongest possible test of causality (P. D. Allison, 2009). Whereas in most observational designs, one has to measure and control for all possible spurious causes of association, in a fixed effects model, each respondent serves as his or her own control. As a result, stable characteristics cannot produce spurious associations. While spuriousness due to other variables that change over time is still a problem, it is possible to use variables that represent the passage of time (WAVE) to control for the sum-total of everything else that changed between the election and the inauguration, making it unnecessary to include each and every time-varying variable that could cause spurious associations.

The effects of media coverage on perceived threat

Before turning to the key hypotheses in the paper about the *effects* of the valence of coverage, it's important to confirm the anecdotal evidence discussed above: that there was not only more coverage of China before the 2012 election, but also that it was substantially more negative. To do this, I looked systematically at overall media coverage both before the election and during the pre-inauguration period (rather than just what was consumed by the random sample, which I will turn to next). First, the content analysis

reveals that the sheer amount of coverage of China *was* higher during the election period than in the post-election period. Substantially more references to China appeared in advance of the election than in the weeks between the election and the inauguration. Whereas there were between 152 and 227 references to China per week in the two weeks preceding the election, the number fell precipitously in post-election weeks, down to a low of 16 in late December. Even the once-in-a-decade leadership transition in China received relatively little coverage. The only major spike in references following the election was a week-long period in which all the Fox News programs “debriefed” the election—focusing in great detail on many programs about the Chrysler ads discussed earlier (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. More China-Related References Pre- than Post-2012 Election, Mainly Campaign-Related



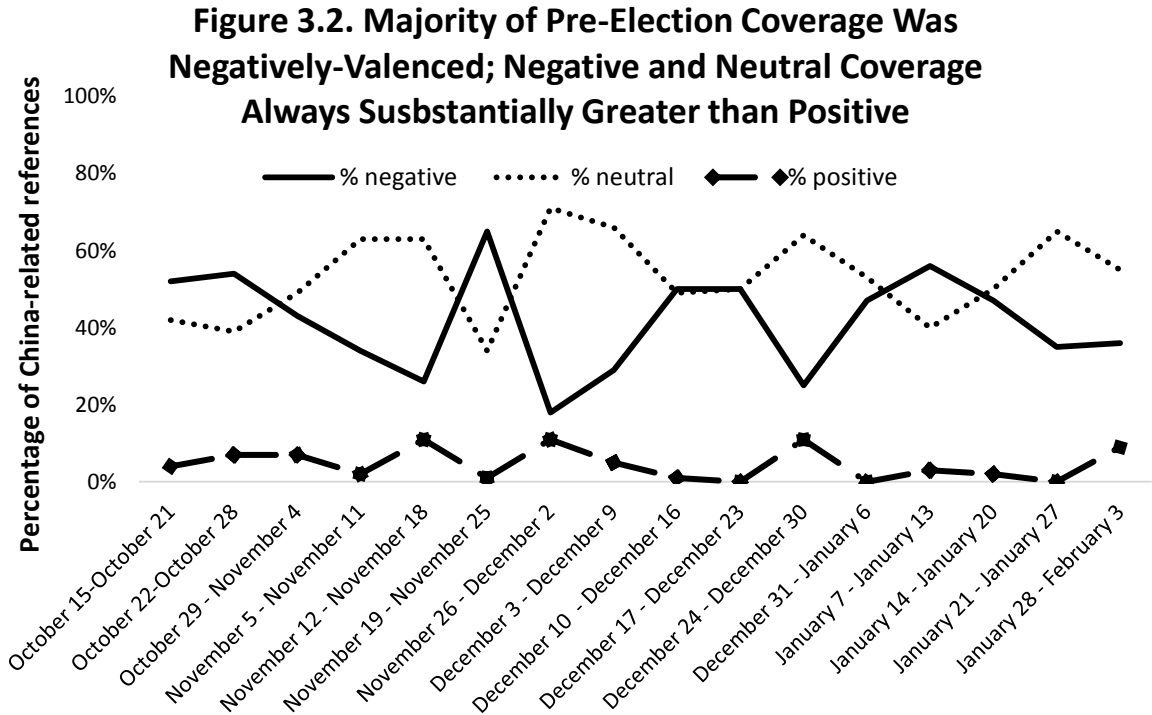
Note: China references are any references to "Beijing," "China," or "Chinese" across 41 of the top Nielsen-ranked political television programs, coded as part of an original content analysis. References are coded as campaign-related if they mention the presidential candidates, debates, campaign ads, or the election.

This increase happened because the majority of references to China in the lead-up to the election involved some reference to the campaign. This total includes not only the campaign ads, but also campaign speeches, talk show hosts' analyses of the candidates' platforms, and even excerpts from the debates.²⁷ The majority of this coverage—particularly in advance of the election—was negative. For example, in the weeks

²⁷ Independent coding indicates that China was referenced two times in the first debate, and 11 times in each of the next two debates. Countries were coded as mentioned if the people (e.g., Chinese), capital (e.g., Beijing), or country name were mentioned. China was also the most referenced country in both Romney and Obama's speeches; only Iran was covered nearly as much.

preceding the election, between 44% and 54% of all references were negative, a number that drops precipitously afterward, excluding key spikes such as the Fox News recap.

Notably, there was very little positive coverage in either time period (Figure 3.2).



Note: China related references across 41 political television programs were coded for positive, neutral, or negative valence. A random sample of 10% of references were coded by a second coder and yielded a Krippendorff's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.83.

However, my independent variables are not about media coverage in general, but rather about what individuals were likely to have been exposed to, given the particular programs that they watched. Returning to Table 3.3, we can examine individual media exposure and valence. First, we see that there were statistically significant changes between the pre- and post-election period in what people may have been exposed to. The average number of references to China in an individual's media diet decreased substantially from pre- to post-election. The variance was also extremely large; some

individuals saw a great deal of China-related coverage, even while the average individual saw a mere three references in advance of the election and none following it. Table 3.3 also shows that the percentage of negative, positive, *and* neutral news that individuals were exposed to decreased substantially—and negative news always outpaced positive news as a percentage of an individual’s news diet.

It’s also important to examine whether or not a perceived China threat *did* significantly change between the pre- and post-election period. Before the election, Americans had a slightly negative impression of China: on average, individuals saw China as more of a threat to U.S. jobs and security (the top end of the scale) than as a opportunity for new markets and investment (the bottom end of the scale). Following the election, individuals saw China as slightly less of a threat.²⁸

Having established that (1) there was a great deal more coverage of China in advance of the election, that (2) much of it was negative, and that (3) there was a shift in valence between the pre- and post-election periods, I can turn to my hypotheses that changes in media valence will produce corresponding changes in perceived threat from China, in the direction of the valence. I turn first to the fixed effects logistic model predicting changes in perceived HIGH THREAT (Table 3.4).²⁹ Results indicate that an increase in the PERCENT OF NEGATIVE CHINA REFERENCES that one consumes as part of his or her news diet significantly increases the likelihood that he or she will perceive HIGH

²⁸ At Wave 1, the mean of the seven-point scale was 5.01 and the median was 5—both above the midpoint. At wave 2, the mean fell to 4.93. A paired two-tailed t-test indicates that the difference between them is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

²⁹ Results here and throughout the rest of the analyses are unweighted. However, substantive findings are largely unaffected by using post-stratification weights. Weighted results can be found in Appendix V (Appendix Tables 5.1 and 5.2) and a description of the weighted and unweighted samples as well as a comparison to Current Population Survey (CPS) estimates can be found in Appendix IV.

THREAT from China (Model 2). This evidence offers suggestive support for my first hypothesis (H1). But, more counterintuitively, results also indicate that an increase in the PERCENT OF *POSITIVE* CHINA REFERENCES also increases the likelihood that an individual perceives HIGH THREAT, which runs counter to my second hypothesis (H2).

Table 3.4. Explaining Change in Perceived High Threat from China (Binary) Using Media Exposure and Valence

	Model 1	Model 2
Wave	-0.078* (0.041)	-0.105# (0.078)
Percent of <u>negative</u> China references		0.623*** (0.161)
Percent of <u>positive</u> China references		0.896** (0.328)
Percent of <u>neutral</u> China references		0.062 (0.098)
Constant	0.556*** (0.307)	0.637** (0.465)
Pseudo-R ²	0.001	0.008
N	2,471	2,234

Note: Results shown are from a fixed effects logistic regression model using two points in time: pre-election and post-election. The dependent variable is a binary variable where those who say China is primarily a threat to jobs and security are coded as 1 and those who said otherwise are coded as 0. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Significance values are indicated with # p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.

One possible explanation for this surprising finding about the effect of positive coverage may be found in the types of coverage that were positively-valenced. In particular, most of them present a situation in which *both* the United States and China are benefiting economically. For example, the positive reference discussed earlier was about a report of Chrysler not shipping jobs to China, but rather manufacturing Jeeps in China

because of growing global demand—an implied “win-win” situation for the two countries. Similarly, the Fox Report with Shepard Smith discussed Chinese investment in the United States with a Los Angeles realtor:

From California to New York, the Chinese are paying cash for high-end multi-million dollar homes with special kitchens, in-law suites, the like. It’s been fantastic for the U.S. housing market because we have not suffered as other communities have. In fact, our property values increased. Forty percent of these houses they buy are investment properties, and sometimes they buy two or three at a time in foreclosure states like Nevada and Arizona.

While not explicit, the subtext in this real estate example is that the *Chinese* are also extremely wealthy—so wealthy that they are moving overseas to buy the homes in the United States that many Americans cannot afford. Thus despite this being positively-valenced and showing benefits for the United States, it nonetheless may be leading individuals to think about how much of an economic win *China* is getting.

Given that the vast majority of coverage of China, especially before the election, was about the economy, positive coverage may simply remind people about the link between China and the economy—which for many, is likely to be knee-jerk negative. Research shows that negating a frame may still activate it; for example, Richard Nixon declaring himself *not* to be a crook still causes people to think about him in the context of scandal (Lakoff, 2005). In the case of media coverage of China, talking about China in a positive context may not register with individuals; they may have no mental framework with which to consider China and the economy *positively*. Rather, positive references like that on *The Rachel Maddow Show* discussed earlier (“...This is good news for American companies, not bad news. They are not shipping American jobs overseas...”) may simply

remind individuals that China and unpopular concepts like America job loss and outsourcing are *linked*.

This argument is important, because other research shows that Americans tend to view trade in a zero-sum context (Mutz & Kim, 2016). Half of Americans believe that if trade helps one country, it hurts another—and this is particularly true with regard to jobs. In fact, only 11% think that trade is a “gain-gain” proposition (Mutz & Kim, 2016). For the half of Americans who view trade through the lens of intergroup competition, both countries benefiting from trade is actually *less* appealing than America benefiting *more* than a foreign country.

Alternate specifications

Because the second wave of the survey was rolled out randomly over a 10-week period, it may be important to take into account *when* the respondent completed his or her second survey. As Figure 3.1 indicates, there are some notable differences in how much China was covered during the period between the election and inauguration. While most weeks had relatively little coverage, Fox News flooded the airwaves with election recap information during one particular week. Moreover, major events like the once-a-decade leadership change took place in China between the two waves. This means that even with a control variable for changes in *valence* of China coverage, there may also be cause to control for time period in order to account for major differences in the *topics* of coverage across the 10-week period. One way to examine these differences is to control for the time period in which people completed their second survey. In Table 3.5 Model 1, I control for these differences in time period by introducing a dummy variable for the

month in which the second survey wave took place. Results indicate that there is no independent effect for the month in which the survey took place. Moreover, controlling for this temporal variation does not affect the earlier substantive findings.

Table 3.5. Explaining Change in Perceived High Threat from China (Binary) Using Media Exposure and Valence – Additional Specifications

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Wave	-0.091# (0.048)	-0.091# (0.048)	-0.088# (0.048)	-0.252*** (0.068)
Percent of <u>negative</u> China references	0.519*** (0.131)	0.523*** (0.131)	0.530*** (0.154)	0.119 (0.161)
Percent of <u>positive</u> China references	0.960*** (0.268)	0.966*** (0.269)	1.026*** (0.308)	0.643* (0.281)
Percent of <u>neutral</u> China references	0.107 (0.083)	0.108 (0.083)	0.032 (0.094)	-0.305* (0.127)
Month of second survey (1=Nov, 2=Dec, 3=Jan)	0.066 (0.048)			
Battleground state		0.150# (0.085)	0.054 (0.120)	
Battleground state x percent of <u>negative</u> China references			-0.036 (0.291)	
Battleground state x percent of <u>positive</u> China references			-0.252 (0.624)	
Battleground state x percent of <u>neutral</u> China references			0.302 (0.184)	
Constant	0.392 (0.390)	0.486 (0.378)	0.494 (0.379)	2.139*** (0.576)
Observations	2078	2078	2078	1367
R^2	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01

Note: Results shown are from a fixed effects logistic regression model using two points in time: pre-election and post-election. The dependent variable is a binary variable where those who say China is primarily a threat to jobs and security are coded as 1 and those who said otherwise are coded as 0. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Significance values are indicated with # p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.

Given the regularity with which China was highlighted as part of the campaign, including in advertisements, it is possible that individuals living in “swing states”—places where campaigns spent more money to try to influence voters—would have been exposed to more and different China-related content. To test whether those living in battleground states were more affected by changes in media valence of China-related coverage, I created a dummy variable to represent whether the respondent lived in a swing state or not. My list of swing states includes the 11 states considered toss-ups by polling aggregator Real Clear Politics during the two weeks prior to election day: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin (“2012 Election Maps - Battle for White House,” 2012). Results in Model 2 indicate that those who lived in one of these 11 states (27% of the population) were slightly more likely to increase in threat between the two waves than were those living elsewhere. However, as the interactions in Model 3 indicate, while people in battleground states increased in threat more between the two waves than those outside of battleground states, they did not react differently to changes in media valence. Increases in negatively- and positively-valenced coverage of China led to an increase in perceived threat from China for all individuals.

Finally, it’s important to note that even in the pre-election time period—a time of relatively increased China-related coverage—many Americans still were not exposed to any content about China. Prior to the election, 35% saw no references; between the election and the inauguration, the percentage whose television diet included no references rose to 54%. Notably, there are theoretical reasons that even those with *no* television exposure to China-related coverage might change their perceived threat from China

during the time period, including changes in the general atmosphere as the China-bashing frenzy died down or changes in other media.³⁰ But, as the key independent variables in this study are changes in media valence in an individual's media are changes in valence in an individual's regular media. For this reason, it's important to examine separately how changes in media valence affect *only* those exposed to at least *some* coverage of China in the pre-election period.

Results in Model 4 indicate that for this group of individuals, results are slightly different. Whereas changes in the amount of positively-valenced coverage affect these individuals in the same way as those whose television media diet included no references to China, negatively-valenced media no longer appears to have an independent effect. Additionally, an increase in the percent of *neutrally*-valenced China related references leads to a *decrease* in perceived threat over time. In other words, as the proportion of an individual's news diet that fixates on China features ordinary or neutrally-valenced events—such as Xi Jinping taking power, Beijing's votes in the Security Council, and other factual, less emotionally-charged stories—their perceived threat levels decrease. These neutral stories appear to help counterbalance the threatening nature of the negatively- *and* positively-valenced coverage.

³⁰ Notably, my media measures only capture changes in the valence of China-related coverage on television. For individuals who only consumed radio or newspapers (or, who consumed those other media in addition to a television diet that lacked China-related references), changes in valence in their media diet would not be captured. Yet, if we expect changes in the valence on those platforms to largely mirror those found on television, then this type of individual might change with regard to perceived China threat, but yet have zeroes on each of my key independent variables. Beyond this, one might also think of the theoretical work on the “two-step flow” and the effects of media as translated through interpersonal communication (Katz, 1957). If China-bashing occupied a relatively large segment of the pre-election newshole, it may have come up around the water cooler at work or in ordinary conversation more in the pre-election period than the pre-inauguration period.

Given the counter-intuitive nature of the effects of positively-valenced coverage, it is also worth examining changes in threat, more generally—as the previous analyses simply looked at whether people’s perceived threat increased, or not. To do this, I turn to my alternate dependent variable: THREE-PART CHANGE IN PERCEIVED CHINA THREAT.³¹ Once again, my independent variables represent a change over time; in each case, the percent of each type of references at Wave 2 is subtracted from Wave 1, with positive scores representing an increase over time and negative ones a decrease over time. Because the dependent variable is a three-part variable, I use ordered logistic regression to predict the change in perceived threat from China on the basis of the changes in differently valenced China references. These results are presented in Table 3.6.

Turning first to Model 1, as the PERCENT OF NEUTRAL REFERENCES in a given individual’s news diet increases over time, their perceived threat from China decreases. Once again, neutrally-valenced references to China appear to counterbalance the effects of positively- and negatively-valenced coverage, which earlier results suggest push in the same direction. This trend is most clearly visible in Figure 3.3, which displays predicted probabilities for the changes in perceived threat as a function of the change in PERCENT OF NEUTRAL REFERENCES, with the change in positive and negative China-related references set at their means.

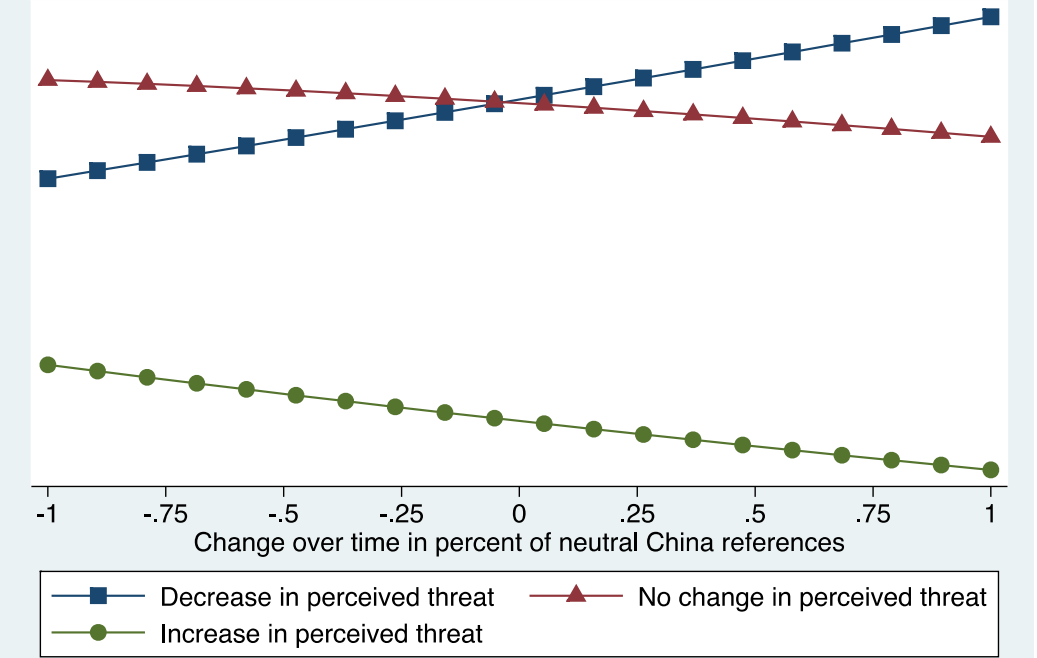
³¹ Because it is impossible for those who were already at the top end of the seven-point scale to become *more* threatened by China (22.1%), nor for those who were at the bottom end of the scale (2.6%) to become *less* threatened, I also ran these regressions using Wave 1 attitudes as a control variable. Substantive results are largely unchanged and can be found in Appendix V.

Table 3.6. Explaining Change in Perceived China Threat (Three-Part Change Scale) Using Media Exposure and Valence

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Change in percent of <u>negative</u> China references	-0.155 (0.140)	-0.124 (0.142)	-1.457* (0.715)
Change in percent of <u>positive</u> China references	-0.178 (0.249)	-0.253 (0.256)	0.416 (1.093)
Change in percent of <u>neutral</u> China references	-0.222* (0.100)	-0.223* (0.100)	-0.646* (0.325)
Change in <u>count</u> of China references		-0.002 (0.002)	
Saw any pre-election China related references			-0.078 (0.096)
Saw any pre-election references x change in percent <u>negative</u>			1.400# (0.732)
Saw any pre-election references x change in percent <u>positive</u>			-0.511 (1.124)
Saw any pre-election references x change in percent <u>neutral</u>			0.484 (0.346)
Cut 1	-0.386*** (0.048)	-0.365*** (0.051)	-0.468*** (0.076)
Cut 2	1.431*** (0.058)	1.454*** (0.061)	1.353*** (0.082)
Pseudo-R ²	0.001	0.002	0.003
N	2,085	2,085	2,085

Note: Results shown are from an ordered logistic regression. The dependent variable is a three-point variable where -1 is those whose perceived threat from China decreased from pre- to post-election, 0 is those who had no change, and +1 is those whose threat perception increased. The key independent variables are difference scores, where the percent of positive/negative/neutral references at Wave 2 are subtracted from Wave 1, and positive scores represent an increase over time and negative ones a decrease over time. Standard errors are in parentheses. Significance values are indicated with # p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.

Figure 3.3 Predicted Probabilities by Change in Percentage of Neutral China References



Note: The graph is the predicted probabilities for the ordered logistic model presented in Table 3.6 Model 1. It represents the predicted probabilities for perceived China threat as the percent of neutral China references varies—with all other variables in the model set to their means. The relationship is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, indicating that as the percent of neutral China references in an individual’s news diet increases over time, their perceived threat level decreases.

However, since these scores are entirely based on the proportion of an individual’s news diet, and since we know from the previous examination that the sheer *amount* of coverage of China that individuals saw decreased from the pre-election to post-election times, it’s also important to examine whether this relationship is affected by the amount of coverage an individual saw. Model 2 introduces a control variable for the CHANGE IN COUNT OF CHINA REFERENCES that an individual saw between the pre- and post-election period. Once again, as the PERCENT OF NEUTRAL REFERENCES in an individual’s media diet increases, his or her perceived threat levels decrease.

Once again, it is important to examine only the individuals whose media diet

included at least some China related references in the pre-election period. To examine the effects of valence only among those who likely saw *some* content, I created a dummy variable for having a diet that contained at least one China-related reference before the election—SAW ANY PRE-ELECTION REFERENCES—and interacted it with changes in percent negative, neutral, and positive coverage. These results, shown in Model 3, indicate that among those who likely saw at least some content, an increase in the percent of negatively-valenced media led individuals to be more likely to experience an *increase* in China-related threat—consistent with my hypothesis (H1). In contrast, there is no effect for an increase in positively-valenced references (H2).

Results presented here offer suggestive evidence that negatively-valenced coverage of China affects perceived threat from China. However, counterintuitively, positively-valenced media has a similar impact. Additionally, the percent of negative, neutral, and positive valence in an individual's media diet appears to affect the likelihood that an individual's opinion changes. *Neutral* news plays a key role that I did not hypothesize, likely due to the unexpected finding that positive- *and* negatively-valenced news do *not* counterbalance, but *both* lead to higher perceived threat.

Limitations

While not all hypotheses are fully confirmed, results suggest that changes in media valence do affect perceived threat from China—and I find these results despite one of the key limitations of this study: the noisiness of the independent variables. In particular, while the program-level measure is an improvement over past studies, utilizing what individuals were likely to have been exposed to in their own, unique

media diets, it is still just that—what they were *likely* exposed to. Without asking about not only what particular shows people *regularly* watch (the measure used in this study)—but also which dates and times they watched them (and, more to the point, whether or not they actually paid attention to the content, rather than flipping between stations, muting, and so on), the measure has a great deal of noise. Additionally, the program-list measure asks only about particular shows and necessarily excludes some content like special reports and election returns (LaCour & Vavreck, 2014; Prior, 2013). Moreover, individuals may have seen a great deal of content about China on programs that they did not believe qualified as “news” when answering the survey question (including fictional programs), which would be excluded from my measures.

A further limitation of the study is the content analysis. While there was high inter-coder reliability, I designed the coding schema and later taught a second coder how to implement it. Both she and I are highly-educated, left-leaning individuals, residing in Washington D.C. (and I work on Chinese politics for a living). It may be the case that what I think to be positively-valenced coverage of China—and that I conveyed to her as part of the coding schema—simply would not be registered as such by people with different backgrounds. Future research might benefit from developing the coding paradigm in a more “bottom-up” approach, ideally with a more varied set of coders.

Moreover, the content analysis appears to have suffered from one other, unforeseen problem: there was a great deal of overlap between the “affective” categories (positive and negative) and whether or not the content affected other countries—and particularly the United States. For example, whereas a simple

reference to China having a great deal of pollution was coded as neutral—a simple, factual statement—if the pollution was said to affect its neighbors (e.g. by blowing over the border), it was coded as negative. Similarly, references to China’s votes in the United Nations were coded as neutrally-valenced, given their factual nature—unless the coded reference emphasized how those votes affected America, North Korea, or other powers. The tendency to code content that had implications for the United States as positively- or negatively-valenced is particularly important in the context of the positively-valenced coverage. A post-hoc examination of the counter-intuitive findings that positively-valenced coverage is related to an increase in perceived threat from China suggests that more than 90% of the positive references not only were economic, but were about how America benefits from China’s economy. Given the discussion earlier about how Americans may not see economic gains in a “win-win” context, it suggests that some of the relationship between positively-valenced coverage of China and perceived threat from China may be due to the fact that what was coded as “positive” was content about Sino-U.S. economic relations—a fraught concept, likely primarily understood by respondents as *negative*.

Additionally, while perceived threat is an important concept, particularly with regard to China and the 2012 election cycle, this study relies on a single dependent variable. Future work would benefit from examining how media valence affects other measures, including favorability, perceptions of bilateral relations, and so on—most of which tend to be highly correlated, but nonetheless may be differently affected by media coverage. Finally, while the fixed effects models allow me to document changes in perceived threat between the pre- and post-election time period and represent a

substantial advance over previous methodology, helping to guard against issues of ecological fallacy and selective exposure, I nonetheless can only document change between these two particular points in time. Future research would benefit from understanding how media valence affects attitudes over a longer period, for it would give greater insight about how truly long-lasting are the relationships between media valence and public opinion of foreign countries.

Conclusion

Results from this study offer some suggestive evidence that media valence influences public opinion about foreign countries. More specifically, the analysis conducted indicates that the increase in negatively-valenced coverage of China in advance of the United States presidential elections affected the opinions that Americans hold of China—increasing the degree to which they perceived China to be a threat. This result suggests, just as one recent scholar has noted, that, “it is a problem to draw conclusions about media effects on China’s image in the news from a cross-sectional survey of public opinion without any accompanying analysis of the news conducted in the period leading up to the survey” (Semetko, 2016). American public opinion of China appears at least somewhat sensitive to how the country is depicted in the media. Moreover, the relatively prevalent, one-sided, anxiety-provoking, negative coverage that flooded the pre-election media in the United States appears to have—at least temporarily—damaged China’s ratings.

The importance of media valence in affecting public opinion of foreign countries also raises a number of potentially important implications for the United States, as China

has been increasing its public relations campaigns in the United States in an effort to shift the way it is portrayed in U.S. media. For example, only this spring, China's State Council Information Office interviewed five western public relations companies to design a campaign to shift the media narrative surrounding China in order to boost its image (Tham & Miller, 2016). Annually, China spends between \$7 billion and \$10 billion on subsidies for media outlets to reach non-Chinese foreigners (Brady, 2015), in addition to running public relations campaigns in the United States, airing commercials (X. Wang & Shoemaker, 2011; J. Zhang & Cameron, 2003), and publishing ads in major periodicals like *The New York Times*. And, beyond even these activities, there may also be many secret ones. China has recently been accused of making covert purchases, including a radio station that covers the D.C. Beltway area (Qing & Shiffman, 2015).

Concern about these efforts is growing in Washington; in March, the Senate introduced the Countering Information Warfare Act of 2016 (S.2692)—a bill that follows from the long American history countering Russian propaganda, but for the first time ever, explicitly references China (Portman, 2016a). It calls for the establishment of the Center for Information Analysis and Response—a group that will be tasked with monitoring media and propaganda efforts, coordinating in part with the Broadcasting Board of Governors, highlighting the important role they believe media to play. As Senator Portman, one of the sponsors of the bill, summarized:

[There's an] urgent need to counter...the extremely sophisticated, comprehensive, and long-term efforts by nation-states to manipulate and control information in order to achieve their national objectives...These countries spend vast sums of money on advanced broadcast and digital media capabilities, targeted campaigns...and other efforts to influence key audiences and populations. China spends billions annual on its foreign propaganda efforts, while RT, Russia's state-funded 24-7 international news channel reportedly spends \$400 million annually

just on its Washington Bureau alone. Just one bureau. By contrast, the FY17 budget request for international broadcasting operations worldwide is only about \$768 million total (Chu, 2016; Portman, 2016b).

Results from this project suggest that some of Washington's worry may be well-placed; the valence of media about foreign countries does appear to affect American public opinion. The Chinese, the Russians, or others spending money in America to change the media narrative may well end up affecting how Americans feel about their countries, if individuals are exposed to these messages. However, results also suggest that it may be more difficult to lead Americans to feel *more positively* about foreign countries via positively-valenced media than foreign governments and media outlets likely hope or expect. For many of these countries, there may be little bang for the buck—particularly if they try to negate the very things that may lead Americans to feel anxious about them. This study also suggests that at least in the case of China, it may be *particularly* hard to influence American opinion positively during presidential campaign seasons.³² Yet, even with this small amount of solace, this study indicates that it is consequential to focus on how media portray foreign countries, as the tenor in which they are discussed has noticeable effects on how Americans feel.

Moreover, as will be discussed more in the following two experimental chapters, the effects of media valence on public opinion appear to be influential. Negatively-valenced media cause individuals to hold negative opinions not only of China, but also of

³² One potentially interesting route for countries to take in their propaganda efforts, suggested by this study, would be to attempt to flood the media with *neutral* stories. Rather than saying that China is good for the United States economically, China might benefit from more stories about *non-economic* topics. With a growth of stories about Chinese culture, history, cuisine, ordinary votes in the United Nations, leaders' backgrounds, or the like, the effects of positively and negatively-valenced media might be somewhat mitigated. It might also help individuals create a more varied mental picture of China, leading them to see it in more than just economic terms—an important change, as results here suggest that the link between China and the economy is almost always *negative*.

Chinese *people*. There also appear to be spillover effects: negatively-valenced media about China cause individuals to feel more negatively about *Japanese* people as well, and can even lead to discrimination against Chinese citizens or native Asian individuals in the context of domestic college admissions.

CHAPTER 4 – THE CAUSAL IMPACT OF POLITICAL ADS ON PUBLIC OPINION OF CHINA DURING THE 2012 ELECTION

Given the difficulties in establishing media effects, experiments play an especially important role in providing convincing *causal* evidence. For example, with media effects, there is always the possibility that individuals are only watching media that are congruent with their existing beliefs—a phenomenon communication scholars refer to as “selective exposure.” In this case, the worry would be that individuals who feel threatened by China are seeking out negatively-valenced information, thus making any observed relationship potentially spurious. In order to better demonstrate causality and to help rule out spurious relationships, an experimental design is preferable. Also, with regard to China in particular, it remains unclear whether the negative attention the media and politicians focus on the country stems from a general assessment that Americans hold negative sentiments toward China—and thus they are pandering to the public—or whether the negative focus is *causing* individuals to feel unfavorably toward China.³³

Today, elites in China often wring their hands about whether American political rhetoric about China and corresponding news coverage of the country is causing Americans to feel more negative about their country—and their citizens. During the 2012 U.S. presidential election, *Xinhua*, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party,

³³ Most theories of how elites, the media, and public opinion interrelate suggest that elites influence *what* the media cover and *how* they present key issues. This influence, in turn, affects how the public feels about these topics (see, for example, Entman’s 2003 model of cascade activation or Baum and Potters’s 2008 supply-and-demand model). Because of the media’s tendency to emphasize official information and authoritative sources (Baum & Groeling, 2009; Bennett, 1994; Livingston & Eachus, 1995), media tend to respond to elite discourse, covering the tenor of elite rhetoric on whatever issue elites are publicly debating—sometimes called “indexing” (Baum & Groeling, 2009; Bennett, 1990; Berinsky, 2009). Media coverage also tends to change in response to elite shifts in opinion (Baum & Groeling, 2009; Hallin, 1984) and public opinion often appears to be responsive to these shifts (Baum & Groeling, 2009; Berinsky, 2009; Page & Shapiro, 1992).

bemoaned the effects American political rhetoric about China was having on views of China. Following the second debate, the newspaper declared,

The presidential campaign reflects an alarming scenario in which China bashing has become a ritual. This ritual, however, negatively impacts China-U.S. relations and leaves Americans with the impression that China is responsible for their country's decline (Jie, 2012).

The more nationalistic *Global Times* argued, "Their speeches are misleading the American public, who will have more complaints or even resentment toward China." The op-ed also cautioned about the negative consequences of presidential campaign rhetoric for international relations, warning: "With mutual discontent accumulating, the slogans politicians have chanted may become real actions. Many international conflicts stem from the showmanship of politicians" ("Election Rhetoric Drives China to Speak Out," 2012).

To date, nearly all research about the effects of media on attitudes toward foreign countries has been cross-sectional, and thus unable to demonstrate that the media have a causal effect on these opinions. In this chapter, I discuss the previous literature on how media affect favorability of foreign countries and experimentally test my hypotheses about the causal relationship between negatively-valenced media about China and American public opinion of China.

The limited existing causal evidence

As explained in more detail in Chapter 2, few studies of how media exposure affects public opinion toward specific foreign countries have explored how the *valence* of coverage affects attitudes, focusing instead on agenda-setting, priming, and framing. Moreover, few studies of persuasion have gone beyond cross-sectional associations to make a strong causal case. Yet some research—including the fixed effects results in

Chapter 3—suggests a link between negatively-valenced media and negative opinions of China, even if the causal link remains vulnerable to alternative interpretations (see, for example: Brewer, 2006; X. Wang & Shoemaker, 2011b; and Willnat et al., 2013b).

Thus I use an experimental design and hypothesize the following:

H1: Negatively-valenced media about China will cause individuals to hold more unfavorable opinions of the country.

Broadening this focus, one might also expect that negatively-valenced media about a country would cause individuals to hold more negative opinions of *people* from that country—yet this has not been studied. Watching more media about China affects the degree to which people believe they are informed about China (“subjective knowledge”), which in turn affects favorable opinions toward Chinese people (Gries, Crowson, and Cai, 2011). But it remains unclear whether there is a direct relationship between media exposure and American favorability toward Chinese people. Moreover, these findings hinge on an extremely blunt media measure: self-reports of the number of stories an individual read about China. Such a measure seems more likely to tap *interest* in China than actual exposure to particular media messages.

Although there is a dearth of evidence to link media valence with opinions of foreign publics, many scholars have found that individuals’ opinions of foreign countries and of foreign peoples tend to be closely correlated, even while opinions of the people of that country tend to be more positive, on average (Chiozza, 2009; Gries, Crowson, & Cai, 2011; Isernia, 2006). Thus I hypothesize the following:

H2: Negatively-valenced media about China will cause individuals to hold more unfavorable opinions of the Chinese people.

One question that emerges is whether negatively-valenced media about China affects views of more than just China and Chinese people. People's opinions about foreign policy tend to be structured by core values like isolationism, ethnocentrism, and anti-militarism (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1987).³⁴ This means that opinions about disparate public policy issues and countries are heavily conditioned by these underlying attitudes. Similarly, generalized international trust—or the degree to which individuals believe that America can trust other nations—affects how Americans perceive specific nations and whether they find them friendly or threatening (Brewer, Gross, Aday, & Willnat, 2004). To the degree that negatively-valenced media about China may lead individuals to feel more negative about international engagement, broadly defined, or to distrust foreign nations, it may also lead individuals to feel less favorably toward other foreign countries and peoples—especially those that are seen as military or economic competition. One framing experiment found, for example, that when participants read a news report about conflict between the United States and China, they were more supportive of Russia joining NATO, perhaps because individuals saw it as a way to counter a rising China (Brewer, 2006). There also appears to be a great deal of consistency in how people evaluate foreign peoples; those who dislike immigrants from one country tend to also dislike immigrants from *most* countries (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007; Sniderman, Peri, de Figueiredo Jr, & Piazza, 2000).

However, even if favorability is affected by more general beliefs about isolationism, ethnocentrism, and the like, it does not necessarily follow that negatively-

³⁴ Many scholars have emphasized the important role of isolationism and internationalism in structuring belief systems. For example, Sobel (2001) argues that American public opinion of foreign policy in the modern era is best seen as cycles of internationalism and isolationism.

valenced media stories about China should cause individuals to feel differently about *all* foreign countries and peoples. Rather, I hypothesize that if negatively-valenced media stories about China *do* cause individuals to hold more negative sentiments toward countries and peoples *other* than China, that it should particularly affect countries and peoples that are perceived as most *similar* to China—especially racially. Numerous historic examples give rise to this hypothesis. For example, during the 1980s and early 1990s the media regularly harped on Japan and the threat it posed to the United States and to the American economy—a period now regularly referred to as “Japan bashing” (F. H. Wu, 2012). The time period was characterized by a large trade imbalance with Japan and negative media coverage of the country, much of which speculated about why America was losing ground and falling behind (Cummings, 1989; Morris, 2013). This contributed to a series of high-profile incidents of racial intolerance against Japanese citizens and Asian Americans, more generally. For example, in 1990 in Los Angeles, the Human Relations Commission reported a 150% increase in anti-Asian hate incidents and similar increases were reported in other major urban areas (Iino, 1994).

This brings me to my third hypothesis:

H3: Negatively-valenced media about China will cause individuals to hold more unfavorable opinions of countries and peoples that are perceived as racially similar to China, but will not affect opinions of other foreign countries and peoples.

A key question is *why* negatively-valenced media about China should cause these changes in favorability. The simplest explanation, of course, is that individuals believe the information given to them from the media sources with which they interface. For example, if negatively-valenced media coverage declares that China is stealing Americans jobs or U.S. intellectual property, individuals then believe those things to be

true and think less of China as a result. But, above and beyond this, much of the negatively-valenced media about China appears to have been specifically designed to produce *anxiety* about the country. During the course of the 2012 presidential campaign, for example, Republican and Democratic strategists described how ads featuring China were designed to play into the public's sense of economic anxiety, featuring music to heighten anxiety and presenting content that focused on how Americans were being duped, manipulated, and cheated (Harwood, 2012). Trey Hardin, a Republican political strategist even declared that the campaigns brought up China because the issue raised “the most influential emotion driving voters: fear” (Caldwell, 2012).³⁵ Moreover, content analyses indicate that a much of the coverage of China depicts it as a threat to America, in conflict with the U.S. or other countries, or as a general economic threat (Peng, 2004; Seib & Powers, 2010; Stone & Xiao, 2007; Willnat et al., 2013; J. Zhang & Cameron, 2003; L. Zhang, 2010).³⁶ Drawing upon this, I hypothesize:

H4: Anxiety about China mediates the relationship between negatively-valenced media about China and unfavorable opinions of the country and people.

Finally, if anxiety about China mediates the relationship between negatively-valenced media and unfavorable opinions of China and Chinese people, then people more prone to feel anxiety and more responsive to threats should be even more likely to increase their negative sentiments toward China. In particular, I expect authoritarians—or those who tend toward conformity, obedience to authority, and outgroup aggression

³⁵ He added, “It is not clear that most voters truly understand the economic significance of China, but playing the fear card doesn’t necessarily require that tutorial by either campaign” (Caldwell, 2012).

³⁶ The content analysis in the previous chapter indicated significantly more negative content than positive, and a great deal of it depicted China as an economic competitor to the United States.

(Hetherington & Suhay, 2011)—to increase unfavorable opinions of China and the Chinese more than non-authoritarians following exposure to negatively-valenced media. Authoritarians experience unusually high levels of anxiety (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Altemeyer, 1988; Duckitt, 2001; Hetherington & Suhay, 2011; Lipset, 1959; Oesterreich, 2005). As one scholar describes it,

Authoritarianism is ... a personal normative ‘worldview’ about the social value of obedience and conformity (or freedom and difference), the prudent and just balance between group authority and individual autonomy, and the appropriate uses of (or limits on) that authority. This worldview induces both personal coercion of and bias against different others (racial and ethnic outgroups, political dissidents, moral ‘deviants’) as political demands for authoritative constraints on their behavior (Stenner, 2009).

This attitude can be “activated”: those with latent authoritarian predispositions are particularly likely to react to threats and then to have their latent preferences manifest in expressions of intolerant behavior or attitudes (Stenner, 2005, 2009). As Stenner puts it, the authoritarian’s “defensive arsenal” involves differentiating and defending “us” in conditions that appear to threaten “us” by excluding and discriminating against “them”—racial and ethnic minorities, political dissidents, and moral deviants (2005, 2009). This leads me to my final hypothesis:

H5: Authoritarianism moderates the relationship between negatively-valenced media about China and unfavorable opinions of the country, such that more authoritarian individuals will increase their unfavorable opinions following exposure to negatively-valenced media more than non-authoritarians.

Research design

To test these hypotheses experimentally, I rely on a between-subjects experiment conducted on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk), October 17-19, 2014. Individuals were paid 70 cents for their participation in the human intelligence task (HIT) titled:

“Watch a short ad and answer some questions—roughly 5 minutes”. They were told that the HIT was a survey about politics and education. Participation was limited to those with an American IP address and an MTurk lifetime approval rating of 90% or higher; 2,053 individuals completed the survey, which took an average of 10 minutes.

Because MTurk is a platform where individuals self-administer surveys, there can be some issues with the data quality. First, in self-administered surveys, the experimenter lacks full control over and knowledge about whether the respondent was exposed to the treatment. Second, individuals may “satisfice”—or complete the survey quickly without cognitively engaging with the questions. This latter problem is particularly acute on MTurk, since individuals are paid for each survey they complete and able to take multiple surveys in quick succession, which may incentivize them to rush through each one to generate more income (Berinsky, Margolis, & Sances, 2014; Chandler, Mueller, & Paolacci, 2014; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014).

In order to ensure that everyone in my sample was actually exposed to the treatment ad, I exclude all individuals who were unable to correctly identify the sponsor of the ad that they saw (N=112) and all those who said they could not clearly hear the ad (N=68). Additionally, to guard against satisficing, I used a pre-determined cutoff and excluded all individuals whose survey completion time was more than two standard deviations away from the average time (N=148).³⁷ Because the experiment focuses on opinion toward China and Chinese—as well as those who are racially similar—I also

³⁷ Evidence suggests that particularly short response times relative to the average often indicate low data quality and that excluding those who rush through the survey may reduce random noise and improve data quality, while not substantially altering the marginal distributions and multivariate models (Greszki, Meyer, & Schoen, 2015).

excluded those who self-identified as Asian (N=152).³⁸ Chi-square goodness of fit tests indicate that with the exception of whiteness—where exclusions were purposeful—the exclusions occurred randomly across conditions (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Mechanical Turk Sample Demographics		
	All participants	Final sample for analysis
Male	50%	48%
White*	75%	82%
Black	8%	8%
Hispanic	7%	7%
Democrat (including leaners)	56%	54%
Voted for Obama	51%	48%
N =	2053	1629
<i>Note:</i> Respondents were excluded if their response time was more than two standard deviations from the average time and if they were unable to correctly identify the sponsor of the ad or reported that they were not able to hear it clearly. Those who self-identified as Asian were also excluded. * chi-square goodness of fit statistics indicates that the two samples were only significantly different ($p > .05$) with regard to race, where exceptions were purposeful.		

The experiment began with a series of demographic questions, including age, gender, race, partisanship, and vote choice in 2012 (see above for a comparison of the demographics of those individuals who completed the survey and those used in the final analysis). As part of this pre-test, individuals were also asked a battery of four questions that are regularly used to measure authoritarianism on the American National Election Survey. Respondents judged which of two traits across four dimensions concerning childrearing is more important: “respect for elders” versus “independence,” “obedience”

³⁸ If I specified in advance that Asians would be excluded from the task, it might incentivize them to lie in order to participate. Rather, it is preferable to allow anyone to participate in the HIT, restricting the sample to my target population *after* collecting the data.

versus “self-reliance,” and so on (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011). The non-authoritarian response in each dichotomy is assigned a zero and the authoritarian response a one, and the items are summed. Individuals are considered highly authoritarian if they chose the authoritarian trait in three or more of the four pairings (20% of the sample; see Appendix VI for the full list of items).³⁹

Following this pre-test, individuals were exposed to a political advertisement aired by either Obama or Romney during the course of the 2012 campaign, either featuring negatively-valenced coverage of China (in the case of the treatment condition) or non-China related coverage (in the case of the control conditions). Individuals typically look to trusted opinion leaders to form their opinions on foreign policy issues (Baum & Groeling, 2009; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998; Potter & Baum, 2016; Rahn, 1993). Thus, in order to strengthen the treatment and to eliminate concerns about counter-arguing and motivated reasoning (Taber & Lodge, 2006), individuals were exposed to ads aired by the candidate whom they supported, using their self-reported 2012 vote (or partisanship, in the case of non-voters). For example, those who voted for Romney saw Romney-sponsored ads (either a treatment ad or a control, described below), those who voted for Obama saw Obama-sponsored ads, and those who did not vote were assigned based on reported partisanship. In the case of non-voters who were pure independents, respondents were randomly assigned to either Obama or Romney ads.

³⁹ I use this pre-determined cutoff because it is the most commonly employed in the literature about authoritarianism and displays convergent and predictive validity with a number of other traits thought to be associated with authoritarianism (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009; Taub, 2016).

Treatments

I focus on political ads as my stimulus because they were extremely prevalent during the campaign (“Bill for China Ads in U.S. Election: \$54.3 Million,” 2012) and because using actual media content produced by the campaigns increases the generalizability of my findings, allowing me to assess the impact that these ads are likely to have had in the real world. Additionally, by using negatively-valenced content about China that comes from trusted sources, I am able to strengthen the treatment, exposing individuals to messages emanating from like-minded candidates, boosting the likelihood that individuals will be affected by the short ad.

I use four ads—two as treatment and two as control. The full text of the videos is available in Appendix VI. The treatment videos are campaign ads that featured China as direct economic competition for the United States. For example, in Obama’s video, entitled “The Cheaters,” he says, “Mitt Romney has never stood up to the cheaters in China. All he’s done is send them our jobs”. In Romney’s video entitled, “Stand up to China,” again the focus is on which candidate would be tougher on China, and China is presented as “stealing American ideas and technology.”

The treatment videos are 30-seconds long and feature ominous background music, images of American factories closing, and stereotypical images of Chinese factories. The control videos—one from each candidate’s actual repertoire of ads—focus on each candidate’s position on women’s issues. They are chosen because they are in support of the same candidate, but feature no discussion of any foreign countries nor any images of Asians. The Obama control ad, “Decision,” shows women discussing Romney’s plan to eliminate Planned Parenthood funding. The women in the ad argue that he cannot

understand the mindset of a woman who needs to visit the clinics, nor the importance of contraceptives to women. In the Romney control ad, “Humanity,” women discuss how Obama does not understand the importance of family in the way Romney does, saying that Romney respects and understands the importance of family values. In addition to featuring two women giving their opinions on the respective candidates and their gender policies, both presentations also have images of Obama and Romney. These similarities allow me to be confident that any difference in attitude toward China and Chinese—as well as toward other countries and peoples—results from negatively-valenced China coverage, not general exposure to political advertising or visual representations of either candidate.

Dependent variables

After watching one ad, individuals were asked their opinion of China using an 11-point scale ranging from very unfavorable (-5) to very favorable (5) (see Appendix VI for all question wording). They were also asked two related questions about (1) whether China’s emergence as a superpower is bad or good for the United States, and (2) whether China is more of a harm to American jobs and security or more of a beneficial economic marketplace. This last question also served as the dependent variable in Chapter 3. Items were standardized, and averaged into a reliable index (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.74), where higher scores mean that individuals have a more POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA.

In order to test whether negatively-valenced media affect opinions of countries other than China, the favorability question was embedded in a randomly ordered battery about Japan, Brazil, and India. These countries are carefully selected to allow me to

evaluate whether negatively-valenced media about China affects opinions of *all* countries or only *certain* countries. As discussed above, I expect that if negatively-valenced media about China affects other countries, this media is most likely to affect attitudes toward Japan—a country that is racially similar to China, and whose historical prominence in American media during the period of “Japan bashing” prompted discrimination against Asian Americans (Morris, 2013). Yet, to isolate whether the source of concern is based on Japan’s racial similarity to the China or on its potential status as a competitor of the United States, I contrast Japan with Brazil and India. These latter two countries, along with China, are considered to be part of an elite group of rising economies—the BRICS (an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).⁴⁰ Following assessments of country favorability, individuals were asked a second question, using the same (randomly ordered) scale, about opinions toward Japanese, Chinese, Brazilians, and Indians.⁴¹

Finally, individuals answered three questions that measured their ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA. First, they were asked to self-report their anxiety following the advertisement they saw. They were also asked whether they believed that China is a threat to the United States, and, if so, how much of a threat, and whether they believe that ordinary Americans are negatively affected by China. Items were standardized, and averaged into a reliable index (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.70). The full survey protocol can be found in Appendix VI.

⁴⁰ Notably, India is also regularly depicted as a major destination for outsourced American jobs in the domestic media and was often mentioned alongside China in campaign ads as an economic competitor to the United States.

⁴¹ There are no order effects for either this randomly ordered battery or the previously described one for country favorability.

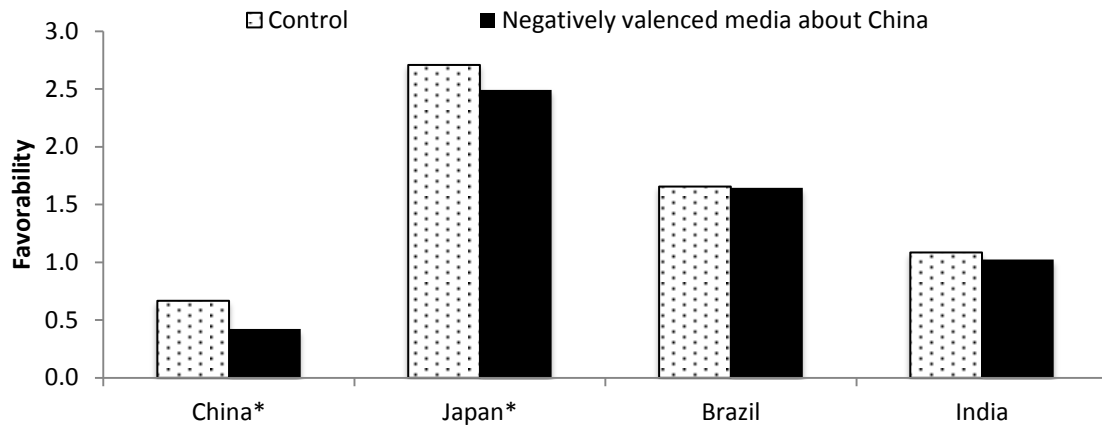
Results

I use between-subjects analysis of variance to evaluate my first two hypotheses: 1) that negatively-valenced media about China decreases POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA (H1) and 2) that negatively-valenced media about China decreases favorability toward the Chinese people (H2).⁴² As shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, I find strong support for both H1 and H2; negatively-valenced media about China decreases POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA ($F=7.56, p < 0.01$) and decreases favorability toward Chinese people ($F=8.21, p < 0.05$) relative to the control condition. This finding is notable, since in the control condition, without exposure to negatively-valenced media about China, the country already receives a lower—and statistically significant—rating than each of the other three countries evaluated: Brazil, Japan, and India (Figure 4.1). The Chinese people are also held in low regard relative to Brazilians and Indians in the control condition (Figure 4.2).⁴³ Yet despite receiving the lowest rating without exposure, the negatively-valenced content in the campaign ad is enough to drive evaluations of China—and the Chinese—down even further.

⁴² I evaluate opinion of China in two ways—using a reliable index POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA as well as a single, 11-point scale ranging from very unfavorable (-5) to very favorable (5). The latter allows for greater comparability with other countries and is presented in the charts below, though I return in greater detail to the index when examining my moderation and mediation hypotheses below. I only assess unfavorable opinion of Chinese using the latter. As a convention for clarity, in this chapter I will refer to indices in capital letters.

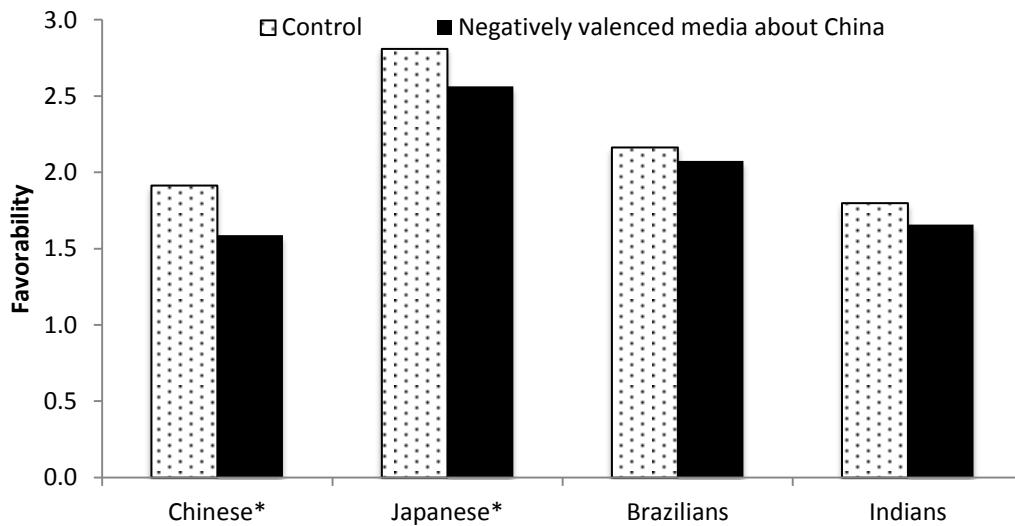
⁴³ There is a statistically significant difference between views of Indians and Chinese using a one-tailed hypothesis test ($p < .05$).

Figure 4.1. Favorability of China, Japan Depressed by Negatively-Valenced Media about China



Note: Mechanical Turk survey experiment, N=1,629. Mean favorability is presented using a scale from very unfavorable (-5) to very favorable (5). * denotes statistically significant differences between the control and treatment where $p < 0.05$.

Figure 4.2. Favorability of Chinese, Japanese Depressed by Negatively-Valenced Media about China



Note: Mechanical Turk survey experiment, N=1,629. Mean favorability is presented using a scale from very unfavorable (-5) to very favorable (5). * denotes statistically significant differences between the control and treatment where $p < 0.05$.

The question then becomes whether the negatively-valenced media about China depresses more than just evaluations of China and Chinese people, instead affecting other countries—and particularly countries that are racially similar to China (H3). Using the 11-point favorability scale for each of the four countries, it is clear that these ads—which significantly depress opinions of both China and the Chinese—have no effect on evaluations of Brazil ($F=0.02, p > 0.05$), India ($F=0.27, p > 0.05$), or the people from either of these two countries ($F=0.70, p > 0.05$ and $F=1.42, p > 0.05$, respectively). However, they *do* significantly lower evaluations of Japan ($F=5.03, p < 0.05$) and Japanese people ($F=6.17, p < 0.05$). This confirms my third hypothesis and indicates that these ads do not cause a general negativity toward *all* peoples and countries—even though Brazil and India are also both large, developing economies that could credibly be seen as economic competitors to the United States. Rather, there appears to be a racial dimension to the relationship—something that will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.⁴⁴ It is also worth noting that Japan and China are at different ends of the spectrum; whereas individuals had the most negative opinion toward China of the four countries, they had the most *positive* opinion of Japan. Yet, negatively-valenced media significantly affected both a well-liked and a relatively disliked country in similar ways.

My fourth hypothesis interrogates the mechanism underlying these findings: whether the relationship between negatively-valenced media about China and POSITIVE

⁴⁴ Importantly, individuals were asked to evaluate countries and peoples using only words (e.g., Japan and Japanese), not photos. Thus it is reassuring that there is a statistically significant interaction between negatively-valenced media about China and education such that more educated people are more likely to have unfavorable opinions of Japan and Japanese following the treatment than less educated people. This likely results from the fact that only more educated people are likely aware that Chinese and Japanese are routinely grouped together as “Asian” (or, in much more antiquated parlance, “Oriental”). Without a fair degree of international knowledge, such knowledge about foreign countries and peoples would be unlikely.

OPINION OF CHINA is mediated by ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA (Figure 4.3). Testing this hypothesis requires a few steps. First, having already demonstrated that negatively-valenced media about China decreases POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA (H1), I next need to demonstrate that negatively-valenced media about China affects ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA, which between-subjects analysis of variance indicates is the case ($F=3.95, p < 0.001$; Figure 4.4). Then, I must show that the effect of negatively-valenced media on POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA declines with the inclusion of ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA in the model.⁴⁵ Results strongly indicate that this shift is the case; the coefficient on negatively-valenced media falls from -0.110 to 0.003 and is no longer statistically significant once anxiety about China is included ($p > 0.05$; Table 4.2, Model 3).

Figure 4.3. Diagram of Mediation Model

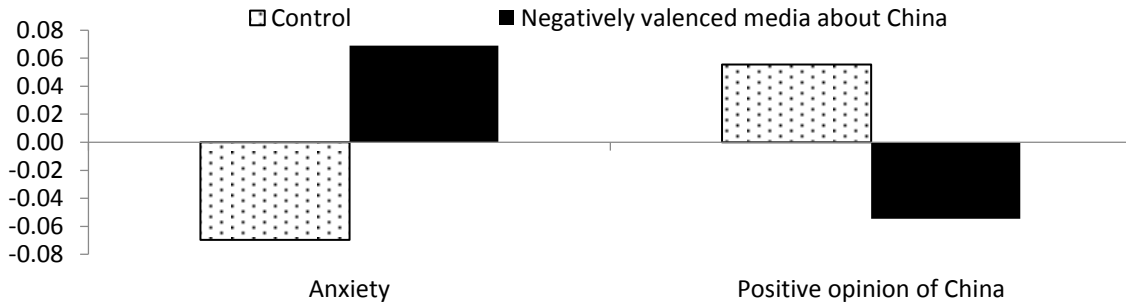


While these steps indicate the likelihood of mediation using the traditional method pioneered by Baron and Kenny (1986), a formal test is still necessary to conclude that my hypothesis is supported, because their classic test of mediation has been criticized for a lack of statistical power and for an incorrect approach to estimating the sampling

⁴⁵ Because POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA and ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA are both measured post-treatment, it is impossible to discern if there is a causal relationship between them. This limitation of mediation analysis in experiments is discussed more fully in Bullock, Green, and Ha (2010).

distribution of an indirect effect (Hayes, 2009; Hayes, Preacher, & Myers, 2011; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002).

Figure 4.4. Negatively-Valenced Media about China Increases Anxiety, Decreases Positive Opinion of China



Note: Mechanical Turk survey experiment, N=1,629. The anxiety about China index is an average of the Z-scores of three questions: self-reported anxiety, whether individuals believe China is a threat to the U.S., and whether they believe ordinary Americans are negatively affected by China; higher values indicate more anxiety (Cronbach's alpha = 0.70). The anxiety about China index ranges from -1.41 to 1.99. The positive opinion of China index is the average of the Z-scores of three questions: favorability, whether China is more harmful to jobs and security or a beneficial economic market, and whether China's emergence as a superpower is bad or good for the United States (Cronbach's alpha = 0.74). The positive opinion of China index ranges from -1.97 to 1.94.). In both cases, differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Following Preacher and Hayes (2004), I test for the hypothesized indirect effect, using bootstrapped standard errors to produce a confidence interval for the estimated indirect effect size. The resulting 95% confidence interval, based on 1,000 resamples, ranges from -0.172 to -0.056. Since this interval does not include zero, there is statistical evidence that negatively-valenced China media about China influences ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA, which in turn affects POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA. Not only is my hypothesis confirmed—that ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA mediates the observed relationship—but results indicate nearly all of the total effect of negatively-valenced media on POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA is mediated by ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA.

Table 4.2. Anxiety about China Mediates the Relationship between Negatively-Valenced Media about China and Positive Opinion of China

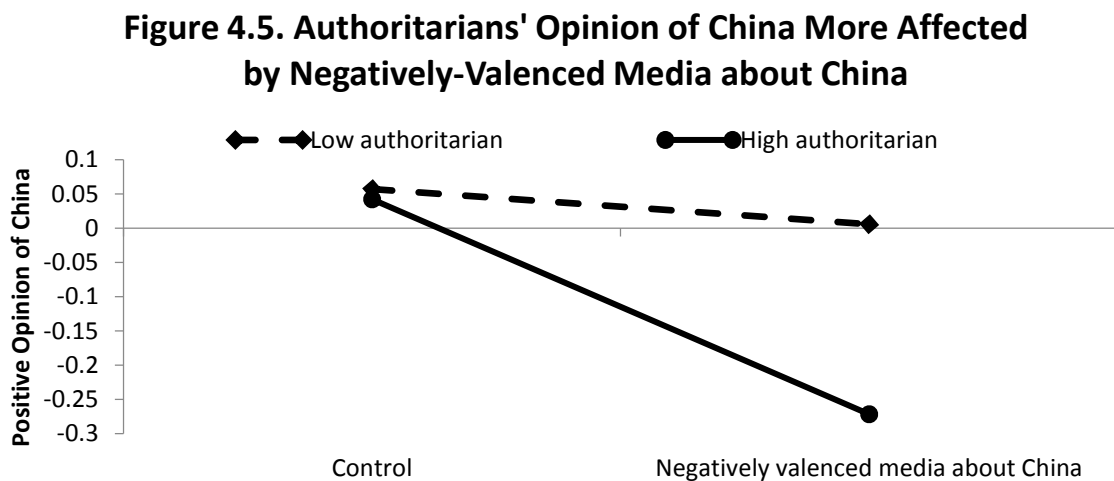
<i>Dependent variable</i>	Model 1 <i>Positive opinion of China</i>	Model 2 <i>Anxiety about China</i>	Model 3 <i>Positive opinion of China</i>
Negatively-valenced media about China (0=control, 1=treatment)	-0.110** (0.040)	0.139*** (0.035)	0.003 (0.028)
Anxiety about China			-0.816** (0.019)
Constant	0.055 (0.028)	-0.070** (0.025)	-0.001 (0.019)
N	1,629	1,629	1,629
R ²	0.005	0.010	0.512

Note: Cell entries represent coefficients from ordinary least squares regression analysis. Standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable, positive opinion of China, is an average of the Z-scores of three questions: favorability, whether China is more of harmful to jobs and security or a beneficial economic market, and whether China's emerge as a superpower is bad or good for the United States (Cronbach's alpha = 0.74). The positive opinion of China index ranges from -1.97 to 1.94. Negatively-valenced media about China is a dummy variable presenting whether the individual was in the control condition or exposed to the treatment—negatively-valenced media about China. Anxiety about China is an average of the Z-scores of three questions: self-reported anxiety, whether individuals believe China is a threat to the U.S., and whether they believe ordinary Americans are negatively affected by China; higher values indicate more anxiety about China (Cronbach's alpha = 0.70). The anxiety about China index ranges from -1.41 to 1.99. Significance values are indicated with # p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.

My fifth and final hypothesis is that POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA will decrease following exposure to negatively-valenced China-related media more among authoritarians than among non-authoritarians. Before testing this moderation hypothesis, it is worth examining whether authoritarians are, indeed, more anxious following exposure to negatively-valenced media about China. Results indicate that they are ($F=13.76, p < 0.01$). Even in the control condition, authoritarians are slightly more anxious about China, but the magnitude of the difference between non-authoritarians and

authoritarians is more than seven times as large after exposure to negatively-valenced media about China.⁴⁶

Having confirmed that authoritarians *do* appear to be more prone to anxious reactions than non-authoritarians, I move on to test my moderation hypothesis. The results of this moderation test indicate that there is a statistically significant interaction between exposure to negatively-valenced media about China and authoritarianism ($F=6.68, p < 0.01$; Figure 4.5). Those high in authoritarianism responded more strongly to the experimental treatments and their POSITIVE OPINION OF CHINA decreased more following exposure to the negatively-valenced China related content.



Note: Mechanical Turk survey experiment, N=1,629. The positive opinion of China index is the average of the Z-scores of three questions: favorability, whether China is more harmful to American jobs and security or a beneficial economic market, and whether China's emergence as a superpower is bad or good for Americans ($\alpha = 0.74$). This variable ranges from -1.97 to 1.94. High authoritarianism is an additive index of whether individuals prefer discipline and respect to independence in child-rearing; high authoritarians are those who choose the authoritarian trait in three or more of the four forced dichotomies. The interaction between negatively-valenced media about China and high-authoritarianism is statistically significant ($F=6.68, p < .01$).

⁴⁶ In the control condition, non-authoritarians have a mean anxiety about China of -0.08, compared to -0.04 for authoritarians. In the treatment condition, non-authoritarians have a mean anxiety about China of 0.01, compared to 0.301 for authoritarians.

Results from this experiment offer strong evidence that exposure to negatively-valenced media about a country can cause unfavorable opinions of both that country and its citizens. It lends support to the concerns raised by the Chinese government—that anti-China rhetoric during the course of the U.S. campaign may cause people to believe that China a threat, and to hold more negative opinions of the country. These changes in opinion are visible despite the fact that this experiment posed a difficult test of this hypothesis. Namely, a mere 30-seconds of exposure significantly depressed opinions toward a country and its people that were *already* seen in a relatively negative light compared to other countries. Moreover, prior to exposure, most Americans were likely familiar with China, likely having been exposed to more rhetoric about it than other countries in the year leading up to the experiment, due to frequent campaign rhetoric.⁴⁷

Limitations

While these results offer some of the first causal evidence of the effects of negatively-valenced media on opinions of foreign countries and peoples, nonetheless there are some limitations to my findings. First, there are issues of external validity. Mechanical Turk is not a probability sample, and users of the platform may not be representative of the American population as a whole.⁴⁸ The sample in this survey, for example, leans more Democratic than the population as a whole. Estimates from a Pew Research Center survey conducted December 8-13, 2015 indicate that 46% of the

⁴⁷ Some subjects likely had already even *seen* the treatment videos, thus making their robust effects even more notable.

⁴⁸ For certain experiments, MTurkers have been shown to be more representative of the U.S. population than in-person convenience samples (like those composed of college sophomores). In addition, average treatment effects found using this platform are often comparable to those obtained using more traditional samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012).

American public identifies as Democrats or leans Democratic, whereas that affiliation is 54% of the sample employed here. Moreover, the sample employed here is more educated than the American public as a whole. Whereas 55% of the sample has a bachelor's degree, 2014 CPS data indicates that no more than 35% of the American public has completed college.

However, to the degree that these differences might bias results, they likely lead to *smaller* effects than we would observe in the population as a whole. Results in this experiment as well as in the broader literature suggest that Republicans respond more to threats than do Democrats (Hibbing, Smith, & Alford, 2014; Lilienfeld & Latzman, 2014). Less educated people also tend to be more susceptible to the persuasive effects of media messages (Petty & Cacioppo, 2012; Wood & Kallgren, 1988; Wood, Kallgren, & Preisler, 1985). While Mechanical Turk samples also tend to be slightly younger than the general population, there is no theoretical or empirical reason that I would expect age to affect the magnitude of the effects.

The treatments may also affect the external generalizability of the experiment. While the ads used are quite comparable to other ads aired at the time, nonetheless, I relied on only two treatment advertisements.⁴⁹ These ads may have been unique in some way and caused the observed results in a manner that other political advertisements (or more general media coverage) would not. The negatively-valenced media about China used as a treatment in this study also caused *anxiety* about China, and not all negatively-valenced media will necessarily prompt such a reaction. Moreover, the negatively-

⁴⁹ The ads also reflect the same types of rhetoric and tenor that I found in my content analysis in Chapter 3. Even the visuals in these particular ads are similar in many ways to other ads aired at the same time, as well as those aired in state and local races in 2012.

valenced media treatment in this study was about an economic topic, rather than human rights, the military, or other subjects. From a theoretical perspective, I expect media valence to affect favorability of China across all of these topics, but that assumption is not tested in this study.

Additionally, while results here suggest that anxiety about China mediated the relationship between negatively-valenced political ads and opinion of China, there are severe limitations to the mediation analysis discussed above. In particular, the mediator—ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA—was not independently manipulated. Although the treatment was randomly assigned, ensuring that it is not related to any unobserved factors that would threaten causal inference, the same cannot be said about the mediator; ANXIETY ABOUT CHINA may be systematically related to unobserved factors (Bullock, Green, & Ha, 2010).⁵⁰ As a result, estimates of the degree of mediation may be biased, and may overstate the extent of the mediation. Nonetheless, results *do* clearly demonstrate that these negatively-valenced advertisements about China caused individuals to feel more anxious about China. Even if this feeling does not *mediate* the resulting change in favorability, it suggests that political strategists during the 2012 presidential election who attempted to play on people's fears were able to do so successfully.

A further limitation of the mediation analysis is the extremely strong relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable. They are highly correlated ($r=-0.71$), suggesting strong conceptual overlap. Future research would benefit from measuring

⁵⁰ In experimental parlance, what I need to be able to demonstrate in order to guard against biased mediation results is that $\text{cov}(e_1, e_3) = 0$ when considering the following three mediation equations: $M_i = \alpha_1 + aX_i + e_{i1}$, $Y_i = \alpha_2 + cX_i + e_{i2}$, and $Y_i = \alpha_3 + dX_i + bM_i + e_{i3}$. That is, I need to be able to show why unobserved factors that affect the mediator are uncorrelated with unobserved factors that affect negative opinion of China.

anxiety using alternate survey measures as well as other, non-survey indicators (e.g., biometric data).

The controlled nature of this experimental setting, in contrast to the real-world context, might also affect generalizability. Whereas individuals may encounter political advertisements in myriad ways—and, given typical campaign outlays, most likely on television (Lieberman & Lieberman, 2015; Tadana, 2015)—in the experiment I conducted, individuals saw the political advertisement on a computer screen. By design they were also unable to skip the advertisement. While some may have muted it, paid little attention, or even left the room during the short manipulation, they likely paid more attention to the ad by virtue of it being in an online experimental context than they would have had they encountered it while channel-surfing or during casual television viewing. This heightened attention may have increased the persuasiveness of the media.

But, besides attentiveness, it seems unlikely that the setting would substantially affect results. For example, observers have noted a growth of political advertisements online, including on Hulu and other online television platforms (Barnard & Kreiss, 2013; May, 2010). Moreover, over half of Americans consume news online (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley, & Matsa, 2014), suggesting that viewing negatively-valenced media about China on a computer may increasingly mimic real-world exposure to media content about China. Additionally, research on campaign expenditures suggests that digital ad spending is likely to surpass traditional broadcast spending beginning in 2016, so online advertising akin to this experiment may soon become the norm (Lieberman & Lieberman, 2015; Tadana, 2015).

Finally—as is the case with all experiments—this study cannot answer the question of *who* in the public is likely to be exposed to these ads outside of the experimental context. However, the sheer prevalence of these ads and of this rhetoric during the campaign (“Candidates Get Tough on China During the Second 2012 Presidential Debate,” 2012), coupled with results from other, nationally representative research, suggest that even in a non-experimental context, a large majority of individuals were likely exposed to at least *some* negative rhetoric about China. The two treatment ads, for example, were aired in nine battleground states for more than two weeks each; cumulatively, potential exposure is even higher when considering online advertising and media markets which sprawl across state borders.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, this study offers evidence that negatively-valenced media about China cause people to perceive the country as more threatening, and to view the country and the people dwelling in it less favorably. Results highlight the power that media can have on how Americans regard a foreign country or foreign peoples. This study’s findings have important consequences for Sino-U.S. relations. A great deal of research suggests that messages that increase anxiety and threat perception also affect policy attitudes. Exposure to threatening stimuli that cause anxiety has been linked to increased risk aversion (Huddy, Feldman, & Weber, 2007; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Lerner & Keltner, 2001), greater support for the use of force (Holsti, 2009; Page & Shapiro, 1992), a willingness to suspend civil liberties (Berinsky, 2009; Mueller, 1988), and a preference for more restrictive government policies (Lerner et al.,

2003). One study, for example, found that perceived threats of terrorism led individuals to support precautionary, isolationist policies (Lerner et al., 2003)

Insofar as negatively-valenced media coverage of China increases the sense that China is a threat to the United States, there is reason to believe that media may also cause people to be less supportive of cooperative policies of engagement with China. This trend may particularly apply in the economic arena, where negative opinions of a country affect support for trade with that country (Pew Research Center, 2014; Sabet, 2013). The Chinese government has already foreseen these problems. As one *Xinhua* editorial cautioned,

During the year-long presidential campaign, both Obama and his GOP rival Romney put a lot of energy into discrediting China, unfairly calling Beijing a trade cheater, currency manipulator, a U.S. job stealer and a rules breaker. Now that the most pressing task confronting America is to energize the economic recovery and slash stubbornly high unemployment, the new Obama administration perhaps should bear in mind that a stronger and more dynamic China-U.S. relationship, especially in trade, will not only provide U.S. investment with rich business opportunities, but also help to revive the sagging global economy (Richburg & Juan, 2012).

Results in this experiment indicate that negatively-valenced media used as part of an ordinary campaign may actually hamstring elected politicians, restricting their available options for cooperation, should they seek it—something that President Obama arguably has been doing as part of his continued “pivot to Asia” policy in his second term. As one China-watcher noted,

[the candidates] outdid each other on promises to get (or stay) tough...Neither candidate spent much time reminding voters of less convenient facts: China and America are inextricably linked, with nearly five hundred billion dollars a year in trade that drives the global economy; they are intensely involved in fashioning joint responses to global crises from North Korea to Iran to Syria; and they are taking slow but necessary steps to stem tensions over cyberwarfare and military intentions” (Osno, 2012).

With such a clear need to collaborate with China, media that cause negative feelings toward China and its people may inadvertently prevent or limit future cooperation (Lieberthal & Wang, 2012). This study suggests that future campaigns ought to use caution when “playing the China card” during the electoral campaign. While it may be an effective vote-getting tool in the short term, the long-term harm done to the budding Sino-U.S. “great power relationship” may not be worth the costs. Further, as the next chapter will discuss in more detail, tolerance for Asians overseas and within the United States may suffer as well.

CHAPTER 5 – DO POLITICAL ADS FUEL DISCRIMINATION? THE EFFECTS OF NEGATIVELY-VALENCED MEDIA ABOUT CHINA ON VIEWS OF CHINESE AND ASIAN STUDENTS

As negatively-valenced media about China increases and campaigns focus more attention on America's competition with China, it raises the question of whether an information environment flooded with negative rhetoric and imagery of China might be leading to discrimination against Asian Americans. Recent examples of high-profile racist statements suggest that a fear of China *may* be leading to a backlash against Asian Americans. For example, a Democratic super-PAC tweeted that jobs were leaving Kentucky because of who had Senator McConnell's ear—Elaine Chao, a Taiwanese-American, his wife and former secretary of labor (Memmott, 2013). More recently, Fox News commentator Bob Beckel declared, "Chinese are the single biggest threat to the national security of the U.S....as usual, we bring them over here and teach a bunch of Chinamen, uh, Chinese people, how to do computers, and then they go back to China and hack us" ("China Joins Furor Over Fox News Host's 'Chinaman' Comments," 2014). Even more extreme was the recent arrest of an Asian American professor—chair of Temple University's physics department—based on limited and flawed information suggesting he was "stealing" sensitive secrets for China.

These and other examples raise important questions: Do media that present China in a negative light cause individuals to discriminate against Chinese? Do they affect not only Chinese citizens, but Asians—even Asian Americans—too? Discrimination has two important components: the first is either a tendency to attribute negative characteristics to a group or a reluctance to attribute positive characteristics to a group (Sniderman et al.,

2000). The second is differential treatment on the basis of group membership that disadvantages the group (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004). Here, the question is whether negatively-valenced media about China (which the previous chapter shows raises the specter of threat from China) leads people to view and treat Chinese—and Asians—differently *solely* because of their nationality or race.

Using a unique survey experiment, this chapter demonstrates that the negatively-valenced ads about China aired during the course of the 2012 presidential campaign led individuals to evaluate Chinese nationals and Asians more negatively. In the following sections, I review the literature about discrimination against Asians and describe the experiment that I use to test these hypotheses, as well as results. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of these findings for a diverse and tolerant American society.

Discrimination against Asians

One extreme example motivates the hypotheses for this study: the hate crime death of Vincent Chin in Detroit in 1982. During the 1980s and 1990s, extremely negative coverage of Japan flooded the media. America's trade imbalance with Japan was a constant in the media and in the political rhetoric of the day; media and elites fixated on Japan's "unfair" trade practices, their advantages, and how America was losing and falling behind (Cummings, 1989; Morris, 2013). This appears to have prompted a great deal of anti-Asian racial intolerance, with a massive increase in Asians reporting harassment during that period (Iino, 1994). Most shockingly, many observers believe it contributed to the killing of Vincent Chin—a young Chinese-American, assumed by his

attackers to be a Japanese foreigner. He was bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat by individuals yelling racial slurs and accusing him of harming the local Detroit auto industry and causing them to be out of work (F. H. Wu, 2012).

There are no systematic empirical studies of the impact of negatively-valenced media about foreign countries on treatment of citizens from that country. However, the historical pattern from the “Japan bashing” period suggests that negatively-valenced media about Japan may have contributed to Americans attributing more negative characteristics to Japanese people, and treating the group differently. While discrimination can take a number of forms—with the case of Vincent Chin being one of the most extreme—the historical example of Japan leads me to my first hypothesis:

H1: Negatively-valenced media about China will encourage individuals to discriminate against Chinese citizens.

The case of Vincent Chin also raises the question of whether negatively-valenced media about one country may actually cause discrimination against not only citizens of the country that is presented negatively in the media, but against anyone who is seen to be racially similar—regardless of citizenship. A pervasive finding in research on Asian Americans in the United States is that regardless of their actual citizenship, whites tend to view Asians as less “American” because of their race (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, & Pratto, 1997; Stroessner, 1996; Tuan, 1998). For example, average Americans consider white European actress Kate Winslet more American than the Asian American actress, Lucy Liu, using Implicit Association Tests (Devos & Ma, 2008). Asian Americans also face some of the strongest social barriers to assimilation, consistently being viewed as “outsiders” or “foreigners,” regardless of how

long they have been in the United States (Devos & Heng, 2009; Devos & Ma, 2008; Liang, Li, & Kim, 2004; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). This tendency for Americans to perceive Asians as foreign, even when they are American citizens, is sometimes referred to as “identity denial” and such questions as “where are you really from” are frequently referred to as “micro-aggressions” (Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, & Sue, 2013; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009; F. H. Wu, 2003).⁵¹

Most Americans also cannot differentiate between Asians from different countries in the region (Hourihan, Benjamin, & Liu, 2012).⁵² This is not a new phenomenon; TIME and Life Magazine in the 1940s published articles such as “How to Tell your Chinese Friends from the Japs” (Y. Wang, 2015). Surveys suggest that this “lumping”—as it is sometimes called—persists today (Committee of 100, 2009; Kuo, 2016; Lipin, 2014). Relatively recent instances of discrimination exemplify this. For example, Wen Ho Lee, a Los Alamos physicist who was arrested and held in solitary confinement because of incorrect allegations that he had passed nuclear secrets to China, is not only a naturalized American citizen, but *Taiwanese* (F. H. Wu, 2016).⁵³ Because Americans have difficulty differentiating among Asians from different countries and even American citizens of Asian heritage tend to be seen as “foreign,” I believe negatively-valenced media coverage of China will affect opinions about and attitudes toward more than just Chinese nationals.

⁵¹ During the 2016 presidential campaign, for example, an Asian American student at Harvard stood up to ask a question and Donald Trump cut him off, asking, “Are you from South Korea?” to which the student replied that he was born in Texas and raised in Colorado (Mo, 2015).

⁵² In fact, the entire existence of a field of study about “Asian Americans” suggests the routine conflation of disparate ethnic groups.

⁵³ Xiaoxing Xi, the chair of the Temple University physics department discussed earlier, as well as Sherry Chen, an employee of the National Weather Service, and Guoqing Cao and Dan Li, two chemists at Eli Lilly are all examples of *American* citizens of Chinese heritage accused of crimes and later exonerated (F. H. Wu, 2016).

Moreover, results in the previous chapter indicate that negatively-valenced media about China cause individuals to feel more negatively toward not only Chinese citizens, but also Japanese citizens—a racially similar group. Thus I hypothesize the following:

H2: Negatively-valenced media about China will encourage individuals to discriminate against Asians, regardless of nationality.

Methods

To test these hypotheses experimentally, I rely on the experiment conducted on MTurk, described in more detail in Chapter 4. However, whereas for the previous experiment I only excluded self-identifying Asians, here, because the domain is university admissions—an arena replete with complicated racial dynamics involving affirmative action—I only include *white* Americans.⁵⁴ Outside of this difference, the pretest questions, treatments (a between subjects factor manipulating exposure to negatively-valenced media about China), and data quality checks (whether individuals clearly heard the ads, could identify the sponsors, and were within two standard deviations of average completion time) are identical to those described in the previous chapter.

Dependent variable

While there are a number of ways to explore these hypotheses about discrimination, I focus here on university admissions. I do this for two reasons. First, it is a context in which I can use subtler measures. Rather than directly asking people whether they would like to limit the number of Chinese or Asians who can attend U.S. colleges, I

⁵⁴ If I specified in advance that only white Americans would be included in the task, it might incentivize those of other races to lie about their race in order to participate. Rather, it is preferable to allow anyone to participate in the HIT, restricting the sample to my target population *after* collecting the data.

use less overt evaluation tasks. This is similar, in many ways, to field experiments which use resumes to evaluate sex or racial discrimination (Huddy & Feldman, 2009; Newman, 1978; Newman & Krzystofiak, 1979; Stewart & Perlow, 2001).

Second, universities are a particularly policy-relevant domain. As noted earlier, some of the high-profile racist comments about Chinese and discrimination against them has taken place in the university context. Moreover, only recently, the U.S. State Department proposed a rule to ban foreign students from research projects and classes they deem to contain vital information for national security, including: munitions, nuclear engineering, and satellite technology (Edwards, 2016). More than 60 universities including Stanford, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania—all of which receive government research grants—criticized the proposal, arguing that it tips the balance too far in favor of national security against academic freedom. While restrictions thus far only target particular fields of study, it suggests the importance of evaluating how negatively-valenced rhetoric about China affects discrimination in the university context.

The dependent variables, discrimination against Chinese and Asians, are based on a Latin Square design. Individuals were asked to think of themselves as admissions officers at an elite university who must rate the QUALITY of applicants who have applied to join next year's freshman class, on a scale ranging from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent). Each respondent was presented with student profiles, one at a time. What I term "a profile" is a set of stable characteristics: GPA, an intended major, and a brief description of the student's extracurricular activities. These were pretested to ensure that they were comparably strong (see Appendix VII). For example, "profile 1" is a student with a 3.81 GPA, who desires to major in political science, and who was a member of Model United

Nations and debate, among other activities. Four slightly different profiles were rotated through the Latin Square design so that different treatment characteristics (race and nationality) are associated with the varying profiles.

Two characteristics of the candidate are randomly assigned to these profiles: race (Asian / White) and nationality (Chinese / American). Race is manipulated via photograph, and nationality is stated in the text. The photographs used to manipulate race were chosen to maximize comparability. The four photos are all head-shots of college-aged men wearing suits in front of the same background. They were pretested using a separate Amazon Mechanical Turk tasking in September 2014, and results indicate no difference in perceived attractiveness across the photos (see Appendix VII for all pretest results).

This design yields a 2 x 2 structure, race by nationality, providing four unique combinations (Table 5.1). Each one of these “combinations” has three characteristics which rotate together: a photograph (the race manipulation), a stated nationality (the nationality manipulation), and a name. For example, the Asian American (AA) student has the photo presented below (Figures 5.1 and 5.2) and is always called “Vince Xu”. The White American student (WA) is always called “Gregory Walsh” and is an all-American blonde with blue eyes (see pictures in Appendix VI). These composites (name, photo to manipulate race, and text to manipulate nationality) then rotate across the profiles (that is, the stable characteristics of GPA, intended major, and activities) to form the Latin Square (Table 5.2).

Table 5.1. Two-by-Two Experimental Design			
NATIONALITY		RACE	
		Asian	White
	American	<i>Asian American (AA)</i>	<i>White American (WA)</i>
Chinese	<i>Asian Chinese (AC)</i>	<i>White Chinese (WC)</i>	

Figure 5.1. Example Profile for the Asian American Student (Profile 1)

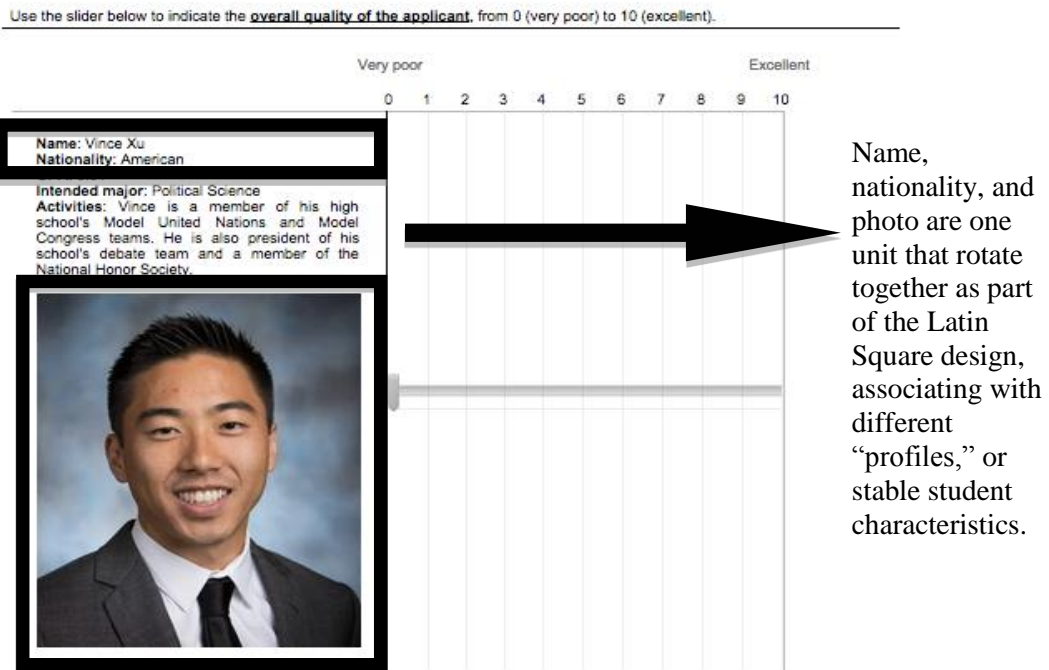
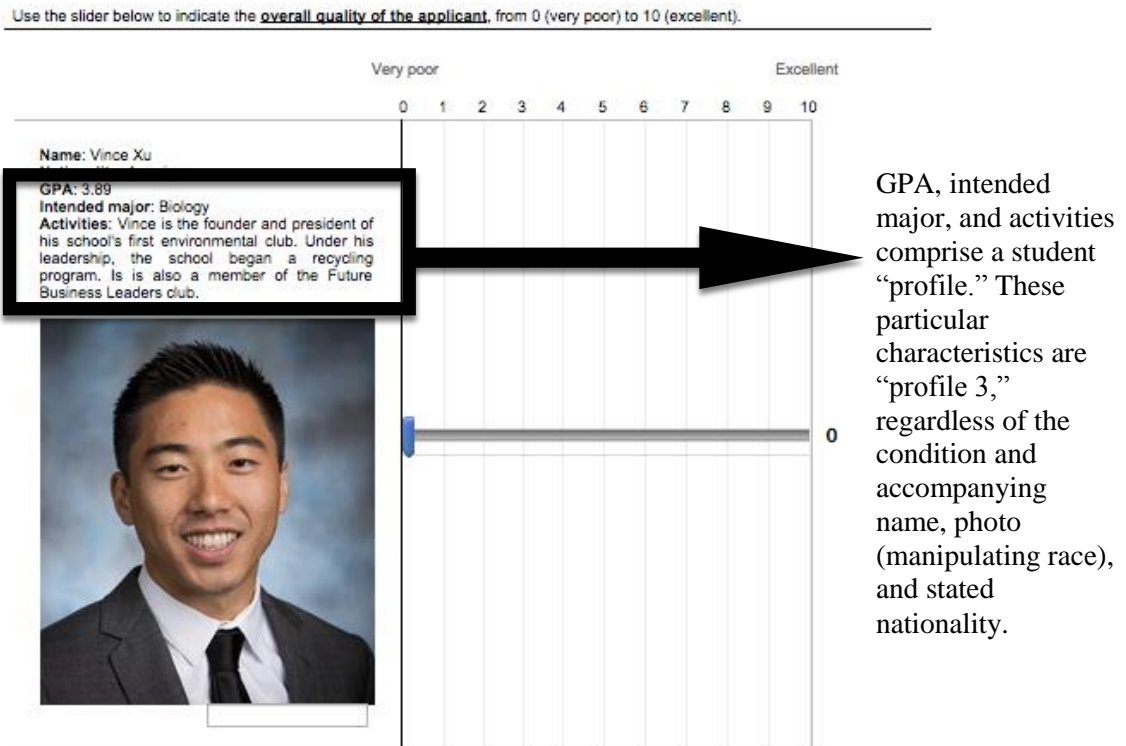


Figure 5.2. Example Profile for the Asian American Student (Condition 2)



While the white Chinese cell may seem strange, it has two advantages. First, this type of individual is increasingly common in a globalized world. Children of academics, reporters, diplomats, and the like may be raised overseas and apply to U.S. universities with non-American citizenship and a phenotype that appears closer to Caucasian Americans. Second, it's worth noting that no race is specified; rather, the manipulation is solely based on the photograph. While it is unlikely that any respondents were thinking in these terms, there are, in fact, millions of Chinese who identify as one of the 55 ethnic minority groups in the country—including the Uyghurs, who are regularly described as having "Western" or "Caucasian" features (Rudelson & Rudelson, 1997). Third, it allows for a fully-crossed design in terms of race and nationality. By design, I can *separate* the

effects of race and nationality—determining the degree to which Asian race and Chinese nationality—or both—are affecting perceived candidate quality.

Table 5.2. Latin Square Design (Race/Nationality)				
	Profile 1	Profile 2	Profile 3	Profile 4
Condition 1	AA	WA	AC	WC
Condition 2	WA	AC	AA	WC
Condition 3	AC	WC	WA	AA
Condition 4	WC	AA	AC	WA

Note: “Profile” refers to a series of student characteristics— a GPA, proposed major, and extracurricular activities. These are stable; e.g. in profile 1, the student is always described as having a GPA of 3.81, desiring to study biology, and as a member of Model UN and the National Honor Society. The name, photo, and picture then rotate, as a unit, across the profiles in the order described above (e.g., the Asian American student named Vince is associated with profile 1 in condition 1 and with profile 3 in condition 2). Race is manipulated using the photo (Asian / White) and nationality (Chinese / American) is explicitly written as a descriptor of each student.

AA =Asian American; WA = White American; WC = White Chinese; AC = Asian Chinese

A Latin Square is a modified block design that has two particular benefits in the context of this experiment. First, although profiles have been pre-tested to be roughly equally strong, and the pictures equally attractive, this modified block design allows me to look at the effects of the manipulated factors—race and nationality—while removing the extra variation that comes due to any residual differences in the profiles. For example, individuals in condition 1 see the Asian American student (AA) described with profile 1 (Figure 5.1), while those in condition 2 see the Asian American student described with profile 3 (Figure 5.2). By presenting the crossed factors with each one of the profiles, I am able to assess the degree to which the *manipulated factors* are driving the differences in candidate evaluation and to remove any effects driven by profile differences. Because each subject’s evaluation of each candidate can be compared within-person, this is a far

more sensitive measure of discrimination than what a between-subjects design would normally offer.

Additionally, because this is a within-subject design, each individual is asked to evaluate *multiple* profiles. By rotating respondents through all possible race by nationality combinations, it is possible to compare each individual's reactions across the four conditions. This is advantageous when studying something subjective like perceived quality of a student, because individual differences may be sizable, thus making the within-group variance extremely large. The Latin Square design allows me to compare each subject to his or her own mean candidate evaluation across the four conditions. This juxtaposition allows me to find more precise effects. In addition, because it is nested within a between-subjects design, I can evaluate whether negatively-valenced media about China (the between-subjects factor) cause greater differences between evaluations of white and Asian students (one within-subjects factor, race) or American and Chinese students (the other within-subjects factor, nationality).

It is important to emphasize that race is *only* manipulated visually, via photograph. Individuals are never described as being ethnically Chinese or ethnically Caucasian. While I specifically chose Chinese sounding names, it is unlikely that most respondents can identify the differences between stereotypically Chinese, Korean, or Japanese names. As a result, in many ways we can view the intersection of American nationality and Chinese ethnicity as a more general test of whether *Asian Americans*—above and beyond just Chinese-Americans – are reacted to differently.

Finally, in addition to the four candidates comprising the Latin Square, individuals were asked to evaluate two other profiles, one of an African-American

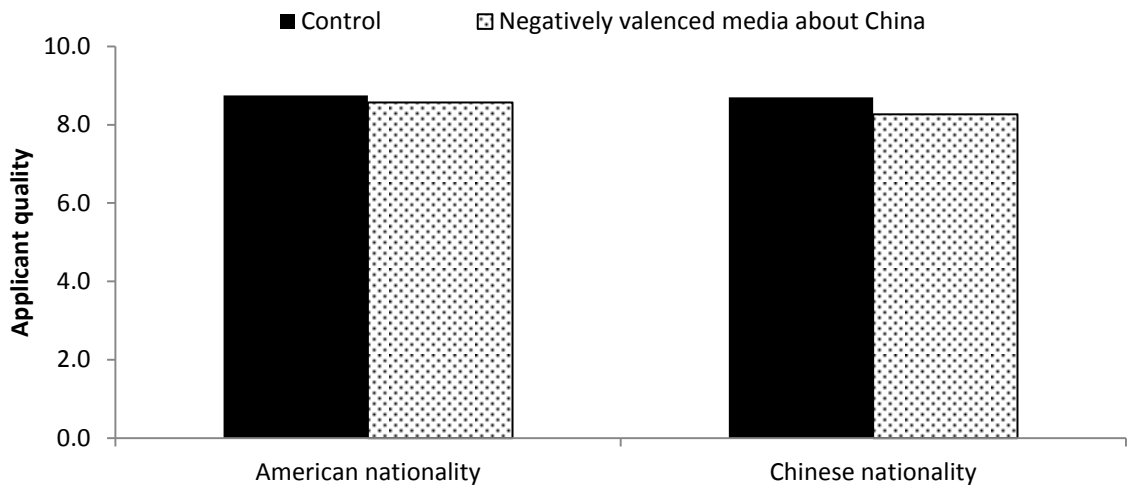
student and one of a Caucasian-looking Brazilian student. These cases were included to help prevent hypothesis guessing by virtue of depicting non-Asian races and nationalities other than Chinese. The photos and profiles for these two students were also pre-tested to be equally attractive and strong, respectively. However, these “candidates” were not manipulated within the design like the four previously described. The African-American student was *always* depicted not only with the same name, picture, and nationality, but *also* with the same GPA, intended major, and activities. The same was true of the Brazilian student. As a result, while I can examine differences in evaluations of those two profiles between the treatment and control condition, I cannot isolate the degree to which these evaluations were influenced by race and nationality, since the stable profile characteristics may have influenced their relative ratings.

I analyze this design using analysis of variance, accounting for the between-subjects factor (exposure to negative campaign ads about China), the within-subjects factors (race and nationality) and their interactions.

Results

The first hypothesis I test is whether negatively-valenced media about China encourages people to discriminate against Chinese citizens (H1). I find support for this hypothesis. Evaluations of applicants with Chinese nationality are lower for individuals who have seen negatively-valenced media about China than for those who have not ($F = 9.00, p < 0.05$; Figure 5.3). Notably, this is simply an evaluation of the *quality* of applicants. It suggests that in the presence of negatively-valenced media about China, individuals are less willing to ascribe positive characteristics to Chinese nationals.

Figure 5.3. Individuals Evaluate Chinese Applicant Quality More Negatively Following Exposure to Negatively-Valenced Media about China



Source: MTurk survey, $N=1,337$. Average quality is a rating for each profile, from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent). Analysis of variance indicates a statistically significant interaction between exposure to negatively-valenced media about China and candidate evaluations by nationality ($F=9.001$, $p < 0.01$); estimated marginal means are presented.

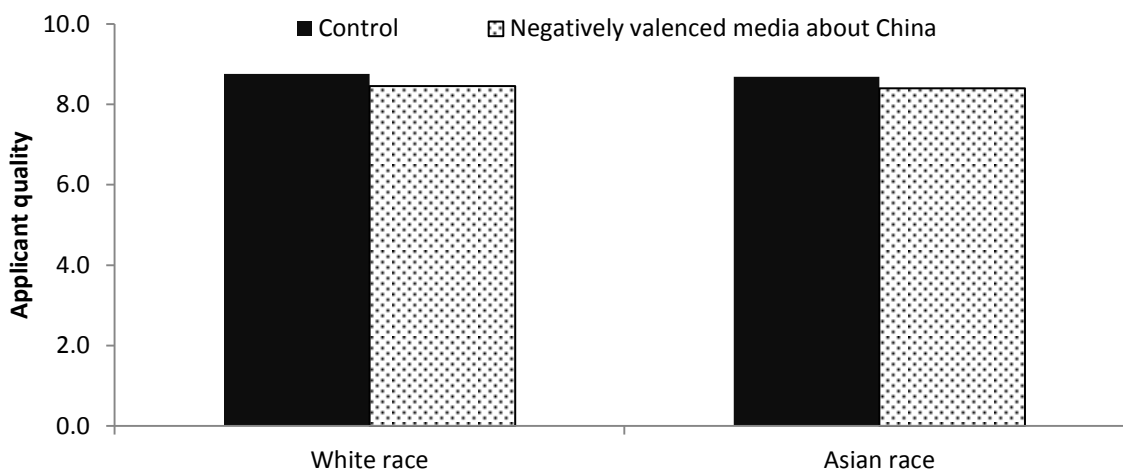
This raises the question of whether *other* foreign nationals are evaluated more negatively, as well. Perhaps negatively-valenced media about China leads individuals to want to retrench; to prioritize domestic citizens about foreigners, even if those foreigners are not Chinese. One of the profiles that respondents evaluated to prevent hypothesis guessing was a Brazilian citizen. As with the other profiles, his race was not stated, but he appears to be Caucasian (see Appendix VI for the photograph and profile). This profile was *not* part of the Latin square, and thus within-subject comparisons of the Brazilian citizen to the Chinese citizens are not possible (because I cannot partial out the difference due to the particularities of his described GPA, proposed major, or other factors). Nonetheless, I can evaluate whether those who saw negatively-valenced media about China evaluated the Brazilian candidate less favorably than those who saw only the control ad. Between-subjects analysis of variance indicates that they *do* ($F = 6.80$, $p <$

0.01).⁵⁵ Average quality ratings of the Brazilian student's profile fall from 8.05 on an 11-point scale to 7.8. This is a notable decrease, given that the treatment was exclusively about China and had *no* reference to Brazil or Brazilians. This suggests that negatively-valenced media about China may have negative consequences for foreign publics who are *not* Chinese as well as for those who are Chinese.

This brings me to my second hypothesis: whether negatively-valenced media about China encourages people to discriminate against *Asians* – regardless of citizenship. Results confirm my hypothesis: evaluations of Asian applicant quality are lower among individuals who were exposed to the negatively-valenced media about China than those who saw the political advertisements about women's issues ($F = 6.70, p < 0.05$; Figure 5.4). This is the case despite that one of the Asian students evaluated was described as an *American* citizen (Vince, presented above in Figures 5.1 and 5.2) and his race was primed solely via photo (meaning he could have been Korean-American, Japanese-American, or any other Asian background).

⁵⁵ This is notably distinct from how negatively-valenced media coverage of China affects opinion of Brazil and of Brazilians as a general group, examined in Chapter 4 (favorability of both decreased, but the change was not statistically significant). This may be due, in part, to the fact that the negatively-valenced coverage of China primed *anxiety*. While this anxiety may not affect Brazil and Brazilians—neither of which are necessarily seen as threatening to the United States—it may still cause people to be more protectionist, or inward-facing (Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003). As a result, individuals may evaluate *any* foreign national students more negatively because those foreigners could be seen as taking an Americans' spot.

Figure 5.4. Individuals Evaluate Asian Applicant Quality More Negatively Following Exposure to Negatively-Valenced Media about China



Source: MTurk survey, N=1,337. Average quality is a rating for each profile, from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent). Analysis of variance indicates a statistically significant interaction between exposure to negatively-valenced media about China and candidate evaluations by race ($F=6.695$, $p < 0.01$); estimated marginal means are presented.

In many ways, this is a hard test of the effects of negatively-valenced media about China, as it runs counter to stereotypes. Americans tend to perceive Asians as *more* qualified academically and as a “model minority” (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Lin, Kwan, Cheung, & Fiske, 2005; Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998; F. H. Wu, 2003). Whites, on average, believe Asians are smarter and harder working than other ethnic groups, including their own (Samson, 2013). They also see them as more competent, prepared, motivated, and likely to succeed than other races (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Lin et al., 2005; Wong et al., 1998). This “model-minority” stereotype is evident even in the control condition of *this* experiment; averaging across all four of the profile conditions, the two students who are “Asian” in their photographs are assigned the highest average quality ratings. This makes the statistically significant decrease in perceived applicant quality for

Asians after only 30-seconds of negatively-valenced media about China particularly striking. Additionally, college admissions are notoriously competitive; the most elite schools admit around 6% of applicants, turning away many thousands of strong candidates, suggesting that even the slightest difference in evaluations could potentially mean rejection for a given candidate.

I find these lowered evaluations of Chinese and Asian students even when their profiles have no references to them studying topics that are “sensitive” for national security. It suggests that if they were said to be studying such topics—e.g., focusing on issues targeted by the new U.S. State Department restrictions, including munitions, nuclear engineering, or satellite technology—discrimination might be even more severe. For example, a recent survey finds that 41% of Americans think that Chinese immigrants and Chinese-Americans working for the U.S. government and U.S. companies as researchers, scientists, or engineers pose a security risk to the United States—and 22% of Chinese-Americans even think the same (Committee of 100, 2016). Moreover, even before China became a regular fixture in political dialogues as a threat to the United States, one study found that people were less likely to want to hire qualified Asian Americans to national security jobs because of a tendency to view them as less loyal to the United States (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010).

Limitations

While these results offer the first causal evidence of the effects of negatively-valenced media about China on discrimination against Chinese and Asians, nonetheless some limitations persist. First, I conducted this experiment with a non-probability sample

on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. Individuals who completed the survey are not necessarily representative of the types of people who work in college admissions or human resources offices evaluating applications.⁵⁶ External generalizability is limited by the laboratory nature of this study, where individuals watched the negatively-valenced media about China immediately before evaluating candidates. Results here suggest the importance of a field experiment, such as sending actual resumes or applications to *actual* evaluators, as is commonly done to more subtly and naturally measure discrimination.

Additionally, the profiles that I showed following the negatively-valenced media about China may have caused some to “hypothesis guess,” answering questions with the assumption that they knew what I was measuring. The greatest concern here would be that individuals would guess that I wanted to see whether they would rate Chinese students differently following negatively-valenced media about China and thus they provided a “desired” answer instead of their “true” answer. However, this could prompt two different types of responses. First, it could lead some to avoid providing a socially undesirable, discriminatory view—thus *under*-reporting their true levels of discrimination so as not to appear racist. Alternatively, hypothesis-guessing could lead to individuals *over*-reporting discrimination in order to please the interviewer, if they assume the negatively-valenced media about China was designed to prompt negative evaluations of Chinese and Asians.⁵⁷ To guard against either of these possibilities, I had respondents

⁵⁶ While there is no way to know the demographics of those who regularly perform tasks of this sort, the biases in this sample—that it is more Democratic and more educated than the general public—may, in many ways, be relatively comparable to those working in admissions offices, as the field of higher education tends to exhibit these same skews (Zipp & Fenwick, 2006).

⁵⁷ This latter threat is a legitimate concern because of the Mechanical Turk platform, where researchers evaluating the respondents after they complete their task and their personal rating then determines whether

evaluate the African-American student immediately following exposure to the ads, hopefully mitigating any sense that this study was specifically about China. However, even if this was not enough, these two forms of potential bias are pushing in opposite directions, potentially cancelling one another out. Moreover, if anything, issues of social desirability and *under-reporting* discrimination for fear of appearing racist would minimize real effects or lead to null effects.

Finally, while the internal validity of the experiment is strong, given that the treatments were actually aired during the course of the 2012 presidential campaign, I only relied on two of them. Results may not generalize to other forms of negatively-valenced media about China, such as ads that do *not* mention the challenge that China poses to the United States economically. Moreover, the treatment videos appear to have changed individuals' mood-states and to have generated anxiety about China (as evidenced in the previous chapter), thus negatively-valenced media about China that doesn't prompt these emotional reactions may have lesser or different effects.

Conclusion

Results from this experiment indicate that negatively-valenced media about China can encourage individuals to discriminate against both Chinese nationals and Asians. They offer strong evidence that when politicians like Obama and Romney campaign about the dangers of foreign countries, there can be important, unintended consequences. Raising anxiety about China may lead to discrimination in America—a country home to an increasingly large number of immigrants from China, as well as a growing number of

the individual's are able to perform subsequent Human Intelligence Tasks. MTurk participations are known to care greatly about how the survey researchers perceive them.

Asian American citizens (Cohn & Caumont, 2016). This experiment lends credence to a recent scholar's comment that "whenever U.S.-Chinese relations get chilly, Chinese Americans get pneumonia" (Lipin, 2014).

With a multitude of Americans engaged in *some* form of evaluation as part of their jobs—whether evaluating interns, prospective employees, people for promotion, contractors to hire, or the like—the tendency to evaluate Chinese and Asians more negatively because of anti-China rhetoric in the political climate is severe. Indeed, over the last five years the number of racially Chinese individuals inaccurately accused of spying for the People's Republic of China has dramatically increased (Perlroth, 2015), including many who work in U.S. government positions (Bhattacharjee, 2015). In 2015, the FBI investigated 53% more intellectual property cases—and the majority of the increase targeted Chinese businesses and individuals (Edwards, 2016). More than half of the prosecutions under the Economic Espionage Act since 2013 have involved Chinese citizens—and the number of indictments has jumped more than 30% in the past year. Yet many of these cases have been "false positives"—accusations against Chinese or Chinese-Americans that are unfounded, suggesting discrimination based on race (Bhattacharjee, 2015; Perlroth, 2015).

Of course, there is the possibility of a real threat from China; politicians campaigning about "standing up to China" may see a real and pressing need to counter China, economically or militarily. However, as one scholar recently contended, a real threat of espionage from China is

An argument for, not against, solid investigation techniques and smart exercise of prosecutorial discretion...the response should be, with the same strength of principle as with other groups, that the handful of people who have violated the

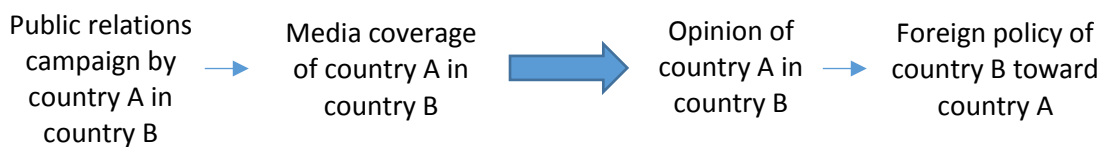
law should not compromise the full citizenship of the millions who are no different than coworkers and neighbors. They deserve due process. The guilt of strangers who happen to be of similar ancestry does not impugn their innocence. Saying otherwise is the essence of racial profiling (F. H. Wu, 2016).

While we thankfully have had not had another case as extreme as the murder of Vincent Chin, many real harms have befallen Americans incorrectly accused of spying for China, targeted because of their nationality and race (McCabe, Roebuck, & Snyder, 2016). The pervasiveness of negatively-valenced media about China and politicians campaigning on an anti-China platforms suggest the very real possibility of growing discrimination against Chinese and Asians in this country.

CHAPTER 6 – EXPANDING THE CASE: OTHER COUNTRIES, TIME PERIODS, AND POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF “PLAYING THE CHINA CARD”

One key contribution of this dissertation is that it unites a disciplinary divide. Communication scholars have focused on how countries influence *what* is reported and *how* their country is reported on by the media. Examples include the seminal studies by Manheim and Albritton about how public relations campaigns affect how much and what type of coverage a country receives in the U.S. media (1984); later studies also include some particularly about China (S. Lee & Hong, 2012; X. Wang & Shoemaker, 2011; J. Zhang & Cameron, 2003). Yet this literature stops short of showing how media valence affects public opinion. Conversely, political scientists have historically ignored the media’s role in forming public opinion, focusing only on how country favorability affects foreign policy attitudes and public policy (Berinsky, 2009; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1990; Page & Bouton, 2008). This dissertation steps into the gap, exploring how media coverage of foreign countries affects broad attitudes toward those countries (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Schema of Existing Scholarship on Media, Opinion toward Foreign Countries, and Policy



In this project, I have shown that the valence with which the media covers China affects American public opinion of China and Chinese people—as well as discrimination toward Chinese and Asians. By filling this gap, this dissertation suggests that public

relations campaigns launched by a country can potentially have important and far-reaching consequences. If a country is successfully able to affect how it is covered in a foreign press, it may be able to affect public opinion, and, in turn, foreign policy preferences. But, the focus here has been narrow: on one country during one particular election season. In this conclusion, I discuss how the media effects documented in this project may or may not generalize to other countries and time periods. I conclude by highlighting the ways in which changes in public opinion about foreign countries may translate into public policy changes.

Generalizing to other countries and time periods

In investigating how media valence affects opinions of foreign countries, I have focused on the case of China and the 2012 pre-electoral presidential context. This choice raises two important questions: (1) would these results hold in other time periods, and (2) in what ways might we expect the relationship between media valence and opinion to be similar or different for countries other than China?

With regard to the first question, one needs only to look at more recent races to see that China bashing remains an integral part of many campaigns. For instance, in the 2014 Senate elections, journalists suggested that because the Democrats were tired of looking soft on ISIS and Ebola, they opted to dial up the China threat, trying to castigate Republicans as un-American for supporting trade with the economic superpower (Saletan, 2014). More recently, 2016 presidential candidate Donald Trump suggested that China was trying to “suck the blood” out of the United States (Hong, 2015) and proposed extremely high tariffs on China (Haberman, 2016). Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton

took a sheet right out of the 2012 playbook—echoing the rhetoric in my experimental treatment—saying that America has to “stand up” to China to make it stop “unfair trade practices that kill U.S. jobs” (Miller, 2015). She even wrote an op-ed piece for *The Portland Press Herald*, calling China out for “underhanded and unfair trade practices,” “abuses,” and “cheating”—all of which she says are “destructive” for American workers and cause the American middle class to “pay the price” (2016).⁵⁸ One commentator to a *New York Times* article captured much of this sentiment in his response to an article “What Donald Trump Gets Pretty Much Right, and Completely Wrong About China,” declaring:

For too long now ... China has been the whipping boy of the world, particularly for the US. One can't go through a week without reading, hearing about China, be it unfair trade practice or any negative reports about that country. The volume gets louder and louder every four years when presidential candidates need to drive their followers into a frenzy to propel themselves up the margin and capture the number of delegate to secure their own political seat in the [White House]. It doesn't matter that as long as the villains are non-Americans, especially if it is China, these future leaders of ours will have no qualms to portrait the imaginary 'villains' as the common enemies just to show that they are wise and brave enough to tell the 'truth'. The problem is, it is not the demagogues who do the demagoguing that worry me, it is us, the people who listen and believe (Irwin, 2016).⁵⁹

In fact, the effects of China bashing have *increasingly* been a focus of the 2016 election, as academics, journalists, and observers have tried to grapple with what factors

⁵⁸ Before the field narrowed substantially, other candidates also offered their two cents on how to be tough on China. Governor Scott Walker called for President Xi's September invitation to the United States to be revoked, Governor Chris Christie promised “cyberwarfare like [China] has never been seen before” (Rauhala, 2015), and Senator Marco Rubio described China as a “danger to our national security,” criticizing Obama for “appeasing” China's leaders—much as Romney had criticized Obama in 2012 (Mullany, 2015; Sanger, 2015).

⁵⁹ This article prompted more than 500 comments within 12 hours of publication, and many of them were racially charged and negatively-valenced toward China, even while simultaneously criticizing Trump. For example, Harry in Michigan declared, “the bottom line is we are in an economic war and we are losing badly. Trumpolini is only stating the obvious...from aspirin to rare earth minerals China has many monopolies and you can't reverse them with mere threats of tariffs...For all we know [his] campaign is financed by the Chinese themselves” (Irwin, 2016).

have led to Trump's overwhelming success. Many are pointing to the "China threat" as part of the the politics of fear and nationalism that are contributing to Trump's dominance. Adam Joyce in St. Louis, another commentator to the above newspaper article declared,

Trump knows his likely supporters are fearful of China, poorly informed, and long for someone to dumb down complex geopolitical issues to a few convenient scapegoats for job loss. Trump gives them that and then some, and they enthusiastically punch ballots (and protestors) for him in droves (Irwin, 2016).

However, even if results likely generalize to other presidential campaign seasons, it's important to consider whether the valence of media about China (or any other country) would have a similar impact on public opinion if it were not part of a campaign. The content analysis in Chapter 3 indicates that there is likely to be much *more* coverage of China—and, particularly, more *negative* coverage—immediately before an election. There also are likely to be more references to China's effect on the United States; for example, how China harms the U.S. economy and jobs, rather than Chinese domestic politics, more broadly. There is certainly a possibility that individuals are more affected by negatively-valenced media about China when they explicitly reference the United States as a competitor, as implied by the Brewer (2006) framing study, discussed earlier. Similarly, effects may be strongest when the topic of the negatively-valenced media is economic, rather than social or political—something untested in this project. From a theoretical perspective, however, there is no reason that media valence would only affect public opinion when focused on certain topics and not others, assuming that individuals pay equal attention to different topics.

The answer to the second question— in what ways might we expect the relationship between media valence and opinion to be similar or different for countries other than China—is more complicated. As discussed in Chapter 1, there is reason to believe that China is a particularly difficult test, given that Americans likely know more and have more stable opinions about China than many other countries. Strong predispositions typically reduce media effects by increasing one’s resistance to disconfirming information (Chong & Druckman, 2007). In framing studies, for example, there is evidence that frames have greater effects on less knowledgeable individuals (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001; Kinder & Sanders, 1990).

Extrapolating from this situation and treating China as a hard test, there is reason to believe that the media should affect American opinion of other countries as well. Effects are likely to be even larger when people know little about a given country and have fewer preconceived notions on which to fall back when forming their assessments. For example, many commentators and country-branding experts point to the “Borat phenomenon,” arguing that because most Americans knew nothing about Kazakhstan prior to the release of the popular film, it became the only image of the place and people they could conjure (Pollak & Babej, 2006; van Ham, 2008). While such major motion pictures about relatively unknown foreign countries remain rare, they nonetheless suggest that media effects may be stronger when people know less.

Yet, some of the factor that make China a “hard test” may also make it unique in ways that affect generalizability. First, at least some of the ways in which China is regularly depicted appear to generate anxiety, as discussed in Chapter 4. Second, much of the coverage likely focuses on how China affects the United States—something that may

not be the case when examining other countries. Third, Americans have many preconceptions about how China affects the United States economically—for example, a majority erroneously assume that China is the largest holder of U.S. debt (rather than Japan) and is the United States’ largest trade partner (rather than Canada) (Guisinger, 2011; Thorson, 2015). Taken together this suggests that even if there were a great deal of negatively-valenced coverage of Japan or Canada—even focused on their effects on the United States’ economy—the resulting change in opinion may still be more limited in part because people don’t realize their relative importance or perceive them as threats in the way that they do China.

The effects of public opinion on public policy

The degree to which China-bashing continues in 2016 raises an important question: What are the effects of American public opinion about China on public policy? For example, Trump recently accused China of “raping” the United States (Appelbaum, 2016). He also delivered a series of China bashing speeches in Nevada in advance of the February caucus, declaring, “The greatest debt in the history of the world is what China has done to us. They’ve taken our jobs, they’ve taken our money, they’ve taken everything. They’ve rebuilt China with our money” (Nash, 2016). Results from this project suggest that stump speeches like these, and the corresponding media coverage, may stand to increase unfavorable opinion of China and the Chinese people. Yet China is Nevada’s second largest trading partner, with exports to China totaling nearly \$600 million. The state also had nearly 200,000 visitors from China in 2014—a 153% increase from 2009 (Nash, 2016)—raising the question of how unfavorable perceptions may affect

these very real bilateral ties and interpersonal interactions.

The 2016 election has also led many to think about the ways in which China may be affecting the rise of right-leaning candidates. Gordon Hanson, an economist and author of *The China Syndrome* writes, “the recipe for populism seems pretty clear: take a surge in manufacturing imports from China and continued automation in the U.S. workplace and add a tepid macroeconomy. The result is a combustible stew sure to sour the stomach of party leaders nationwide” (Edsall, 2016). On the same topic, Jared Bernstein, a senior fellow at the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities declared,

the intersection of inequality driven by real wage/income stagnation and the fact that the folks perceived to have blown the damn economy up not only recovered first, but got government assistance in the form of bailouts to do so. If you’re in the anxious middle and that doesn’t deeply piss you off, you’re an unusually forgiving person...the core theme of Republican establishment lore has been to demonize not unregulated finance or trade or inequality, but ‘the other’—e.g., the immigrant or minority taking your job and claiming unneeded government support (Edsall, 2016).

Related work has focused on how districts hit hardest by trade from China have elected more ideologically extreme leaders (Autor, Dorn, Hanson, & Majlesi, 2016; Che, Lu, Pierce, Schott, & Tao, 2016; Schwartz & Bui, 2016). Implicit in this argument is that trade with China affects American public opinion and thus voting behavior. The authors declare,

Clues for a connection between changes in the U.S. economy and the growing ideological divide in Congress come, fittingly enough, from the politicians themselves. In the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, candidates from the extremes of both parties have singled out China as a principle cause for U.S. economic malaise. China bashing is now a popular pastime as much among liberal Democrats as among Tea Party Republicans...we show this political showmanship [affects elections] (Autor et al., 2016)

While the underlying mechanism in this study is not teased out and there are likely

numerous factors at work, this research raises the very real possibility that negatively-valenced media about China and corresponding changes in public opinion of China can affect elections.

This finding also highlights the limited scope of the dissertation: namely, this project stops short of investigating how public opinion translates into public policy. My research cannot show, for example, that more negative opinions of China lead to more aggressive U.S. foreign policy toward China. For the most part, this caveat is a common limitation of public opinion research. Early public opinion researchers actually took solace in the idea that public opinion *didn't* affect public policy, given initial suppositions that Americans knew and cared little about foreign policy (Holsti, 2009), nonetheless, researchers have recently come to different conclusions.⁶⁰ For example, scholars have suggested that foreign policy attitudes can affect vote choice—though they do not do so in all elections (Aldrich, Sullivan, and Borgida, 1989). Similarly, scholars have increasingly considered how public opinion might constrain elites (Canes-Wrone, 2010; Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000; Sobel, 2001) and might translate into policies (Bartels, 1991; Jacobs & Page, 2005; Soroka & Wlezien, 2009; Stimson, MacKuen, & Erikson, 1995). They have also addressed situations under which opinion may affect or constrain policy.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Scholars have also increasingly argued that even if individuals typically don't know much about politics or foreign policy, they are nonetheless rational because individuals can rely upon elites and informational shortcuts (heuristics) in order to overcome informational limitations. Scholars now largely characterize public opinion on foreign policy as relatively stable and consistent, responding rationally to large-scale events (Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler, & Sharp, 2006; Potter & Baum, 2016).

⁶¹ Increasingly, public opinion scholars who are interested in explaining how public opinion affects public policy have focused more on moderators. Among suggested moderators are: (1) the level of threat, time available to respond, and leaders' beliefs about the value of public opinion (Foyle, 1999); (2) institutional structures, election timing, and differences in salience, coherence, structure, and intensity of citizens'

Ultimately, this dissertation sides with the following adage: “No one believes that public opinion always determines public policy; few believe it never does” (Burstein, 2003). Under some scenarios public opinion likely has little influence, whereas in others it may have a great deal of influence on how politicians behave. Certainly it could be purely situational factors that lead a politician to demur to the public, but it is important to consider what a public—consistently exposed to negative rhetoric about a country, prone to distrusting it, and generally negatively oriented toward it—will choose, if given the option. Public opinion may not always matter, but to the degree that it does, having publics in the two superpowers trust one another more than they currently do appears imperative.

This seems particularly true in this current election season. Drawing upon the research in this project, we can expect that the negatively-valenced media coverage about China that has pervaded the 2016 presidential primary season has taken a negative toll on opinion of China. Yet, concurrently, there are a number of major bilateral priorities that such a downturn in opinion might harm. For example, some have questioned whether constant harping about America losing in trade to China may be turning the tide of opinion—both among the public and the candidates—against Obama’s signature foreign policy legislation, the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement (Harwood, 2016). Others have raised the question of whether “the surge in anti-China sentiment on the campaign trail cast a shadow over the Obama-Xi meeting, and [if] it could have ominous consequences for China’s relationship with the United States after Mr. Obama leaves

attitudes toward particular policies (Canes-Wrone, 2010; Manza & Cook, 2002); (3) costs of responsiveness, and the alignment of special interest groups (Manza & Cook, 2002), and (4) whether the affluent hold the same opinion as the rest of the population (Gilens, 2012).

office” (Landler, 2016). China scholar Minxin Pei has argued, for example: “The Chinese are more worried [than they have been in past electoral cycles] because the anti-China rhetoric is happening not just in a political context but in the context of a deteriorating overall relationship in the last two years” (Landler, 2016).

Additionally, the rise of Trump has caused many to consider the role of authoritarian traits in the electorate. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, negatively-valenced media about China are particularly influential on those with latent authoritarian preferences. This is a large segment of the U.S. public: 19% of Americans are “very high” authoritarians, and another quarter are “high” authoritarians (Taub, 2016). Theories of authoritarian “activation” posit that when individuals with authoritarian traits

perceive that the moral order is falling apart, the country is losing its coherence and cohesiveness, diversity is rising, and our leadership seems (to them) to be suspect or not up to the needs of the house, it is though a button is pushed on their forehead that says ‘in case of moral threat, lock down the borders, kick out those who are different, and punish those who are morally deviant’ (Haidt, 2016).

Essentially, these arguments suggest that bigotry can be “activated”— and that it is precisely rhetoric like “China bashing” that elevates threat and anxiety and focuses on an enemy and a leadership failing to confront our enemy.

The effects of public opinion on interpersonal relations

Public policy is not the only domain of interest, however. Equally important, if not more so, is the effects that negatively-valenced opinion of China appears to be having on relationships between individuals in America. Asian Americans make up 5% of the U.S. population today (*United States Census Bureau*, 2014). Knowing how negatively-valenced media about China affects not only Chinese in America, but Asians more

generally, is crucial. This insight is particularly true given the earlier era of “Japan bashing,” and the violence against and even death of Asian Americans (Morris, 2011; Wu, 2012). As one op-ed about the death of Chinese-American Vincent Chin in Detroit noted recently, that period was a time, “like now, [of] malaise, characterized by high unemployment, a slowing economy, and an Asian country rising to economic prominence” (Wu, 2012).

Suspicion of China appears to be increasingly harming Asian Americans. The Justice Department had to issue new rules in April to give Washington prosecutors greater oversight and control over national security cases following several high-profile allegations against Chinese-Americans for spying turned out to be incorrect (Apuzzo, 2016). Representative Judy Chu, a Democrat from California, declared, “the profiling must end; we cannot tolerate another case of Asian Americans being wrongfully suspected of espionage” (Apuzzo, 2016). More than half of the prosecutions under the Economic Espionage Act since 2013 have involved Chinese citizens—and the number of indictments has jumped more than 30% in the past year (Perlroth, 2015). The arrest of the Chairman of Temple University’s physics department, for example, prompted a longtime federal prosecutor to declare,

If he was Canadian-American or French-American, or he was from the U.K., would this have gotten on the government’s radar? I don’t think so...it’s influenced by the politics of the time (Apuzzo, 2015).

In China, the nationalistic *Global Times* has argued that such cases are part of the “China-U.S. information war,” declaring that as it continues, “there may be more Chinese framed as spies and jailed in the United States” (“Should We Show Gratitude or Sympathy to Su Bin?,” 2016). While hopefully far-fetched, there appears to be a sizable

minority of the public who agree with the importance of restricting “enemies” from the country—a role into which political rhetoric is increasingly relegating Chinese and Chinese-Americans (although lately Mexicans and Muslims have occupied that negative role). Most notably, a third of Trump’s supporters believe that Japanese internment during World War II was a good idea (Vavreck, 2016).

There is also a growing body of evidence about policies being disproportionately enacted against Chinese investors and businesses. For example, for the third year in a row, China has accounted for the most notices in the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), an inter-agency committee in the federal government used to oversee whether foreign direct investment in the United States comports with national security concerns (Hanemann & Rosen, 2016). Numerous deals have been blocked, including ones which most journalists believe are solely Chinese companies—unrelated to the government—pursuing profits (Hanemann & Rosen, 2016; Wong, 2016). One recently declared,

As growth slows at home, more and more Chinese companies are looking to do deals in the United States. And they are increasingly running smack into the American national security apparatus. Such scrutiny will have implications for United States and China relations, as well as for mergers and acquisitions more broadly... This will be a debate that will primarily be about China (Solomon, 2016).

In line with the arguments in this dissertation, the *Beijing Youth Daily*, the official newspaper of the Communist Youth League committee in Beijing, recently contended that the 2016 presidential election may be a key factor in the discrimination they perceive against China’s telecom company, ZTE (Pengfei, 2016). *Global Times* has wondered the same of the CFIUS investigation into Syngenta in recent weeks, declaring that “in

addition to the United States' suspicions about China, [election-related] China bashing has always served U.S. politicians well" ("U.S. Senators Put Pressure to Examine ChemChina's Acquisition of Syngenta," 2016). Ultimately, while many of these investigations and restrictions may be entirely legitimate on the grounds of national security, it seems remarkably likely—if not plausible—that Chinese businesses are subjected to greater scrutiny because of the perceived threat emanating from China.

Outside of the specific effects documented in this project with regard to Chinese and Asians, this dissertation suggests the importance of investigating how politicians harping on a particular foreign country might affect the public from that country or those who are racially similar. For example, the 2016 presidential campaign has focused a great deal on Mexico, with comments ranging from Trump's candidacy announcement where he lampooned Mexicans ("They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists"; M. Y. H. Lee, 2015) to anti-NAFTA statements by both candidates (Kane, 2016; Montanaro, 2015) to discussions of building a wall along the Mexican border (Rappeport & Richtel, 2016). Results in my study suggest that this type of focus on Mexico may lead to discrimination against Mexicans—and likely against other Hispanics and Latin-Americans. This is particularly consequential as the two parties discuss how to reform immigration and create policies about deporting illegal migrants. Evidence here indicates that this type of rhetoric may cause others—including legal migrants or American citizens of Mexican or Latino heritage—to be targeted, harassed, and discriminated against.

The importance of favorability of foreign countries and peoples

Beyond the potential effects on public policy and interpersonal relations, country favorability is interesting and important for its own sake. Countries spend millions of dollars both to boost and monitor their favorability. There also appear to be important downstream consequences to public opinion of foreign countries, offering credence to the notion that this governmental money might be spent on a useful end goal. When a country is more popular, individuals are more likely to evaluate the goods and products from that country favorably and to purchase those goods, suggesting that favorability can have effects on trade relations and gross domestic product (Amine et al., 2005; Klein et al., 1998). Favorability also affects foreign policy attitudes. When individuals have positive attitudes toward a country, they are more likely to support that country's policies (Page & Bouton, 2008). Negative opinions are related to supporting more aggressive policies toward that country (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1990). Attitudes toward *people* have similar effects; when individuals have unfavorable opinions of the citizens in a country, they are more likely to support aggressive military action against it (Sides & Gross, forthcoming). Conversely, positive opinions of a country may lead to more willingness to provide assistance and intervene on their behalf (Berinsky, 2009).

Effects on the Sino-U.S. relationship

Finally, the policy community is also very concerned that anti-China rhetoric during our elections is causing *Chinese* to have more negative views of the bilateral relationship (Dvoskin & Zhao, 2012). For example, the American primaries have attracted a great deal of attention in China, and many netizens criticize the fact that China

is a regular scapegoat (Guo, 2016). Prominent China scholars have bemoaned the “mutual strategic distrust” evident in Chinese and American publics, citing it as the greatest threat to the bilateral relationship—arguably the most important bilateral relationship in the world (Lieberthal & Wang, 2012).

Negative rhetoric about China may also be creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, wherein condemning China for behaving aggressively leads it to become more so, because the option for a “peaceful rise” is blocked by hostile publics (Zimmerman, 2014). A growing discourse about “punishing China” may be creating politicians who are inclined toward a new-era containment strategy in Asia—something many international relations scholars believe would be a “tragedy” in great power politics (Blackwell & Tellis, 2015; Chen, 2015). The growth in articles describing China as “assertive” and “aggressive” in American media—despite the fact that its international behavior has not fundamentally changed—may be narrowing the option-set available to both American and Chinese politicians (Johnston, 2013):

Language can affect internal and public foreign policy debates. There is a long-standing and rich literature on the role of the media in agenda-setting. What does agenda-setting mean in concrete terms? It means focusing attention on particular narratives, excluding others, and narrowing discourse. In the agenda-setting literature, it refers to the power of information entrepreneurs to tell people what to think about’ and ‘how to think about it.’ It can make or take away spaces for alternative descriptive and causal arguments, and thus the space for debates about effective policy. The prevailing description of the problem narrows acceptable options...In security dilemmas, discourses about Self and Other tend to simplify and to polarize as attribution errors multiply and ingroup-outgroup differentiation intensifies. The newly assertive China meme and the problematic analysis on which it is based suggest that the nature of the media-blogsphere interaction may become an important factor in explaining the speed and intensity of future security dilemma dynamics between states, including those between the United States and China (Johnston, 2013).

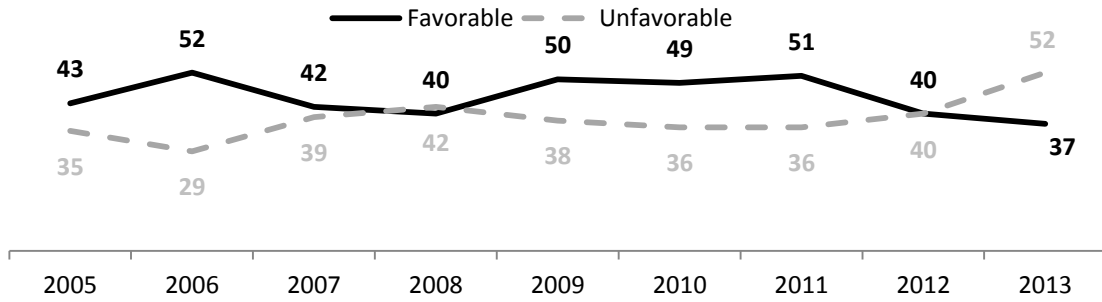
This viewpoint is closely related to the argument that China and the United States

risk falling into a Thucydides trap. As Thucydides argued more than 2,400 years ago, “It was the rise of Athens, and the fear that this inspired in Sparta, that made war inevitable” (G. Allison, 2015). This argument suggests that negatively-valenced media about China and their effect on attitudes toward China may have very real consequences for foreign policy toward China, even increasing the risk of Sino-U.S. war. Today, Sparta is confined to the dustbin of history following centuries of war. Whether China and the United States follow in the steps of their Hellenic predecessors is yet to be determined, but may be influenced, at least in part, by how the American media portrays the rise of the world’s next superpower.

APPENDIX I – AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION OF CHINA OVER TIME

Appendix Figure 1. Unfavorable Opinions of China Have Increased around Presidential Elections

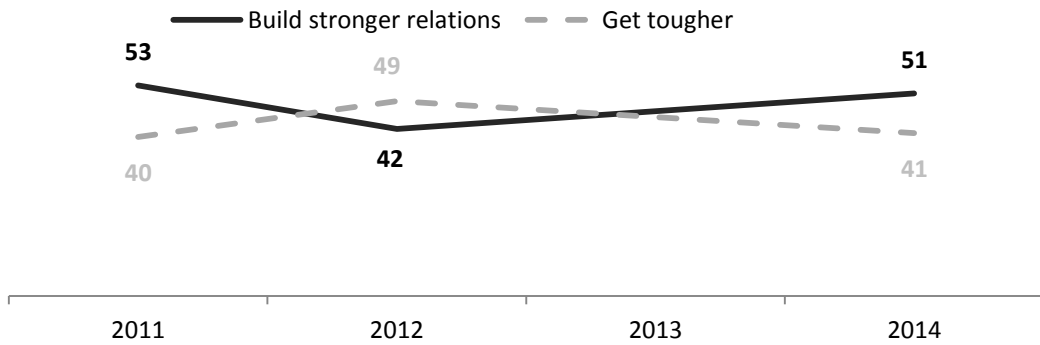
Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of China. [%]



Source: Pew Research Center surveys, 2005-2013

Appendix Figure 2. Americans Favored Getting Tougher on China around 2012 Presidential Election

In economic relations with China, percent who say it is more important to... [%]



Source: Pew Research Center surveys, 2011-2014

APPENDIX II – MEDIA CODING WORKSHEET FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

Show title: _____

Network: _____

Air date: _____

Valence (select one)

01 Positive

00 Negative

-01 Neutral

Campaign/candidate (check if referenced; all applicable)

Romney

Obama

1st debate

2nd debate

3rd debate

Vice presidential debate

Topic

01-27 Economy

01 Currency manipulation

02 Cheating

03 Auto industry

04 Job loss (in America)

05 Factories closing

06 Trade war / trade sanctions

07 World Trade Organization

08 Investment

09 Cheap labor / wages

10 Tax loopholes / offshore investment

11 Made in China / assembled in China

12 Trade imbalance

13 Borrowing from the Bank of China / debt / deficit

14 Rise of China / second-largest economy

15 Pressure to play fair

16 Tough on / crack down on

17 Stealing (jobs, opportunities)

18 Outsourcing / outsourcer in chief / pioneer of outsourcing

19 Communism / Red China

20 Counterfeit goods

21 Competitor / adversary / buying things in our country

22 Flooding the market with cheap goods / dumping

23 Slowing growth / demand falling

24 Large market / lots of demand

- 25 General reference to arguing/debating about China's economy
- 26 Innovation
- 27 Insourcing (to America) / exports to China rising

30-49 Politics and military

- 30 South China Sea / aggressive toward neighbors
- 31 Chen Guangcheng (human rights)
- 32 United Nations / Security Council votes
- 33 Xi Jinping / new CCP leadership
- 34 Ivory poaching / smuggling
- 35 Senkaku / Diaoyu islands
- 36 Political corruption / anti-corruption drive
- 37 Ambassador / Huntsman
- 38 Navy / Army / weapons
- 39 Investment in weapons systems / missiles / drones
- 40 Xinjiang / terrorism
- 41 Taiwan
- 42 Dalai Lama / Tibet
- 43 East China Sea
- 44 International organizations (not the UN) / pivot to Asia
- 45 Authoritarian / dictatorship / communist
- 46 Cyber attacks / hacks
- 47 North Korea
- 48 Construction
- 49 Historic relations (Clinton scandal, Nixon opening)

50-59 Social and societal issues

- 50 Press and internet freedom / censorship
- 51 Google and Baidu
- 52 Gender imbalance / female infanticide / adoption
- 53 Chinese students studying abroad
- 54 Trying to have children in America for citizenship
- 55 Elementary school knifing incident
- 56 Human rights
- 57 People (generally)
- 58 One-child policy
- 59 Education

60-65 Environment and food safety

- 60 Typhoon Haiyan
- 61 Smog / pollution
- 62 Polluted food / lead in food
- 63 Acid rain
- 64 Carbon emissions / emission standards
- 65 Green energy

APPENDIX III – LIST OF TELEVISION PROGRAMS IN ISCAP 2012

Any local news program	Chris Matthews Show
ABC World News with Diane Sawyer	The Rachel Maddow Show
Today Show	America Live with Megyn Kelly
NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams	Meet the Press
Huckabee	MSNBC Live
Good Morning America	Special Report with Bret Baier
Person of Interest	Rock Center with Brian Williams
CBS This Morning	CBS Sunday Morning
CNN Newsroom	The Ed Show
Jimmy Kimmel Live	20/20
America This Morning	Tavis Smiley
The Daily Show with Jon Stewart	The Fox Report with Shepard Smith
America's Newsroom	CBS Evening News with Scott Pelley
60 Minutes	This Week with George Stephanopoulos
The Late Show with David Letterman	Dateline NBC
The O'Reilly Factor	The View
ABC News: Nightline	On The Record with Greta Van Susteren
The Talk	The Colbert Report
The Ellen DeGeneres Show	The Five
Face the Nation	Anderson Cooper 360
Frontline	Saturday Night Live
Hannity	The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson

APPENDIX IV – ISCAP 2012 SAMPLE COMPOSITION VERSUS CPS 2012

Appendix Table 4.1. Sample Representativeness: Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of Samples in the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the ISCAP 2012 Panel Survey, Unweighted and Weighted

	CPS	ISCAP 2012			
	October 2012	Pre-election		Post-election	
	%	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
		%	%	%	%
Sex					
Male	48.3	47.1	48.0	46.9	47.9
Female	51.7 ^a	52.9 ^b	52.0	53.1 ^c	52.1
Age					
18-24	12.8	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.7
25-44	34.6	38.0	39.4	37.4	39.9
45-64	34.9	37.1	38.0	37.0	37.7
65+	17.7	23.1	23.8	23.8	20.7
Race/ethnicity					
White non-Hispanic	66.5	70.1	67.5	70.3	67.6
Black non-Hispanic	11.5	13.4	11.3	13.1	11.3
Hispanic	14.8	9.8	13.9	9.8	13.9
Other	7.3	6.8	7.2	6.8	7.2
Education					
High school or less	43.2	41.3	41.5	41.7	41.4
Some college/Associates	28.6	23.5	26.9	23.3	26.9
Bachelor's degree	18.4	20.9	19.0	20.8	19.0
Postgraduate degree	8.4	14.3	12.6	14.3	12.8
Household income					
Less than \$25K	18.7	19.9	22.6	19.9	22.2
\$25K-49,999	20.7	26.4	25.4	26.5	25.8
\$50K-74,999	16.1	21.9	21.8	21.7	21.3
\$75K-99,999	11.3	15.4	14.9	15.4	14.9
\$100K or more	25.9	16.5	15.4	16.6	15.8

^a All CPS estimates provided have N=234,719

^b All pre-election estimates provided have N=2,606

^c All post-election estimates provided have N=2,471

Note: GfK uses address-based sampling to recruit a random sample of Americans into their online panel. Panel demographic post-stratification adjustments were made using the October 2012 Current Population Survey to ensure that the panel is as representative as possible across seven factors: gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, census region, and metropolitan area. Separate weights were calculated for each of the two waves. The post-election wave weights are used in the robustness tables in Appendix V. They range from a minimum of 0.19 to a maximum of 3.72 (they have a mean of 1 and a standard deviation of 0.66) and have a design effect of 1.4.

APPENDIX V – ROBUSTNESS TABLES FOR CHAPTER 3

Appendix Table 5.1. Explaining Change in Perceived High Threat from China (Binary) Using Media Exposure and Valence - Weighted

	Model 1	Model 2
Wave	-0.08 (0.051)	-0.105# (0.078)
Percent of <u>negative</u> China references		0.623*** (0.161)
Percent of <u>positive</u> China references		0.896** (0.328)
Percent of <u>neutral</u> China references		0.062 (0.098)
Constant	0.586*** (0.383)	0.637** (0.465)
Pseudo-R ²	0.000	0.009
N	2,471	2,234

Note: Results shown are from a fixed effects logistic regression model using two points in time: pre-election and post-election. The dependent variable is a binary variable where those who say China is primarily a threat to jobs and security are coded as 1 and those who said otherwise are coded as 0. Robust standard errors are in parentheses; post-stratification weights are employed. Significance values are indicated with # p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.

Appendix Table 5.2 Explaining Change in Perceived China Threat (Three-Part Change Scale) Using Media Exposure and Valence - Weighted

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Change in percent of <u>negative</u> China references	-0.016 (0.173)	-0.003 (0.177)	-0.107 (1.499)
Change in percent of <u>positive</u> China references	-0.102 (0.339)	-0.135 (0.350)	-0.411 (1.384)
Change in percent of <u>neutral</u> China references	-0.198# (0.122)	-0.199# (0.122)	-0.102 (0.428)
Change in <u>count</u> of China references		-0.001 (0.002)	
Saw any pre-election China related references			0.041 (0.116)
Saw any pre-election references x change in percent <u>negative</u>			0.117 (1.510)
Saw any pre-election references x change in percent <u>positive</u>			0.344 (1.431)
Saw any pre-election references x change in percent <u>neutral</u>			-0.079 (0.450)
Cut 1	-0.486*** (0.059)	-0.476*** (0.064)	-0.462*** (0.093)
Cut 2	1.391*** (0.071)	1.40*** (0.074)	1.416*** (0.099)
Pseudo-R ²	0.001	0.002	0.003
N	2,033	2,033	2,033

Note: Results shown are from an ordered logistic regression. The dependent variable is a three-point variable where -1 is those whose perceived threat from China decreased from pre- to post-election, 0 is those who had no change, and 1 is those whose threat perception increased. The key independent variables are difference scores, where the percent of positive/negative/neutral references at Wave 2 are subtracted from Wave 1, and positive scores represent an increase over time and negative ones a decrease over time. Standard errors are in parentheses and post-stratification weights are employed. Significance values are indicated with # p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.

Appendix Table 5.3. Explaining Change in Perceived China Threat (Three-Part Change Scale) Using Media Exposure and Valence Controlling for Pre-Election Attitude - Weighted

	Model 1	Model 2
Time 1 (7-pt) Perceived Threat from China	-0.375*** (0.026)	-0.403*** (0.030)
Change in percent of <u>negative</u> China references		-0.049 (0.190)
Change in percent of <u>positive</u> China references		0.069 (0.419)
Change in percent of <u>neutral</u> China references		-0.326* (0.136)
Cut 1	-2.83*** (0.162)	-2.90*** (0.181)
Cut 2	-0.783*** (0.157)	-0.849*** (0.173)
Pseudo-R ²	0.051	0.059
N	1,901	1,605

Note: Results shown are from an ordered logistic regression. The dependent variable is a three-point variable where -1 is those whose perceived threat from China decreased from pre- to post-election, 0 is those who had no change, and 1 is those whose threat perception increased. The key independent variables are difference scores, where the percent of positive/negative/neutral references at Wave 2 are subtracted from Wave 1, so positive scores represent a decrease over time and negative ones an increase over time. Only those with a substantive pre-election opinion are included. Standard errors are in parentheses and post-stratification weights are included. Significance values are indicated with # p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.

APPENDIX VI – EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN PROTOCOL

Note: throughout this protocol, everything in italics is a note to readers and was not presented to the survey respondent. Everything not in italics was shown to the respondents.

Thank you for agreeing to take this survey. Please note that participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. If at any time you would like to end the survey, please do so. As part of this survey, you will be shown a short advertisement and asked a series of questions about education and other opinions you may have. If you have any questions, please email the researcher at lsilver@asc.upenn.edu.

Please note that following the study, you will be provided with a code that you must enter on Amazon's Mechanical Turk in order to receive payment.

Please enter your Amazon Mechanical Turk ID [_____]

Pretest demographics

Are you a

- Male
- Female

Do you consider yourself

- White
- Black or African American
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Other (please specify) [_____]

Are you

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, mark the previous grade or highest degree received.

- Less than high school
- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate
- Some college credit, but no degree
- College graduate
- Graduate degree

Are you currently

- Employed
- Out of work and looking for work
- Out of work but not currently looking for work
- A student
- Retired
- Unable to work
- Homemaker
- Other

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Another party (please specify) [_____]

[If “*Republican*”] Would you call yourself a

- Strong Republican
- Not very strong Republican

[If “*Democrat*”] Would you call yourself a

- Strong Democrat
- Not very strong Democrat

[If “*Independent/Another party*”] Do you think of yourself as closer to the

- Republican Party
- Democrat Party
- Neither of these

Who did you vote for in the 2012 presidential election?

- Mitt Romney
- Barack Obama
- I did not vote
- Other (please specify) [_____]

Authoritarianism

Although there are a number of qualities that people feel that children should have, every person thinks that some are more important than others. Please choose which of the following traits you find most desirable.

- Independence
- Respect for elders

And which of these traits do you find more desirable?

- Curiosity

Good manners

And which of these traits do you find more desirable?

Obedience

Self-reliance

And finally, which of these traits do you find more desirable?

Considerate

Well-behaved

Social dominance orientation

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Some groups of people are simply inferior to others.

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally.

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Treatment videos – negatively-valenced coverage of China

Individuals were assigned either a treatment or a control video aired by the candidate who they voted for in 2012, using self-reported vote choice in the pre-test. If they did not vote or voted for a

third-party candidate, they were randomly assigned a treatment or control video from the candidate of the party with which they identified with or leaned. If they were true independents and did not vote in 2012, they were randomly assigned.

Now you're going to be shown a short (30 second) video. Please pay close attention, as there will be some questions about it later.

Treatment – Obama campaign (“The Cheaters”)
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MI4YOICmuA]

Mitt Romney: “It’s time to stand up to the cheaters and make sure we protect jobs for the American people”

Voice over: “Mitt Romney- tough on China? Romney’s companies were called pioneers in shipping US manufacturing jobs overseas. He invested in firms that specialized in relocating jobs to low wage countries, like China. Even today part of Romney’s fortune is invested in China. Romney has never stood up to China. All he’s done is send them our jobs”

Barack Obama: “I’m Barack Obama and I approved this message”

Treatment – Romney campaign (“Stand up to China”)
[<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUhKRV4Tq8A>]

Voice over: “Fewer Americans are working today than when President Obama took office. It doesn’t have to be this way, if Obama would stand up to China. China is stealing American ideas and technology, everything from computers to fighter jets. Seven times Obama could have taken action, seven times he said no. His policies cost us two million jobs. America had years to stand up to China. We can’t afford four more”

Mitt Romney: “I’m Mitt Romney and I approved this message”

Control – Obama campaign (“Decision”)
[<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPrFp5VhdnU>]

Barack Obama: “I’m Barack Obama and I approved this message”

Woman 1: “I think Mitt Romney’s really out of touch with the average woman’s health issues”

Woman 2: “This is not the 1950s, contraception is so important to women, it’s about a woman being able to make decisions”

Woman 1: “I don’t remember anyone as extreme as Romney”

Mitt Romney: “I’d cut off funding to Planned Parenthood”

Woman 2: “I don’t think Mitt Romney can even understand the mindset of someone who has to go to Planned Parenthood”

Mitt Romney: “Planned Parenthood, gonna get rid of that”

Woman 1: “I think Mitt Romney would definitely drag us back”

Control – Romney campaign (“Humanity”)
[<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPfRbp2zycc>]

Jane C. Edmonds, former Mitt Romney cabinet member: “I was just personally struck by his humanity”

Beth Lindstrom, former Mitt Romney cabinet member “He said, we need to take care of those who can’t take care of themselves, single mothers or women who are trying to get back to work. He is very very sensitive”

Ellen Roy Herzfelder, former Mitt Romney cabinet member: “He totally gets working women, especially women who, like myself, had two young kids. I needed flexibility”

Beth Lindstrom: “It’s so wonderful to have someone who you respect and work for that understands how important family is”

Mitt Romney: “I’m Mitt Romney and I approved this message”

Post-test

Now I’m going to ask you to participate in a role-playing situation. Pretend you are an admissions officer at an elite university. I am going to show you a series of profiles of students applying to your school. Please read them carefully and evaluate their quality, and whether or not you think they should be admitted to the school.

Each individual now sees six profiles. The profile content is presented in the same order depicted below, though the race and nationality of the candidate presented with each of the profiles varies in a Latin Square designed discussed in Chapter 5.


Profile #1

Use the slider below to indicate the **overall quality of the applicant**, from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent).

Very poor Excellent

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Name: Darius White
Nationality: American
GPA: 3.82
Intended major: Business
Activities: Darius is the treasurer of his senior class and has served on student government for all four years of high school. He is also an active member of his school’s debate team and co-president of the math team.



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Do you think Darius should be admitted?

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Probably yes
- Definitely yes

Profile #2

Use the slider below to indicate the **overall quality of the applicant**, from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent).

Very poor Excellent

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Name: Vince Xu
Nationality: American
GPA: 3.91
Intended major: Environmental Studies
Activities: Vince is the captain of his high school's varsity lacrosse team. He is also the president of the school's Habitat for Humanity club and an active volunteer with the organization.



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Do you think Vince should be admitted?

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Probably yes
- Definitely yes


Profile #3

Use the slider below to indicate the **overall quality of the applicant**, from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent).

Very poor Excellent

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Name: Gregory Walsh
Nationality: American
GPA: 3.81
Intended major: Political Science
Activities: Gregory is a member of his high school's Model United Nations and Model Congress teams. He is also president of his school's debate team and a member of the National Honor Society.



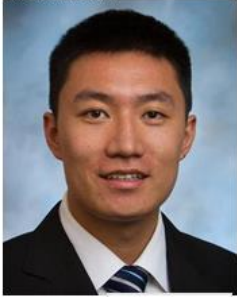
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Do you think Gregory should be admitted?

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Probably yes
- Definitely yes

Profile #4

Use the slider below to indicate the **overall quality of the applicant**, from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent).


		Very poor				Excellent						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p>Name: Yen Wei Shih Nationality: Chinese GPA: 3.84 Intended major: Journalism Activities: Yen is the Editor-in-Chief of his high school's newspaper and has had one of his op-eds published on Huffington Post's website. He is also a member of his school's tennis team.</p> 												

Do you think Yen should be admitted?

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Probably yes
- Definitely yes

Profile #5

Use the slider below to indicate the **overall quality of the applicant**, from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent).

		Very poor				Excellent						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p>Name: Jeffrey Chang Nationality: Chinese GPA: 3.89 Intended major: Biology Activities: Jeffrey is the founder and president of his school's first environmental club. Under his leadership, the school began a recycling program. He is also a member of the Future Business Leaders club.</p> 												

Do you think Jeffrey should be admitted?

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Probably yes
- Definitely yes


Profile #6

Use the slider below to indicate the **overall quality of the applicant**, from 0 (very poor) to 10 (excellent).

Very poor Excellent

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Name: Lucas Santos
Nationality: Brazilian
GPA: 3.85
Intended major: English
Activities: Lucas plays the clarinet in his high school orchestra and band and is the winner of the 2013 National Clarinet Association's Most Talented award. He is also the president and co-founder of a photography club at his high school.



Do you think Lucas should be admitted?

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Probably yes
- Definitely yes

Admissions officers routinely have to make tough decisions, choosing between very strong candidates. Thinking back on the six profiles that you evaluated, please rank the students in order, from the one you would most like to admit (1) to the one you would least like to admit (6).

The respondent will then drag the small profile pictures—which are presented in a random order—into their preferred order.

Please take a moment to explain why you placed the students in that order. What types of things were you considering? *[OPEN END]*

Country favorability

Now I'm going to ask you your opinions about a few foreign countries. Please tell me whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following countries. [*randomly ordered*]

India

Very unfavorable Very favorable
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Japan

Very unfavorable Very favorable
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

China

Very unfavorable Very favorable
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Brazil

Very unfavorable Very favorable
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

People favorability

Now I'd like to ask you about the citizens who live in those countries. Please tell me whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following people. [*randomly ordered*]

Indians

Very unfavorable Very favorable
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Japanese

Very unfavorable Very favorable
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Chinese

Very unfavorable Very favorable
-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Brazilians

Very unfavorable

Very favorable

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Limiting Asian Americans

Do you support taking into account whether someone is Asian American when deciding whether to admit them?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

Admissions officers at universities should try and limit the number of Asian American students they admit each year.

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

If Asian American students are making up a large percentage of a university's class, steps should be taken to limit the number admitted in order to ensure campus diversity.

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

Limiting foreigners

Do you support a policy to limit the number of Asians who are not American citizens who can attend universities in the United States?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

I think it's important that American universities primarily admit Americans, not foreigners.

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support

- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

There should be fewer Chinese students admitted to U.S. colleges

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

It is bad for the United States when Chinese come here for their college education.

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

Thinking back to the ad you saw earlier, to what degree did it make you feel the following emotions? *[sliders from not at all (1) to a great deal (5)]*

Anxiety

Happy

Sad

Angry

Who sponsored the ad you saw earlier?

- Barack Obama
- Mitt Romney
- Hillary Clinton
- John McCain

In your opinion, how much of a threat are each of the following countries to the United States, if at all? *[sliders from not a threat (0) to a very large threat (10)]*

Iran

India

China

Russia

There are different views about China. Some people see China as more of an opportunity for new markets and economic investment, while others see it as a threat to our jobs and security. Still others are somewhere in between. Which view is closer to your own? *[sliders from China is more*

of a terrific opportunity for new markets and investment (1) to China is strictly a threat to U.S. jobs and security (7)]

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I think that China's rise will negatively affect ordinary Americans.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Do you think China's power and influence is a threat to the United States, or not?

- China is a threat to the United States
- China is not a threat to the United States

[IF "THREAT"] Is China a very major threat, a somewhat major threat, a somewhat minor threat, or a very minor threat to the United States?

- A very major threat
- A somewhat major threat
- A somewhat minor threat
- A very minor threat

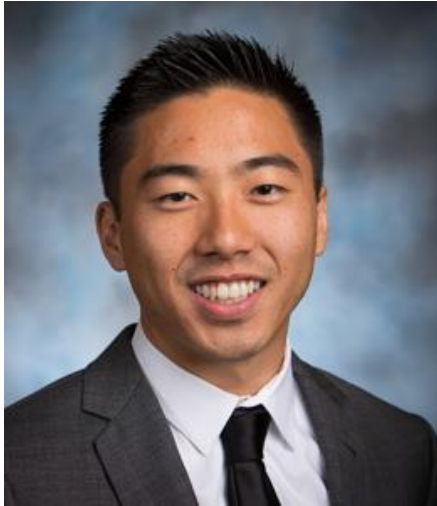
Finally, thinking once again about the ad you saw earlier, please indicate the degree to which the following statement is true.

I clearly heard all of the advertisement.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

APPENDIX VII – EXPERIMENTAL PRETESTS

The following photos were pretested in September 2014 on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to 75 participants. Each was given the following prompt: “*We are interested in learning more about what makes a person’s headshot attractive to others. Because attraction is very subjective, there is no right or wrong answer. Please look at the following photos and rate how attractive you find each person using the scale provided.*” Then, using a scale ranging from 0 (not attractive at all) to 10 (extremely attractive), they rated a total of 16 photos—eight Asians and eight Caucasians. I selected the four photos that had the most similar average ratings. These are presented below with their ratings:



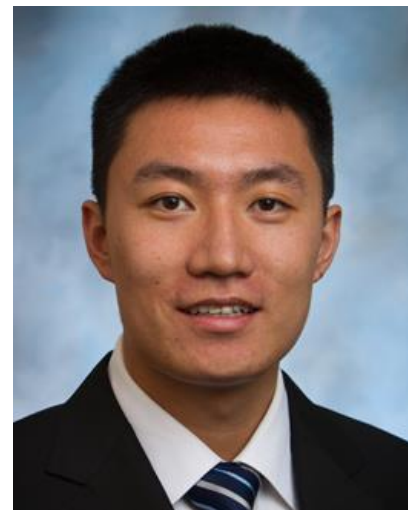
Mean: 5 / Median: 5
Mode: 6 / Std. dev.: 2.2



Mean: 4.9 / Median: 5
Mode: 5 / Std. dev.: 2.3



Mean: 4.6 / Median: 5
Mode: 5 / Std. dev.: 2.5



Mean: 4.5 / Median: 5
Mode: 5 / Std. dev.: 2.3

In addition to photos, applicant profiles were also pretested in September 2014 on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. A different 75 individuals were given the following prompt: *"We are interested in learning more about what makes a person a successful applicant to university. This is very subjective and there is no right or wrong answer. Please look at the following short paragraphs about an applicant named John and rate how qualified you find each one of them using the scale provided."* Then, using a scale ranging from 0 (not at all qualified) to 10 (extremely qualified), they rated 10 profiles. I selected the four profiles that had the most similar average ratings. Below are the four profiles that I selected and their respective ratings;

GPA: 3.91

Intended major: Environmental Studies

Activities: John is the captain of his high school's varsity lacrosse team. He is also the president of the school's Habitat for Humanity club and an active volunteer with the organization.

Mean: 8.3 / Median: 9 / Mode: 10 / Std. dev: 1.7

GPA: 3.81

Intended major: Political Science

Activities: John is a member of his high school's Model United Nations and Model Congress teams. He is also president of his school's debate team and a member of the National Honor Society.

Mean: 8.3 / Median: 9 / Mode: 9 / Std. dev: 1.8

GPA: 3.84

Intended major: Journalism

Activities: John is the Editor-in-Chief of his high school's newspaper and has had one of his op-eds published on Huffington Post's website. He is also a member of his school's tennis team.

Mean: 8.2 / Median: 9 / Mode: 9 / Std. dev: 1.8

GPA: 3.89

Intended major: Biology

Activities: John is the founder and president of his school's first environmental club. Under his leadership, the school began a recycling program. He is also a member of the Future Business Leaders club.

Mean: 8.2 / Median: 8 / Mode: 8 / Std. dev: 1.6

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