Definition, Equivocation, Accumulation, and Anticipation

American Media's Ideological Reading of China's Olympic Games

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To construct and display itself to its own members and to an external audience, a culture or nation employs many types of texts—legible events or objects—including museums, historic homes and districts, rituals and ceremonies, architecture, shrines, sports events, and artistic performances. Such texts are purposefully used as symbolic resources by the community, engaging the past to forge an image that is "profoundly constitutive of identity, community, and moral vision" (Phillips 2004, 90).

Nowhere is the symbolic function of cultural display more evident than at the Olympic Games. Host nations use the Games "to emphasize [their] claims to having a leading status, mission, and destiny in the world international order and world history" (Roche 2000, 10). Because the Olympics provides the sponsoring country with the opportunity to highlight its achievements to the world (Beck and Bosshart 2003), the Games act as a "potent cultural resource with real implications for international relations and the domestic interest of nation states" (Polumbaum 2003, 57).

The 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing provide an extraordinary opportunity for China to display its culture, ideology, and values to a global audience. China has defined its objectives for sponsoring the Games as being to create "a New Beijing" and to host "a Green Olympics, a High-Tech Olympics, a People's Olympics" (Kolatch 2006). The official theme

of the Olympic Games, "One World, One Dream," suggests that China also seeks to position itself as a member of the global community, where it can create a "bright future with the rest of the world" ("One World" 2007). China "considers the Olympics to be modern China's coming-out party to the rest of the world" (Yardley 2005a, 4), and by "taking on the Olympics, China committed itself to demonstrating that it is a world-class power." Its primary objective now is "to impress the world, by whatever means necessary" (Lubow 2006, 68).

China's capacity to accomplish its objectives in hosting the Olympic Games is not, however, entirely under its control. The construction and presentation of its activities in advance of the Olympics is mitigated by media coverage, the primary means by which cultural display is disseminated, particularly to foreigners. The media invite audiences "to understand the world in certain ways, but not in others" (O'Connor and Downing 1995, 16) by framing information to *"select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item proposed" (Entman 1993, 52). As they reinforce, transform, diminish, or ignore the messages China seeks to communicate about itself to the world, then, the media offer "preferred social, cultural, political, and economic meanings" (Danner and Walsh 1999, 64) that easily can become hegemonic in their "symbolic power to map or classify the world for others" (Hall 1988, 44).

In this chapter, we explore the preferred meaning that is being advanced by elite American media concerning China's preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games. To this end, we employ ideological analysis, which focuses on patterns of beliefs that determine a group's interpretations of some aspect(s) of the world and that reflect a group's "fundamental social, economic, political or cultural interests" (van Dijk 1998, 69). As critics make visible the dominant ideology embedded in a particular discursive construction, they are able to discover its preferred reading, what it asks audiences to believe or understand, the arguments it makes, and the ways of seeing it commends. Equally important, an ideological analysis can reveal what a discursive construction does not want audiences to think about or the ways of seeing it asks audiences to avoid (Foss 2004).

The data for our analysis are the eighty-four articles concerning China's preparation for the 2008 Olympics that appeared in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* between January 2003, and May

2007. We selected these newspapers as our data because both are widely distributed national newspapers, which means that the issues deemed newsworthy by these newspapers often set the agenda for other Western media outlets, including television, radio, and other newspapers (Dearing and Rogers 1996). Both are highly respected: the *New York Times* is considered the "principal newspaper of record in the United States" (Merrill 1983, 310), and the *Wall Street Journal* is viewed as a leading source of business and financial news in the United States. Because they "provide a site and forum for elite discourse, and produce policy and intellectual discourse for elite consumption" (Lee 2002, 345), they constitute elite American media that are likely to be highly influential in the construction of a hegemonic ideology concerning China (Lee 2002).

An understanding of the ideology behind the discursive construction of China by elite American media is important because of the potential for far-reaching consequences of such a construction. Informed publics often adopt elite cues in the news and utilize those cues to structure their perceptions about specific issues (Zaller 1992). The particular frame used to construct media coverage will affect, for example, whether China achieves its objectives of impressing the world with the Games and positioning itself as a legitimate member of the global community. In addition, the narrative constructed by the media will affect the perceptions of China by Americans and the larger global community, including the nature of outsiders' interactions with the Chinese, their views of Chinese products, and their definitions of themselves vis-à-vis the Chinese.

What we suggest in this chapter is that the elite American media use China's cultural displays in advance of the Olympic Games to construct four ideological spaces—those of definition, equivocation, accumulation, and anticipation. Each of these spaces allows the media to set up a tension between two options concerning a major exigence, something the media identify as "waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (Bitzer 1968, 6); according to the media construction, each exigence remains unresolved in the space created. We turn now to an explication of each space, followed by a discussion of the reassurance function that we argue these spaces perform for media consumers.

Space of Definition

A major space that is being created in the discursive construction of China by American media is that of definition, which focuses on what

Beijing and China will be like in the future. The exigence that creates this space is the tension between the familiarity and comfort of the West and the uniqueness of Chinese culture. This exigence, the mediated narrative suggests, requires a balance between the desire for China to be much like Westerners' home spaces—comfortable and nonthreatening—and the desire to experience and appreciate what makes China unique. In the space of definition, the key issue, then, is the nature of the "place consciousness" (Glassberg 1996, 18) that China will create.

China as Western

One of the options in the tension that constitutes the space of definition is for China to become Western. American media's coverage of China's cultural displays in advance of the Olympics suggests support for this option in a number of ways. The one that is receiving the most attention is the "demolition of many of the city's old 'hutong' neighborhoods, the ancient, densely populated enclaves of narrow, winding streets and crumbling courtyard homes." The result has been the dislocation of "untold thousands of people, to make room for the thousands of development projects swallowing the city" (Yardley 2006b).

The demolition is exemplified in stories about the historic neighborhood of Qianmen, "once the domain of Qing Dynasty opera singers and classical scholars." One of the last intact hutongs, Qianmen is "home to teachers, shop owners, migrant workers and other working-class people." Because it has fallen into disrepair, however, "many residents believe that officials do not want the neighborhood to be an eyesore at the center of the city during the Olympics." One story quotes a resident who analyzes the situation in this way: "This neighborhood is the face of Beijing to the world. They don't want foreigners to see this scarred old face." As a result, one reporter observers, Qianmen is now "an eerie picture of destruction. Ancient homes lie in rubble. Scavengers squat in alleyways and wait to ransack vacated buildings" (Yardley 2006b).

The presentation of China as part of the West is also evident in coverage of its demolition of archaeological sites. The construction being done for the Olympics is "uncovering so many antiquities that it might be considered a golden era for archaeology—except that sites and antiquities are often simply demolished by bulldozers or looted." The president of the China Archaeological Society, Xu Pingfang, is quoted in one story with an explanation for what is happening in China:

"There are two enemies of antiquity protection. Construction is one. Thieves are the others. They know what they want, and they destroy the rest." The media note that developers and local officials often sidestep rules concerning the treatment of archaeological sites "partly because surveys and excavations can be time-consuming and create costly construction delays" (Yardley 2007a). Because archaeological sites delay the construction of modern cities, the news stories suggest, they are often destroyed without excavation so that China may more quickly achieve its goal of Westernization.

The American media's narrative of China as becoming Western can be seen as well in their discussion of the "eye-popping physical transformation of China" through its "craze for theatrically expressive schemes by famous architects." Acknowledging that Chinese "architects were not yet up to the challenge, the Chinese had imported the best the West could offer" to create Western-style buildings. Several factors are cited as facilitating China's embrace of Western architecture: "Cheap labor, at least as much as an unfettered outlook, permits the flourishing in China of avant-garde architecture, with its penchant for original engineering, unorthodox materials and surprising forms." Not all the results have been successful, the media note: the "National Theater is generally seen as a grotesquely inappropriate building on a supremely sensitive site." One story provides an explanation for the less successful architectural results by quoting Peng Pei Gen, an architecture professor: "They couldn't do this in their own country, so they are taking advantage of the Chinese psychology that European thinking is better" (Lubow 2006, 68).

China is also depicted as achieving a Western look because of the kinds of commercial establishments that are taking the place of historic neighborhoods—businesses such as "[n]ightclubs, bars and art galleries." In the area of Houhai, one story reports, "20 or 30 bars all opened up" in one summer; one of these nightclubs is described in detail as "a lounge with a modern décor and a cool minimalist patio," while another is shown as a place where customers come "to dance to the different D.J.'s and drink cocktails like Chivas Regal with green tea" (Yang 2005, 7).

Other typically American institutions that are being introduced into China to make it a more familiar place to Westerners are featured in the news stories. Articles discuss Super 8 Hotels' opening of "six franchise hotels in China, including three in Beijing" (Conlin 2006, 2) as well as the fact that Ticketmaster "won the exclusive contract to supply tickets" for the Olympic Games (Silver 2006). Westerners also will recognize the regional airline on which they fly within China, media coverage notes, because of Mesa Air Group's launch of a regional airline in China in conjunction with Shenzhen Airlines ("U.S. Carrier" 2006).

The disciplining of Chinese citizens to Westernize the country is also the subject of coverage by the media. Much attention has been paid to China's initiation of a campaign to curb public spitting, "a frequent practice in Beijing and even more common elsewhere in China. Health officials, worried about communicable disease, have long tried to curb public spitting, with limited success, given that many people do not consider it unacceptable behavior." The media report that hundreds of volunteers have joined the group known as the *Green Woodpecker Project*, named for the woodpecker's practice of picking up worms and cleaning up the forest. The group members are quoted as saying they want "to clean up the city the same way," which they do by carrying "tissues, which they offer to people as an alternative to spitting on the ground, and try to convince the offender, usually male, to change his ways" (Yardley 2007b).

Yet another way in which China is presented as trying to imitate the West is by cleaning up its English translations: "English translations on signs are considered fashionable and good advertising, as well as a gracious gesture to foreigners baffled by Chinese characters," but many of the translations are poorly done. News stories provide examples of poor translations such as "Racist Park" as the English name for a theme park about China's ethnic minorities and "Sexually Inexperienced Chicken" on menus to describe pullet, a hen less than a year old. The stories applaud Beijing's announcement of "new standards and official translations that can be used on more than 2,000 different types of signs, as well as on menus" (Yardley 2007b) and tell of teams of linguists that will patrol Beijing's public places to cleanse the city of its "often comical English translations" (Fong 2007).

China as Unique

Although a key focus of American media coverage of China's cultural displays is to portray Beijing as a thoroughly modern city devoid of an Asian heritage, the constructed narrative also features China's heritage and its uniqueness as a culture. Although some archaeological sites are being demolished, the narrative asserts, others are not. Archaeological projects, which suggest a reverence for Chinese history, are reported to

be "under way all over China," and excavation of archaeological sites is encouraged in many ways, the articles note. They report that a network of government antiquity bureaus "has been established throughout the provinces and major cities. Chinese law also requires that real estate developers receive approval from the local antiquity bureau before proceeding with work." The Olympic site is presented as "an example of how China's antiquities protection system should work" in that "organizers have been careful to work with preservationists." At the sites for the main Olympic stadiums, one story reports, archaeological remains were discovered "tracing back 2,000 years to the Han Dynasty. In all, archaeologists excavated 700 ancient burial sites and recovered 1,538 artifacts, including porcelain urns and jade jewelry, while collecting more than 6,000 ancient coins" (Yardley 2007a).

China is also depicted as unique in articles that note the construction of many new museums designed to showcase key aspects of Chinese culture. Around the country, reporters explain, 1,000 new museums are planned to feature the history of oil lamps, beer, salt and piped water, aerospace, typhoons, tree roots, and smoking. The 2,300 museums that currently exist in China do not compare, news stories note, with the number of museums in developed nations, "especially with China's long history" (Fong 2006b).

There is yet another way in which the media depict China's embrace of its heritage in the space of definition, and that is in the discussion of the Chinese allusions that abound in the most visible buildings being created for the Olympics. The headquarters of CCTV, the national television company, for example, is reported to have been designed to suggest a "calligraphic swoop," while the "airport terminal bears an unmissable resemblance" to a dragon, "a beast revered in traditional Chinese architecture and folklore"; its use of the "imperial colors red and gold" also is noted in media coverage. The bird's nest analogy for the main stadium is described as referencing Chinese culture: "In China, a bird's nest is very expensive, something you eat on special occasions" (Lubow 2006, 85).

The tension that creates the space of definition in the media culture is between transformation of China, and Beijing, in particular, into a modern, Western space that will be familiar to foreign visitors and the preservation and highlighting of China's unique culture. As they do not resolve and, in fact, reinforce the tension between these two options, the media suggest that Beijing can be modern and familiar at the same time that it is historic and unique.

Space of Equivocation

A second space that is created by the American media's presentation of China is a space of equivocation, marked by deliberate ambiguity or evasiveness. This is the space that China's political leaders are shown to occupy, and the focus in this space is on human rights issues. The exigence created in the narrative that constructs this space is the tension between China's meeting of global human rights standards and the sovereignty of Chinese officials to run China's affairs as they choose, which sometimes means controlling Chinese citizens and foreigners. If the political leaders resist global demands and standards for human rights too vigorously, the media observe, they risk losing their place in the global community; if they acquiesce too much to those demands and standards, they lose their power within China.

China as a Violator of Human Rights

One of the major human rights issues that creates the tension in the space of equivocation concerns China's relationship with Darfur in Sudan. The problem is summarized in one article in this way: "China has been criticized for giving strong financial and diplomatic backing to the government of Sudan, which the Bush administration and critics worldwide say has practiced genocide in its southern Darfur region while waging a war against secessionists there" (Kahn 2007c). Another story explains that at least "200,000 people—some say as many as 400,000—mostly non-Arab men, women and children, have died and 2.5 million have been displaced, as government-backed Arab militias called the janjaweed have attacked the local population" (Cooper 2007).

Only three articles about China's economic relationship with Sudan have appeared in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* during the time period of our analysis, and one features actor Mia Farrow and her son, Ronan Farrow. An op-ed they coauthored is printed in the *Wall Street Journal,* and their explanation of the relationship between China and Sudan is the most detailed provided in either newspaper: "China is pouring billions of dollars into Sudan. Beijing purchases an overwhelming majority of Sudan's annual oil exports and state-owned China National Petroleum Corp.—an official partner of the upcoming Olympic Games—owns the largest shares in each of Sudan's two major oil consortia. The Sudanese government uses as much as 80% of pro-

ceeds from those sales to fund its brutal Janjaweed proxy militia." They also note that China "has used its veto power on the U.N. Security Council to repeatedly obstruct efforts by the U.S. and the U.K. to introduce peacekeepers to curtail the slaughter" (Farrow and Farrow 2007).

That Darfur and the Olympics could collide in the space of equivocation is depicted primarily through the lens of celebrities' activities. In addition to the Farrows, Ira Newble, a professional basketball player with the Cleveland Cavaliers (Beck 2007), and film director Steven Spielberg (Cooper 2007) are cited to create the narrative that "China must use its influence with Sudan's government to improve the situation in Darfur or face a possible backlash against its serving as host of the Games" (Kahn 2007c). Such celebrity protagonists are positioned in the narrative as threatening to shut down the Olympics by disseminating labels such as "Genocide Olympics" to describe the Games (Cooper 2007). The response of the Chinese foreign minister, Yang Jiechi, appears inconsequential in juxtaposition to the star power of the cited celebrities: "There is a handful of people who are trying to politicize the Olympic Games. This is against the spirit of the Games" (Kahn 2007c).

China's restrictions on media access are well known, and coverage of its continued restrictions contributes to a picture of China as a country that violates human rights. Chinese journalists "face heavy censorship" (Yardley 2006c), according to an article that cites as its source Reporters Without Borders. In its annual report on press freedoms, the group asserted "that conditions for the news media and for journalists had deteriorated in China. 'The press is being forced into self-censorship, the Internet is filtered, and the foreign media very closely watched.'" The story continues to quote Reporters Without Borders concerning the status of media restrictions: "Faced with burgeoning social unrest and journalists who are becoming much less compliant, the authorities, directed by president Hu Jintao, have been bringing the media to heel in the name of a 'harmonious society.'" Stories also cover the five-year prison sentence given to a Hong Kong reporter and the three-year sentence given to a researcher in the Beijing bureau of the *New York Times* as examples of efforts to intimidate journalists. In total, one reporter details, "31 journalists were serving jail terms in China and . . . the authorities had convicted 52 more people for posting political views on the Internet" (Kahn 2007b).

Another example of the media's highlighting of the curtailment of press freedoms is a story on China's efforts "to prevent domestic critics from voicing negative views." One Chinese couple, Hu Jia and Zeng

Jinyan, "who have promoted a variety of delicate social and political causes," receive particular attention in the news coverage. The police prevented the couple "from departing from Beijing on a trip to Hong Kong and several European countries," where the two "had planned to call attention to what they described as a neglect of AIDS patients and to defend other Chinese campaigners for human rights who had been prosecuted in recent months." A story reports that the police told the pair that they "were suspected of 'endangering national security' and would be required to stay in their home under police watch for an indefinite period" (Kahn 2007c).

A similar restriction of information is taking place, the media report, in the exhibitions housed in China's new museums. One professor is cited who "fought Shenzhen city authorities when they wanted to omit mention of a devastating 1995 chemical-plant explosion from the city's history museum he was designing. They eventually took his advice, though they played down the significance of the explosion." Likewise, in an exhibition in the new Beijing Capital Museum "designed to show parallels between Beijing and global history," media coverage notes that no mention is made "of an 1860 pillaging of the imperial Summer Palace by British and French troops . . . . Museum head Guo Xiaolin said the period isn't mentioned because it is only a small part of China's history." The media point out that some subjects still cannot be discussed at all: "the 1989 Tiananmen Square killings are still taboo" (Fong 2006b).

China as an Upholder of Human Rights

At the same time that the media's presentation of China depicts it as a violator of human rights, China is also shown to be conforming somewhat to human rights practices. China's loosening of control of the media is one such arena that is reported with the note that "Beijing promised in its bid for the Games that it would . . . open its doors wider, allowing a freer flow of information into and out of the country" (Kahn 2007a). New regulations concerning foreign journalists receive particular attention in the coverage. The rules, announced by the Foreign Ministry, are reported to temporarily "supersede existing restrictions that require journalists to obtain government approval before traveling or conducting interviews. Under the new rules, a foreign journalist will only need to obtain the permission of the person being interviewed" (Yardley 2006c).

Further evidence of the theme that China is willing to share rather than to hoard or restrict information can be seen in coverage of an agreement of cooperation signed between the United States and China in June of 2006. The agreement stipulates that each "country will send delegations of athletes, coaches and administrators to the other to share information about training and research." China has signed such agreements with other countries as well, one article notes. In response to the agreement with the United States, Peter Ueberroth, chair of the United States Olympic Committee, is quoted as saying, "This agreement will benefit the athletes and coaches of each national Olympic committee, but it will also benefit the Olympic movement and sports" (Zinser 2006).

Yet another way in which China is constructed as conforming to global human rights practices is in its transformation concerning Sudan. China's stance toward Sudan changed in April 2007, the media narrative notes, when a senior Chinese official, Zhai Jun, recommended that Sudan allow a United Nations peacekeeping force to support the African Union's efforts in Sudan: "'We suggest the Sudan side show flexibility and accept the United Nations peacekeepers,' he urged." The press note that he "even went all the way to Darfur and toured three refugee camps" (Cooper 2007).

In the space of equivocation, the tension that must be negotiated, according to the media narrative, is between conformity to global requirements for practices concerning human rights and maintenance of power and sovereignty, even at the expense of violating human rights. The media construction of China traditionally has featured the latter, but coverage in advance of the Olympics suggests a nascent effort to construct a different image of China—one that features some degree of conformity with human rights practices.

Space of Accumulation

A third space created by the American media regarding China is a space of accumulation. A primary focus of American media coverage in the construction of this space is on the economic benefits the Olympics will bring. This theme is exemplified in a story that notes that the Chinese consider the number eight to be lucky because it rhymes with the Chinese character for wealth; because the Olympics means the possibility of wealth for the Chinese, it "is no coincidence that the Summer Olympics in Beijing will open on 8/8/08 at 8 p.m." (Yardley 2006a).

The space of accumulation is depicted by the media as an expanding space available for reaping economic rewards. The stakeholders who are situated in the space of accumulation are manufacturers with products to sell and marketers who create markets for those goods among the Chinese and others. But markets can be limited in many ways in China, and when they are, access to economic wealth through the production and marketing of goods is denied or diminished. The exigence that must be negotiated in this space in the media construction is between access and denial of access to new markets.

China as Abundant Resources

The theme of accumulation and access to resources is narratively constructed in stories that feature massive marketing efforts that accompany the Olympics. "In my 20 years in the Olympics, I have never seen the level of interest that I am seeing here," Michael Payne, marketing director of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), is quoted as saying (Chang 2003). The Games, the media reported in May 2007, already "have 55 official sponsors and suppliers, including Coke, Adidas AG, Visa International Inc. and Lenovo Group Ltd.—compared to 38 at the 2004 games in Athens." More "than $5 billion will be spent on ads in China featuring Olympic themes, estimates MindShare, WPP Group PLC's media-buying agency" (Fowler 2007).

Because of China's immense market, the Beijing Games are reported to be drawing "a larger-than-usual field of corporate competitors" (Fowler and Lee 2006, B1). The Olympics traditionally have one "official brand of credit card, one computer, one wristwatch." The 2008 Games, however, "already boast three official beers: Tsingtao, Yanjing and Budweiser. 'One beer cannot cover all China,' says Liu Jun, deputy director of marketing of the Beijing Organizing Committee, or Bocog." China's large number of beer drinkers and the fragmented market are cited to justify the "sudsy trifecta," with each of the beer companies establishing "a different target audience." A Tsingtao representative is quoted to explain the marketing frenzy: "Our point of view is this is the first time that China will conduct the Olympics. We believe it is a great thing that many Chinese brands and businesses are able to participate" (Fowler and Lee 2006).

Another way in which accumulation is featured in the media's discursive construction of China is in the proliferation of stories about China's encouragement of its citizens to participate in sports, thereby creating entirely new (and huge) markets for products. One story, for example, discusses how the organizers of the Games are trying to shift local perceptions of bicycling. To most Chinese citizens, "the bike is transportation—a tool for getting from here to there rather than a source of healthful exercise or fun. Now, that is beginning to change." The Olympics organizers "are trying to raise interest in the sport by adding a bicycle-motocross (BMX) event to the 2008 Olympics," at which riders will race on modified bikes on a dirt track. Tang Mingxi, the sales manager at a bicycle manufacturer in China, is quoted to make the point that, not long ago, "you would never see people on the street using their bicycles for exercise, but beginning last year, you see it everywhere. You'll see—the market for BMX and other specialized bicycles is going to grow. When something is popular here, it catches on quickly" (Chao 2007).

Another effort reported by the American media to encourage the Chinese people to participate in new sports and thus to create new markets for sports equipment is China Central Television's launch of a reality show with the theme "'sports can be for all—even the weedy and untrained.' The show aims to pluck someone from the nation's . . . population to become an Olympic athlete"—a coxswain to steer the men's and women's teams of rowers in the Olympics—a position that requires "just a healthy set of lungs and a good sense of direction." The search to find a male and female winner, an article on the new program suggests, "will draw from parts of 'Survivor,' 'The Apprentice,' and 'American Idol' as organizers seek to make stars of China's rowers, whose sport doesn't have much of a following in that country." The story emphasizes as well other ways in which the show will allow access to greater resources: "Of course, the new TV reality show could also draw millions in ad sponsorship for broadcasters" (Fong 2006a).

China as Limited Resources

Although some aspects of the media's narrative tout China as a burgeoning market that will provide greater access to goods and resources for its citizens, it also contains a theme that suggests that access to available resources can be limited. One example is the media's reporting on the Chinese government's stunting of the growth of sports marketing through a "creaking socialist system of state control over athletic careers." As a result, it is a "headache for advertisers counting on Chinese sports heroes to help them grab market share in China's fast-growing consumer market." For advertisers, the narrative continues, securing access to athletes is often difficult because officials want to focus on training them to win medals. One story tells of China's top sports minister, Liu Peng, who "sent ripples through the marketing industry by suggesting to a Beijing newspaper that in order to keep athletes focused on training for the 2008 games, he would ban them from 'social activities.' That has been widely interpreted in China," the media explain, "to include advertising and public-relations work" (Fowler 2007). The media's cautionary note that investing in marketing in China can be risky also can be seen in the example they cite of diver Tian Liang, who won gold and bronze medals in Athens in 2004. He "was kicked off the Chinese national team after appearing in too many commercials" (Fowler and Lee 2006).

That marketers face other problems also is part of the narrative concerning China. As one story explains, "Murky rules make it difficult for advertisers . . . to work with Chinese athletes. 'Brands don't know where to go or how to do it,' says Phil de Picciotto, the president of the athletes and personalities practice at Octagon, a sports-marketing division of Interpublic Group of Companies Inc." As a result, "brands have had to develop relationships with sports federations," which handle athletes' careers, "to gain access to their stars." There are no clear rules "about when and how athletes have to go through their federations or whether they can use individual agents." In addition, the media note, "even scheduling time with some Chinese athletes can take months of planning." Sponsors who "pay as much as $1.3 million" to be associated with famous athletes may not even be allowed access to them "for ad shoots or appearances at their events." Just to get such athletes "once a year for a commercial shoot," according to one story, "they need to pony up nearly $2 million" (Fowler 2007).

China's poor record with intellectual property rights is another potential limitation to access to markets and consumer goods in the media's narrative. Some brands are "nervous about 'ambush marketing' or fu ji shi ying xian, in which brands either steal the Olympics logo or find ways to work Olympic images into their ads" (Fowler and Lee 2006). News stories explain that China is notorious "as a knockoff haven where poor law enforcement has turned a potentially huge consumer market into a land of 75-cent pirated DVDs and $10 fake Louis

Vuitton handbags." If Olympics merchandise is copied, the market for Olympics goods will be dispersed, and the funds expected to pay for the Games may not materialize. "'We have no fixed assets,' says Liu Yan, deputy director of legal affairs for the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, which operates under the Beijing city government and various national government agencies. 'So the Olympic logo is the most valuable thing we own'" (Fowler 2005). In response to the threat of Olympic knockoffs, one story reports, Olympics officials are reported to have "already shut down some unauthorized use of its logo and is considering launching educational campaigns on state TV to inform the public about the phenomenon" (Fowler and Lee 2006).

In the space of accumulation, according to the elite American media's narrative, manufacturers and marketers are presented as seeking to develop markets and sell goods to a vast market of Chinese and other consumers. At the same time, efforts to gain access to these markets are presented as being mitigated by the government's efforts to rein in and control such efforts.

Space of Anticipation

A fourth space created by the media about China is a future space—a space in which the decision will be made about whether China will be a legitimate and fully participating member of the global community. This space is developed largely through economic themes and is rooted in the constructed tension between growth and control or between China as a strong economic partner and China as an unreliable economic partner.

China as a Powerful Economic Partner

A major way in which the media create a space of anticipation is through discussion of China's rise as an economic power, which is the catalyst that forces China into the global community: "In the last 30 years, no major economy in the world has grown at the speed of China's, and no other country has been able to do it year after year, for over a decade." In 2006, the media exclaim, "China did it again, saying that its economy grew by a whopping 10.7 percent . . . the fastest pace in more than a decade" (Barboza 2007b). According to one story, favorable economic trends continued in 2007, with the economy growing "11.1 percent in the first quarter" of 2007. China's economic growth is compared favorably to that of developing countries; indeed, according to one story, China soon could "overtake Germany to become the world's third-largest economy, behind those of the United States and Japan" (Barboza 2007d).

That China's stock market is booming also receives attention in media coverage. In 2006, "the country's key index—the Shanghai exchange—rose 130 percent to close at 2,675, a record and the best performance of any major stock exchange in the world," and it is reported to have soared even higher in the opening weeks of 2007. The media report that one "Chinese mutual fund raised $5 billion in a single day . . . before closing its doors to new investors." The run-up in the stock market, a reporter explains, means that "companies in China can once again raise money in the Chinese market rather than relying on the Hong Kong stock market" (Barboza 2007a).

Record trade figures are used in the media narrative to provide additional evidence for China as a powerful force in the world economy. As one story notes, "After posting a record $100 billion trade surplus in 2005, much of it with the United States and Europe," China announced in June 2006 "that its total surplus had already reached nearly $47 billion in the first five months of this year, a period that is traditionally slower for exports than the second half of the year." During that time, its "exports rose 25 percent, to $73 billion, while imports rose 22 percent, to $60 billion" (Barboza 2006).

China as an Unreliable Economic Partner

The media's narrative around China also contains the theme that China may be an unreliable economic partner. China does not have much incentive to slow growth, the media explain, because the Communist Party bases "its legitimacy on delivering economic growth," and local officials "are promoted, foremost, for delivering economic growth." High growth "is needed simply to keep unemployment in check, and top leaders fear that a slowdown could lead to social instability" (Yardley 2005b). The government, then, "is determined to keep the economy expanding but is concerned about growing so quickly that the economy might crash before 2008" (Barboza 2007a). "Right now, the economy is growing at the upper limits of what is acceptable," Li Lianfa, an economist at Peking University, is quoted as saying. "The

government is facing a lot of challenges." Among the economic challenges, according to one reporter, "are balancing the supersize growth and heavy investment, and trying to distribute the riches as evenly as possible" (Barboza 2007a).

The discursive construction of China also contains the theme that Beijing is under pressure to allow the Chinese currency, the yuan, to appreciate more quickly against the dollar in the hope of easing the country's trade surplus with the United States. Chinese officials, however, assert "that the pace of currency revaluation must be measured and that they will not be pressed into moving hastily" (Barboza 2007d). Reports on the value of the yuan against the dollar are common. One story notes, for example, that the yuan strengthened somewhat against the dollar in 2006, "climbing to about 7.8 yuan to the dollar, from 8.26 yuan in 2005." News stories about the yuan explain that economists "have warned that if the yuan does not continue to appreciate against the dollar and other major currencies, China could face protectionist action, which could pose an even more serious threat to economic growth" (Barboza 2007b).

China also faces concerns about its "enormous rise in bank loans" (Barboza 2006, C8); "too much money in the financial system," the media assert, "could ignite inflation and perhaps fuel a stock market bubble." In January 2007, China's central bank is reported to have "raised the reserve requirement ratio for banks, the fourth increase in six months, to further tighten the nation's money supply," a move that increased "the reserve ratio by half a percentage point to 9.5 percent." "Raising the amount of cash reserves that Chinese banks keep on hand with the central bank," the media's narrative explains, "effectively restricts the amount of money that banks can lend" and curbs "excessive lending to new factories, real estate projects, and road construction" (Barboza 2007a).

China's potential unreliability as an economic partner is also developed in media accounts through stories about the environmental devastation its economic growth has generated. For the Chinese government, these stories assert, the question is how to address the country's environmental problems without crippling the economy: "China, it seems, has reached a tipping point familiar to many developed countries, including the United States, that have raced headlong after economic development only to look up suddenly and see the environmental carnage. The difference with China, as is so often the case, is that the potential problems are much bigger, have happened much

faster and could pose greater concerns for the entire world" (Yardley 2005b).

Some stories use prediction of negative consequences to develop this theme. According to one account, pollution levels in China "could more than quadruple within 15 years if the country does not curb its rapid growth in energy consumption and automobile use." Other environmental problems are noted: "China is already the world's second-biggest producer of greenhouse gas emissions and is expected to surpass the United States as the biggest. Roughly a third of China is exposed to acid rain. A recent study by a Chinese research institute found that 400,000 people die prematurely every year in China from diseases linked to air pollution" (Yardley 2005b). One reporter provides an explanation for why China is facing such problems by citing a local official: "'In the past, we never thought of the capacity of resources,' said Huang Yan, the deputy director of the planning commission in Beijing. 'We only focused on development'" (Yardley 2005a).

All of the ideological spaces constructed through the media's narration concerning China implicitly are designed to address the issue of whether China will become a legitimate participant on the world stage. The space of anticipation, however, is explicitly designed to function in this way as the media present China's credentials as a steady, significant, reliable economic force and weigh those against potential economic problems and the negative environmental impacts of a growing economy.

Spatial Construction of a Rhetoric of Reassurance

The ideological spaces of definition, equivocation, accumulation, and anticipation constructed by the American media regarding China constitute a preferred reading of China that serves an important function for the media themselves and for media consumers. China is, for these audiences, a country with which they are forced to engage because of its economic reach, its manufacture of vast numbers of products distributed worldwide and its sponsorship of the major sports competition in the world, to name a few reasons. But this entity with which they must engage is still largely a mysterious unknown, a perception reinforced when, for example, Zheng Xiaoyu, the head of China's equivalent of the United States' Food and Drug Administration, was exe-

cuted for accepting gifts and bribes from pharmaceutical companies (Barboza 2007c). Such incidents that suggest a dramatically different system from the one in which they reside make vivid to the international community their lack of knowledge about China, its government policies and judicial system.

In response to the situation of forced engagement with a largely unknown and powerful entity, the American media have chosen to construct a narrative of reassurance. They seek to reassure those who must deal with China—particularly those who have economic and political interests at stake (the targeted audience for the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*)—that their investments in China will be secure and their relationships with the Chinese will be successful and productive. The spaces function to provide reassurance by educating audiences about China, avoiding construction of China as an enemy and assigning agency to Americans and other outsiders rather than the Chinese.

One of the primary functions of the four spaces is that they educate media audiences about China. For outside observers, the spaces take the vast and complex information available on China and simplify it into easily told and remembered narratives. The spaces reduce China to four primary arenas, each clearly defined, reassuring foreigners that they can gain an understanding of China and can negotiate the culture successfully. Although the ambiguity that derives from the constructed liminal space between two options for the future is crucial for all of the spaces, for audiences outside of China, the spaces limit that ambiguity and make China an entity that is capable of being known. The spaces thus constitute zones of safety and stability in that they help various audiences know the issues and the boundaries with which they must deal.

The ideological spaces provide reassurance as well in that they refrain from making China into an enemy. The constructed narrative avoids such a depiction by presenting a balanced view of the various issues that characterize its content. Certainly, part of the impetus for a balanced presentation is due to the fact that readers' expectations are that the media will provide objective or balanced coverage. But this kind of balance is unusual in an ideological construction; ideologies typically present positive information about a favored person or group and negative information about an opponent. Here, in contrast, when one side of an issue within a space is presented by the media, the other option is also typically presented. Just as China might begin to be seen as negative in the constructed narrative because of its restrictions on

the media, for example, the spaces point to China's opening up of opportunities for foreign journalists. Enemies are threatening and create unknown and unstable situations, so lack of construction of an enemy reassures the media audience that its financial investments are safe and its business dealings likely to be ongoing.

The media also eschew presentation of China as an enemy by suppressing story lines already known to American and other audiences in which China is defined as a clear enemy. The prime example is the complete lack of coverage in either newspaper about China's dealings with Tibet and the inclusion of Tibet in the Olympic games. These events include coverage of the activists who protested the route of the Olympic torch over Mount Everest and through Tibet, the "defection" of the Tibetan antelope as an Olympic mascot, and the plans for Team Tibet to bring the FreeTibet2008 message to Chinese embassies and consulates throughout the world on August 8, 2007 (Students for a Free Tibet).

Such coverage would call to mind for many readers China as imperialist, repressive, and seeking to squash negotiations with the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet and recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize. If nothing related to Tibet is covered, this plotline and the concomitant negative perspective on China are less likely to be recalled by audiences. There is another reason, of course, why the elite American media would not want to cover an enemy-sanctioning issue like Tibet: their readers are not likely to be those most concerned about Tibet—an issue that generates the most excitement among economically impoverished college students, American Buddhists, and political activists.

Although coverage of Sudan in the media coverage of China seems to violate the narrative tenet of suppression of story lines that would make China into a clear enemy, that coverage was done in a particular way—largely in terms of celebrities. Although nonpoliticos who act as spokesperson for causes are becoming increasingly common in the context of infotainment-dominated media (Kellner 2003, 13), a degree of trivialization of an issue may evolve when that issue is embraced and advocated for by, for example, an actor. Certainly, celebrities do "attract press attention to various issues and explain why the public should be concerned" and, "with the aid of willing media reporters, this kind of coverage affects the national political agenda and sometimes even the deliberation of congressional legislators" (West and Orman 2003, 74). Celebrities, however, are not always successful in insuring that their causes take precedence over the very nature of their

celebrity. In America's infotainment culture (Kellner 2003; West and Orman 2003), the public's attention tends to stay focused more on the celebrities' lives and activities per se and less on the issue itself, which takes back stage to, for example, what the celebrity is wearing, with whom she is seen, her current marital status, what her children are doing, who their father is, and the nightclubs in which she makes an appearance. The presence of a celebrity helps reassure media audiences by placing on center stage someone known and familiar to them rather than a serious issue or China as a potential enemy. In this case, attention on the celebrity is allowed to displace the possibility of an enemy in the narrative.

When China is not constructed as an enemy because of a balanced presentation of issues and lack of coverage of polarizing plotlines, another benefit accrues to the media and media consumers as well. China's image cannot become fixed and settled; one truth, in other words, cannot emerge about China in this media construction. As a result, neither the media corporations nor their audiences can be caught on the wrong side of any particular issue or argument; they are positioned in a liminal space of noncommitment. They can rest easy, knowing that whichever way an issue unfolds or on whatever side a decision is made, they have not committed themselves to the opposite position. As a result of the four spaces in the media's constructed narrative, the truth about China is always fluid and changing, and the media and media audiences are allowed to change with it, positioning themselves in whatever ways are politically and economically most advantageous.

A third way in which the ideological spaces function to provide reassurance to media corporations and audiences is that they make Americans in particular, and outsiders in general, the active agents in the media narrative. The construction of the spaces provides reassurance for audiences that they are in control of the mysterious entity that is China. They are the ones who have the capacity to act and to make a difference in this world, even though they are the outsiders. They function, in a sense, as omnipotent protagonists, and because they are all seeing and all knowing, they are the ones who can act in the most effective ways.

What is striking in the narratives is the extent to which outsiders are depicted as inhabiting the spaces, roaming across them, and playing key roles in them. In the space of definition, they are seen as driving China's transformation into a different kind of physical space. In the

space of equivocation, they are positioned as judges, measuring and passing judgment on China's progress on human rights. In the space of accumulation, they are the marketers and investors who stand to benefit from the resources available in China. And in the space of anticipation, they are the ones with the most to gain from China's participation in the global community. Although some Chinese people move from space to space in the media narrative, the consistent occupants of the spaces of China are not the Chinese. That Americans and other outsiders have this capacity surely is reassuring to American corporations and audiences.

Americans and other foreigners are given agency in the narrative as well as in its trivialization of certain aspects of the Chinese culture. The articles often present information about China in a mildly patronizing tone, with readers expected to chuckle at the eccentricities of the Chinese—their spitting and translation practices, bars that serve cocktails of Chivas Regal and green tea, and museums on subjects such as tree roots and piped water, for example. The position created for outsiders in the narrative is thus one of superiority—they belong, the narrative suggests, to a culture that is more civilized, refined, normal, and sensible because it is lacking in the silly or boorish practices that characterize the Chinese culture. Positioned to pronounce judgment on the Chinese, media audiences no longer feel as intimidated by the mysterious, powerful China, and they are reassured that they will be able to handle their interactions with the Chinese successfully.

The elite American media's narrative concerning China in advance of the 2008 Olympic Games offers four spatial arenas that negotiate tensions between opposite perspectives on China in terms of definition, equivocation, accumulation, and anticipation. Although such a balanced approach is unusual for an ideological construction, the preferred reading presented by the media is one designed to serve the interests of its readers as they seek to engage—often unwillingly or at least warily—with China. Lee labels this type of coverage "established pluralism" and notes that it "consists of a plurality of viewpoints within a narrow range of the established order or official circle, thus producing an orchestra of 'diversity within unity' in support of the hegemonic voice" (Lee 2002, 345). In this case, the spaces function to provide reassurance that engagement with the Chinese will be safe, secure, worthwhile and, most important, under the control of the Americans or other outsiders.

That the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* would construct

China with a balanced narrative that reassures themselves and their audiences concerning the unknown power that is China is not unexpected, of course. As Hallin points out, a newspaper such as the *Times* is "basically a Fortune 500 company that positions its products to have broad appeal and credibility" (2006, 44–45). As part of "a global media market . . . closely linked to the rise of a significantly more integrated 'neo-liberal' global capitalist economy" (McChesney 1999, 78), such newspapers construct news frames for a number of reasons, including newsgathering routines and values, economic factors, government regulation, the physical structure of the medium, the political and economic interests of the country constructing the news, deference to government officials, and journalists' personal biases (Innis 1951; Gitlin 1980; Chomsky 1989; Keshishian 1997). Perhaps most important, they make decisions to frame news coverage in ways that benefit the interests of the elite—the wealthy and powerful few who have the most to gain and lose from interactions with China (Lee 2002; McChesney 1999). The narrative of reassurance created by the four ideological spaces in the news coverage around China is designed to address this audience and to reassure it specifically that interactions with China will create "America's China Dream" and not "America's China Nightmare" (Wasserstrom 2007; also see Wasserstrom's chapter in this volume).

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