


2009

Modernization and Cultural Change in China: Links to the 2008 Summer Olympics

Kevin Brennan

Ouachita Baptist University, brennank@obu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/articles>

 Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Economic Policy Commons](#), [Growth and Development Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brennan, Kevin, "Modernization and Cultural Change in China: Links to the 2008 Summer Olympics" (2009). *Articles*. 66.
<https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/articles/66>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

Modernization and Cultural Change in China: Links to the 2008 Summer Olympics"

Kevin L. Brennan
Ouachita Baptist University

In 2001, the International Olympic Committee awarded Beijing, China to be host of the 2008 Summer games. Though interesting for multiple reasons, the decision to pick Beijing is intriguing partially because it will be just the third city in the modern era of the Olympics to be located in a Third World country. It has long been argued that hosting the Olympics can lead to significant social and economic changes, especially in non-Western locations. This paper, however, examines a different set of changes linked to the upcoming Olympics in China—the cultural dynamics. The main argument is that the rapid modernization process in China that has occurred during the past three decades has led to both the decision to hold the 2008 Summer games in Beijing as well as efforts to alter certain cultural practices in the country. The decision to award the Olympics to Beijing has served as an intervening variable, as it is accelerating attempts to change various aspects of Chinese culture that are generally unacceptable by Western standards.

Introduction

For a few decades, theories of development composed a significant topic in the sub-field of Comparative Politics. The broad schools of modernization, dependency, and modern world systems occupied the minds of many comparativists. Though receiving less attention during the past decade, these development theories should be revisited. As parts of the Third World have experienced substantial economic growth (probably the most defining element of modernization), examining their policies and resulting changes would seem to be of interest to those who had studied and offered versions of these development theories. Perhaps the most interesting case is China. Over the past 30 years, China has had the highest economic growth rates in the world, and has experienced significant societal changes. Modernization theory expects society to change as economic development occurs.

Though some aspects of modernization theory are certainly rejected by this author, some broad ideas of this school of thought may be utilized to explain societal change in China. Related to this, the selection of Beijing, China to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games was partially the result of the great economic growth the country has experienced over the past few decades. The argument put forth here is that China's modernization played an essential role in the country's invitation to host the Olympics, which in turn has accelerated efforts to change aspects of Chinese culture.

Literature Review

The material included here will examine some research regarding modernization as well as the impact of the preparations for and the holding of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. These variables are included because they serve as the independent and intervening factors respectively in this study. First, the section will examine research linked to modernization.

Walt W. Rostow wrote a seminal piece on modernization. In *The Stages of Economic Growth*, he puts forth five categories through which countries will progress as they economically advance. These stages are traditional society, precondition for takeoff, takeoff, drive to maturity, and high mass-consumption society (Rostow, 1960). He puts forth an interesting list of stages of economic growth with rich descriptions of each. He also advocated an injection of capital so that Third World countries could develop a manufacturing base and thus advance economically. The research provided a good contribution to the debate over the economics of development. His work, however, does not address the cultural changes that accompany such economic modernization.

Another major work that represents modernization theory was written by David E. Apter. In *The Politics of Modernization*, he also addressed how Third World countries could develop economically. He differed from Rostow by suggesting the need for elites in the Third World who embraced Western values and an education program about capitalist economics. This type of prescription is highly controversial, as it is ethnocentric. Indeed, this has been a common criticism of modernization theory in general. It suggests that the Western method of development and its accompanying culture is superior to others.

Certainly, this ethnocentric aspect of modernization theory is rejected in this paper. Simultaneously, this school of thought has some useful ideas. The primary component of modernization theory that is of concern here is the contrast between modern and traditional societies that they describe. This can be done in a manner that is not ethnocentric.

In general, modernization theory distinguishes between two types of societies in many ways. These societies are classified as being traditional or modern. As economic development occurs, modernization theory recognizes that societies experience changes in other areas besides economics. This point is embraced in the research presented in this paper. Modernization theory was not so concerned with how cultures would change. This paper is interested in how economic development plays a role in altering culture.

Another significant piece of research linked to modernization is Ronald Inglehart's *Culture Shift*. Though this work is not actually classified as falling in the school of modernization, its argument fits with the general idea of the broad theory. It perceives continued economic progress as altering societies. In this book, he argues that the West had achieved such high levels of affluence that these societies experienced a change from materialist to post-materialist values (Inglehart, p. 5). Put differently, people in these countries have altered their priorities from material well-being to greater quality of life. In the process, it has also led to new political issues, which in turn have created new cleavages in these societies.

The argument put forth here differs from some of the earlier modernization literature in that the latter often implied that countries reached an objectively better status as they industrialized. The thesis supported in this paper agrees that major changes happen beyond economics as countries industrialize; it does not believe, however, that the changes will all necessarily be better. Instead, it is stressing that economic development plays a crucial role in changing culture, both directly and indirectly.

Another set of literature relevant to the research presented here addresses the role of sports in Chinese culture. Some research specifically addresses the role of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. For example, Xin Xu argues that the Summer Olympics in Beijing serve as a major force in China's move toward becoming a modernized country (Xu, 2006; 91). Xu uses this case more broadly to demonstrate how sports have been tied to the emergence of modern nationalism and, in the case of China, a modern state (Xu, 2006; 92). Furthermore, this piece states that under Communist rule, China has used sports "as the continuation of politics by other means" (Xu, 2006; 92). Xu does very well in showing the role of sports in politics, particularly for China. This piece is especially good at describing how the Chinese government is using the upcoming Olympics to serve its goals, two of which are to expose Chinese culture to the rest of the world and acquire greater acceptance by the international community (Xu, 2006; 97).

Xu's argument, however, seems to have one major weakness. It ignores the primary initial cause of the changes in China—the modernization process. If it weren't for the great economic growth that has occurred there since the adoption of the Four Modernizations policy in the late 1970s, the country never would have been considered to host the Summer Olympics. Indeed, China will be only the third country from the Third World to host the Summer Olympics. Mexico City, Mexico hosted the games in 1968, and Seoul, South Korea served as the host in 1988.

Monroe E. Price and Daniel Dayan have edited a book that deals specifically with the relationship between the 2008 Summer Olympics and conditions in China. The various articles address different economic, political, social, and cultural issues

in regard to the Beijing games. In particular, the chapters examine how the Chinese government may be utilizing the Olympics to the country's benefit and how hosting the games may influence China's policies. For the most part, the chapters look at the use of the media. (Price and Dayan, 2008). One article of particular interest was written by Jacques deLisle. He describes how the Chinese government has used the Beijing Olympics to demonstrate that the country is normal and stable to the rest of the world (deLisle, p. 19). Simultaneously, he provides evidence showing how the 2008 Olympics is helping critics of the regime make their case. For example, it has helped critics of China's human rights abuses and detainment of political prisoners (deLisle, p. 38).

The primary strength of deLisle's piece is that it succeeds in demonstrating how the regime is both enabled and constrained by the Beijing Olympics. It provides multiple examples of how the government is using the 2008 Olympics to promote a good international image, while simultaneously showing how the games are leading to increased coverage of the country's various problems. The work does not, however, deal much with cultural change. The section on potential long-term effects of the Olympics addresses political and environmental issues. In addition, it does not recognize the importance of economic progress in both winning the bid to host the Olympics or its role in bringing about societal change.

Another related piece is by Susan Brownell. Her broad argument is that sports are an aspect of a culture of the body, and examines the case of China (Brownell, 1995; 17). She supports this contention by saying that the culture of the body is influenced greatly by various power relationships (Brownell, 1995; 8). She is especially interested in the role of sports in body culture under Communist rule. The author describes how a "working class and military body culture" became the ideal (Brownell, 1995; 17). This led to the elimination of footbinding. She adds that other changes to body culture occurred as sports from the West were introduced to China (Brownell, 1995; 18).

Brownell's piece has multiple strengths. One is its discussion of the idea of body culture. Second, she describes well the changes in Chinese cultural values in regard to the body. Third, she recognizes the importance of the Olympics in influencing cultural change. This is particularly noteworthy since this piece was published prior to the selection of Beijing to host the 2008 Olympics. As in the case of the other works, however, she does not provide enough attention to the role of the modernization process in bringing about such change.

The research in this paper presents the modernization process as the independent variable. This modernization process is defined as economic growth and the transition from an agricultural-based economy to one that utilizes more manufacturing and even high-technology services. The role of the Olympics is one

of an intervening variable. The Olympics Games are an example of what was called a major international event earlier in the paper. Cultural change is the dependent variable in this study. Though China's economic growth has produced cultural change, winning the bid has accelerated the pace of such change.

Logic

The theoretical underpinnings of this paper are linked to modernization theory. This school of thought was at its height in the 1950s and 1960s. The key aspects of this school of thought that are relevant are the relationships between societal development and cultural change. Societal development is primarily economic development in this context. Modernization theory recognizes development's role in bringing about societal change. In general, it argues that countries will develop in similar ways. It also describes how societal changes will occur as countries advance economically. As stated earlier, the school of thought stresses the differences between traditional and modern societies. Certainly, the economic characteristics will differ. More economically developed countries will have more industry, whereas those that are less economically advanced will be based more on agriculture. One would expect a more contemporary version of modernization to state that the most economically developed economies would include a more high-technology, tertiary sector.

Modernization theory also presents stark contrasts between traditional and modern societies in addition to the economic differences. For example, traditional societies operate more according to personal relationships, as their members tend to interact with a small number of people. In modern societies, norms exist to govern relationships between people. This situation exists because the number of members is much greater. Modern societies tend to exist in more urban areas, thus people frequently interact with others whom they do not know, and that interaction will be in a specific situation. For example, one interacts with a cashier at a grocery store and a salesperson at a shopping mall, and that is the only capacity in which one will know those people.

Modernization theory would expect other societal changes to happen as well, as countries continue to develop. For example, as Western economies have become more based on technology, a better-educated workforce has become necessary. This situation has led to a much greater percentage of high school graduates going to college compared to the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, these countries have permitted women to play a greater role in society. Women are accepted in the workforce and have more opportunities to become professionals. This particular change in the West has altered the traditional roles for women.

These examples show how cultural change may result from economic modernization. They are provided to demonstrate the logic of how economic development may produce broader changes in society. Though certainly not all of modernization theory is embraced in this paper, its argument that economic development may contribute to cultural change is accepted here. As previously mentioned, economic development may produce other results as well, which in turn can lead to more societal changes, or at least accelerate such changes that have already begun.

One example of another result of economic development is international recognition. Though it is true that some reject modernization, it is mostly embraced throughout the world. More specifically, economic development is widely perceived as positive. Thus, the international community tends to applaud societies that move from mainly producing primary goods to making manufactured goods and providing high-technology services. This type of change not only leads to international recognition, but also makes countries more powerful. In addition, countries will be rewarded for their economic achievements. One way to reward them is to permit them to host various international events. The Olympics are obviously one such event.

In regard to being chosen to host a major international event, it is not done just to provide a reward for achieving economic growth. The economic growth will likely be perceived as enabling a country to successfully host a significant global event. If it is significant, then it probably requires one if not many venues. Especially in this contemporary era, these sites require large sums of money to construct. Furthermore, if the event is considered as significant, it will probably involve many participants and/or spectators. This situation requires the appropriate transportation system and lodging facilities. As with the building of venues, these other infrastructural components will also cost a substantial sum of money. Thus, those selecting a host for this type of an event will likely require a city and perhaps even much of the country in which it is located to be relatively developed, as only such a place could afford to construct the necessary infrastructure and venues for a monumental event.

Thus, being awarded to host a major international event is apt to lead to greater international recognition. Countries generally desire such recognition by their counterparts. In carrying out duties related to hosting such events, however, these countries will likely want to be perceived as doing a good job. Thus, being selected as the location for an event is not enough; they also want further recognition for being good hosts. States want such praise not only as an end itself, but also because it increases their chances of acquiring more tangible benefits. It may lead to more foreign investment, tourism, and trade. For example, hosting the Olympics is considered to be a way to attract more tourism and future events. Hosting the

Olympics may be a significant economic event itself. Furthermore, it may lead to greater acceptance in the world. It also suggests, however, that the behaviors of the hosts are likely to be altered permanently.

This is because the proper conduct of hosts of such international events is determined by global norms. The creation of such norms is primarily done by the most powerful states. Because of their wealth and position in the international system, they are able to exercise more influence. “Soft power” is especially important in this context (Nye, p. 9). A country’s businesses use advertising not only to display their products and services, but also to do it in a way to get people to want them. Multi-national corporations have even more access to customers in this age of globalization, as new technologies and the opening of more markets make it easier to reach more potential consumers. This situation gives wealthy countries an advantage in setting standards for what is “appropriate,” whether it applies to appearance or actions. People who do not live in wealthy countries may begin to develop tastes that conform to those in such places. Thus, blue jeans and Western popular music become “cool” outside of the West too.

It is not just a situation in which businesses come to the consumers, as it may be in the opposite direction as well. In the current era of globalization, international tourism is expanding. The advances in technology and the opening of markets also make it easier for consumers, in the form of tourists, to obtain more access to foreign products and services. Given this situation, local businesses may alter their products and services in ways that cater to foreign tourists. As a result, local restaurants in non-native-English-speaking countries start producing menus in the English language. Non-smoking sections begin appearing in restaurants in countries with large percentages of smokers. In essence, these cultures become more Western.

Hosting a major international event may accelerate these cultural changes. Being perceived as a good host will be at least partially determined by adhering to global norms. The government of the host country will likely adopt policies to facilitate conforming to these norms. If the host country is not in the West, then following these guidelines will require many changes. Thus, the alterations created by initial modernization increase even faster after being chosen to host a significant international event. This accelerated process has been recognized by the Chinese themselves. As Qin Xiaoying, a scholar at the China Foundation for International and Strategic Studies, has written: “It is an almost universal belief that a city can greatly accelerate its progress toward modernization by hosting the Olympic Games” (*China Daily*, May 12-13, 2007).

Thus, much logic exists in linking modernization to broad, cultural change in a society. Furthermore, one may understand other ties between modernization,

international events, and societal change. This paper will try to demonstrate how these three variables are related in contemporary China.

Methodology

Several pieces of evidence are provided to show China's substantial economic modernization during the past three decades. In addition, a description of the International Olympic Committee's criteria for being selected to host the Olympics is given. Furthermore, other information is provided to demonstrate how the importance of economic factors has increased in not only being awarded the Olympics, but also as an incentive to apply to host this international event.

Much of the research for the role of the Olympics and cultural change examines news stories in the English press in China. Information presented in news stories in *The China Daily* has been used as evidence. It is the English-language national newspaper owned by the Chinese government. An insert in *The China Daily* was added to weekend editions called *Olympian*. It was analyzed as well. Thus, content analysis was utilized. The material evaluated is from February 22-August 12, 2007. Because this news source is owned and operated by the Chinese government, a regime that has little history of granting freedom to the press, one can assume that the country's political leaders want to use the stories to serve their interests. If one notices certain stances on issues repeatedly embraced, then one can take that as evidence of a value or set of values held by the government. If such values differ from the past, whether it be recent or long ago, then this serves as evidence of cultural change.

China is an excellent case to study because it has been experiencing rapid modernization in the contemporary period. As previously mentioned, it has had the fastest growing economy since the late 1970s. Examining if the country is experiencing an accompanying change in values, or at least an attempt at such change, would seem worthwhile. Since its capital city, Beijing, was selected to host the 2008 Summer Olympics back in 2001, it would be especially interesting to see if any individual changes in cultural values started or accelerated during the past seven years. Given the thesis, it would be best to choose such traits that are common in China, but not in the West. If one notices an alteration in these behaviors in a manner that appeared more Western, or at least attempts at this, then this would signal that cultural change is occurring. Furthermore, if one can find statements linking the Olympics to changes in such behavior, then that would make the argument presented here even stronger. In regard to the dependent variable, this paper will look at multiple behaviors that have long been a part of Chinese culture, but are not aspects

of Western culture. Three aspects of Chinese culture that will be analyzed are spitting in public, smoking, and the lack of ordering queuing.

Evidence

Economic Modernization and Winning the Bid. The significant economic progress made by China played an important role in getting the International Olympic Committee to award Beijing to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. Since the era of the modern Olympics began in 1896, almost every city that has been selected to host the games is located in a relatively developed country. If one examines just the Summer Olympics, only two cities in Third World countries were selected to host the games before Beijing—Mexico City, Mexico in 1968 and Seoul, South Korea in 1988. Both of these locations, however, had experienced substantial economic growth several years prior to their hosting the Olympics. Beijing, China is in the same situation.

In analyzing the requirements for selection, it reveals that only places that have experienced significant economic development will be chosen. “The site selection process is partly technical and partly political. The technical aspects concern the availability of suitable sporting facilities and other infrastructure, such as transport, accommodation and security, and organizational capabilities of the would-be hosts” (Toohey, et. al, p. 53). As scientific and technological innovation continues, succeeding at winning a bid to host the Olympics has become an increasingly difficult and expensive task. “If a city did not project magnificent, state of the art facilities and infrastructure upgrades it is unlikely that it would not be awarded the Games in the first place. “The nature of the bidding process to host an Olympic Games encourages massive government expenditure, which many nations can ill afford, financially and/or politically” (Toohey, et. al, p. 79). Part of the expense has increased due to the terrorist attacks in the U. S. in 2001. Athens, Greece spent \$1.2 billion for security purposes alone in 2004, far more than Sydney, Australia did in 2000 (Conrad, p. 65-66).

The costs of hosting the Olympics have increased partly because states see them as contributing to greater economic gains, both at the time of the games as well as in the future. In regard to the Olympics as a major economic opportunity itself, the Los Angeles Olympics of 1984 was a watershed event. They reportedly earned \$222 million (Tomlinson, p. 68). The economic impact of hosting the games can also be long term. “If the particular Olympics are successful, then the resulting favorable publicity promotes tourism and leaves that city with new facilities for sports and other functions for future years” (Conrad, p. 65). Thus, countries are more likely to put in a bid that demonstrates they have the capacity to host an elaborate event, which means they have the most advanced facilities and secure environment. This

will cost a substantial amount of money. This demonstrates that economic modernization is essential to winning a bid to host the Olympics.

After adopting economic reforms in the late 1970s, China has achieved dramatic modernization of its economy. It has had the highest economic growth rates during this period. As a proportion of global GDP, China's share was under five percent at the time the Four Modernizations economic reforms were adopted in the late 1970s. In 2005, China produced 15.4 percent of the world's GDP (Lampton, p. 117). Examining the period between 1993-2001 is particularly important. China submitted a bid in 1993 to host the Olympic games in 2000. It failed, but only by two votes. Beijing then submitted its second bid in 2001 to host the Olympics in 2008, which the city obviously won. The city and entire country continued to experience significant economic changes in this eight-year span. These economic changes contributed to Beijing winning the bid in 2001. During this period between Olympic bids, China's GDP increased 2.5 fold. In 2001, its economic growth rate was ten percent (*China Daily*, June 8, 2007). Beijing, as well as the country as a whole, expanded its infrastructure dramatically. In particular, improvements were made in transportation and communications (*China Daily*, June 8, 2007). Furthermore, it is now the third richest country in the world in regard to gross national product. Given the importance of economics in awarding a city and the country in which it is located the chance to host the Olympics, these figures suggest China's economic progress during the past three decades played a major role in winning the bid to host the 2008 Olympics.

Data also exists to show that China will likely gain economically from hosting the Olympics. The results of a survey conducted by the Pacific Asia Travel Association and Visa International Asia Pacific suggests that China should see immediate economic benefits from hosting the Olympics. The survey was conducted among ten markets, and it revealed that Indians, South Koreans, and Americans were the three nationalities most apt to attend the Olympics. The results also indicated that the Olympics would increase travel by foreigners not only to Beijing, but also to other locations within China. Most important, however, the survey demonstrated that one out of every five people who participated stated the Olympics in Beijing would be the main purpose for their trip to the region (*The Olympian*, May 11, 2007).

This information provides evidence that China's significant economic progress was vital to being chosen to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. Furthermore, it indicates that the government could expect to reap substantial economic benefits by having Beijing serve as the host. The next section will demonstrate that the economic modernization of the country has contributed to cultural change, and being selected to host the Olympics accelerated the process.

Cultural Change. This section analyzes three aspects of Chinese culture that are not a part of the West to see how they have been impacted. These elements of Chinese culture include spitting in public, smoking, and the lack of orderly queuing. China is making efforts to address these common behaviors. A growing view exists in the country that these aspects of culture are not appropriate. Indeed, this perception appears to be increasing there. A member of the Communist Party Political Consultative Committee, Huayuan Zi, referred to spitting, smoking, queue-jumping, and bad language as the “new four pests” (Huayuan Zi, quoted in *The China Daily*, March 13, 2007; Yardley, April 18, 2007). Modernization is probably playing a key role in changing the view of these behaviors. Furthermore, the upcoming Olympics are accelerating efforts to reduce spitting and smoking, while trying to get Chinese to stand in line in an orderly manner.

Reducing Spitting. The Chinese government has tried to get people to stop spitting in public. Their actions include the adoption of laws as well as a public relations campaign. For the latter, during the May Day holiday of 2007, the government put up posters around various tourist sites in the country about etiquette. They also handed out pamphlets conveying similar information. These actions clearly demonstrate the use of a public relations campaign. Though the posters and pamphlets addressed many behaviors, they included spitting and the accompanying loud throat-clearing. The posters and pamphlets that requested people to refrain from these activities were written in Chinese. This suggests that the Chinese government’s policy was aimed at changing the behavior of its citizens instead of serving solely as a propaganda campaign for international consumption. If it had just been the latter, the signs probably would have been in English. Though China is definitely motivated by creating a positive international image, the Chinese government is trying to achieve this goal by altering aspects of its culture that are frowned upon in the West. The aspects of culture here are spitting and the loud clearing of one’s throat. The timing of the public relations campaign and the statement in the article in *The China Daily* suggest that the Olympics have contributed to the government’s efforts to reduce these behaviors, which have long been common in the country.

In regard to legal action, the Chinese government has adopted a law in which businesses leading tourists can be held liable if a member in their group spits in a public place. Even loudly clearing one’s throat in public is against the law (*The China Daily*; May 7, 2007). It was reported that 56 people in Beijing were fined for spitting in public during this holiday (*The China Daily*, May 8, 2007). The motivation for curbing this habit appears to be the Olympics. An article in *The China Daily* on this topic stated the following: “As part of its preparations for next year’s Olympics, the government has been keen to crack down on public displays of bad habits, such as spitting, and saw last week’s holiday as the perfect opportunity to apply some new rules” (*The China Daily*, May 8, 2007).

Another example of the Chinese government's efforts to reduce spitting is the evaluation chart devised by the Beijing Municipal Transport Management Bureau for taxi cab drivers. This bureaucratic agency created a specific set of rules for cab drivers just prior to the 2008 Olympic games. One of the prohibited behaviors was spitting. Given their exposure to tourists, a legal restriction on spitting by taxi drivers suggests a concern with the attitudes of foreigners. Yao Kuo, the vice-director of the agency, said that "cab drivers must remember that their industry is a window for China's capital, and they contribute powerfully to the city's image" (quoted in the *China Daily*, April 19, 2007). The quotation implies that health concerns did not primarily motivate the directive as much as the desire to present a positive view of the city. Since spitting in public has long been a part of Chinese culture, it suggests that the new rules have been adopted to portray a good image to foreign visitors. It indicates that China is attempting to change this aspect of its culture. Furthermore, the timing of the adoption of the evaluation chart was just months before the Beijing Olympics. Thus, the Olympics appear to have served as a motivation to reduce spitting in public. The Olympics, however, would never have been awarded to Beijing if the country had not experienced significant economic modernization.

Beijing's municipal government has acted in another way to curb spitting in public as well as address other behaviors to help conform to international standards. In 2007, it introduced new strict rules regarding hygiene. It did so by amending its "Regulations on Hygienic Management in Public Places." The changes imposed fines for violators (*The China Daily*, March 13, 2007). In explaining the reason for the changes, the city official cited the Olympics. "Hosting of the Olympic Games has raised the bar for the administration of the city construction and environment" (Chen Wenzhan, quoted in *The China Daily*, March 13, 2007).

Reducing Smoking. Another cultural habit that is being challenged in China is smoking. China is thus experiencing a public debate on smoking that Western countries have had in recent decades. The debate in China is occurring after almost three decades of rapid economic growth and the emergence of a wealthy, entrepreneurial class. This trend corresponds to a broad idea expressed by modernization theory—that cultural changes would accompany economic growth. Specifically, the theory would correspond to the idea that efforts to reduce smoking reflect a more modern society. As China has become richer and more economically developed, it is also becoming more educated about public health issues, and is now acting to address them. It has been established that smoking is harmful to one's health. As China has expanded its economy and reached a much higher level of development over the past three decades, a demand has risen to make smoking less acceptable within its culture.

The point here is that the relationship between its rapid economic development and efforts to reduce smoking is not spurious. Substantial economic growth has led

to a more educated population, which has led to attempts to alter certain cultural aspects that are now considered bad. In this case, high rates of smoking are now perceived as a problem and efforts are being made to address it. Furthermore, as China's economic progress has led to their acquisition of the 2008 Summer Olympics, it has increased attempts by the government to reduce smoking.

The government has acted both at the national and city levels to address the concern. These efforts have intensified as the Olympics have become nearer. The Chinese government also appears to be using the media to reduce smoking. Several articles have been included in *The China Daily* to promote this idea. Given the government's ownership of this newspaper and the dictatorial nature of the political system, it seems clear this is the view of the Chinese Communist Party. They are using the media to try to reduce smoking in public. In addition, these efforts are occurring as China has experienced significant economic growth. It is a much more modern society than it was just 30 years ago. Furthermore, a common argument put forth is that incidents of public smoking should be curtailed because the Olympics are coming. This suggests that modernization and the upcoming Olympics are leading to efforts to reduce smoking.

The government started acting to reduce smoking even before China was awarded the Olympic Games. The municipal government in Beijing issued a decree in 1996 that outlawed smoking in certain public areas, such as primary and middle schools, movie theatres, hospitals, and shops, though interestingly enough, not in restaurants (*The China Daily*, April 28-29, 2007).

Most efforts, however, have happened since Beijing was notified in 2001 that it would host the Summer Olympics seven years later. A recent proposal in the National People's Congress, one of China's main legislative bodies, would ban smoking in several public places. The prohibition on smoking would cover schools, offices, and waiting rooms at bus and train stations (*China Daily*, March 17-18, 2007). The 30 legislators sponsoring the proposal argue that as many as 600 million Chinese are at risk of getting lung cancer due to exposure to passive smoke. Interestingly enough, some of the sponsors of the bill are smokers themselves (*China Daily*, March 17-18, 2007). Another intriguing element of this issue is that opposition to the proposal exists within the government. The Deputy Chief of the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration stated that China needed the tobacco industry and that the country's stability might even be threatened if the government tried to reduce smoking (*China Daily*, March 17-18, 2007).

The national government has taken another major action to curb smoking. Beginning in January 2009, all Chinese tobacco firms will be required to the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control rules pertaining to the size of warning labels. These rules mandate that the warning labels are at least

one-third of the size of the cigarette package (*China Daily*, May 30, 2007). China signed the FCTC in 2003 and ratified it in 2005. The FCTC was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2003. By signing and ratifying the agreement, the Chinese government has taken a position against a long-standing aspect of Chinese culture.

The city government in Beijing has also taken actions to curb smoking since being awarded the Olympics. One is specifically linked to the games. It has adopted a bill for a “tobacco-free” Olympics. The proposal would ban smoking at Olympic-related venues, restaurants, hotels, the Olympic Village, and on public transportation. The city government has designated seven categories of public zones as being smoke-free areas linked to the Olympics (*The China Daily*, May 30, 2007). It also forbids the sale of cigarettes at Olympic venues (*The China Daily*, April 28-29, 2007; Gu, *The Olympian*, August 3, 2007). Clearly, this action shows the impact of the upcoming Olympic Games on curbing smoking. To reiterate, China would not have received the Olympics if it had not experienced dramatic modernization. Thus, the economic progress serves as the initial cause of efforts to reduce smoking.

Another legal action by the Beijing government has previously been mentioned, but applies to efforts to reduce smoking as well. The evaluation chart composed by the Beijing Municipal Transport Management Bureau for cab drivers not only prohibits spitting, but also smoking while driving. As described earlier in the context of spitting, the reasoning behind the new list of rules for taxi drivers is not for better health, but for portraying Beijing in a positive manner. As with spitting in public, smoking has been a common behavior in China for so long, that it is considered part of the country’s culture. Thus, governmental attempts to curb this behavior appear to be aimed at getting foreigners to view China favorably. Cab drivers have more exposure to foreigners than do most other people. This indicates that the Olympics have accelerated efforts to change Chinese culture.

In regard to the media campaign, several articles have been published in the *China Daily* and accompanying magazines encouraging efforts to reduce smoking. *The China Daily* included an editorial urging more attempts to address smoking. In particular, it emphasized that public campaigns should be utilized to prevent children from developing the habit (*China Daily*, April 7-8, 2007).

Another article was included in an issue of *The China Daily* three weeks later. One editorial praised the upcoming 2008 Olympics for helping efforts to reduce smoking. It says the following: “The 2008 Beijing Olympics is changing China and many attitudes held by Chinese people. One of the changes I am happy to see is to stop people smoking, or at least to stop people smoking in public places” (*The China Daily*, April 28-29, 2007). It applauds China’s desire to host a “green” Olympics and states that it will help the anti-smoking campaign in the country.

The information is also interesting because it suggests that Western values in this context are appropriate. The article also states that Westerners perceive China as a “smoke-friendly nation.” Thus, what is really an editorial is arguing that one reason China should reduce smoking is because of Western views of the country (*China Daily*, April 28-29, 2007). This clearly demonstrates that China is concerned with Western views of the country, and these opinions are leading the Communist Party to take action to change certain aspects of the culture. With the newspaper being owned and operated by the government, it is clear that this kind of message would not be printed if Beijing disagreed.

An additional article was published in late May that provided substantial evidence of the numbers of smokers in China as well as how many non-smokers are exposed to passive smoke regularly. The article also discussed China’s efforts to curb smoking, as well as Beijing’s attempts to reduce this practice as the Olympics approached. The piece also revealed how Australia’s laws pertaining to smoking are more strict than those in China (*China Daily*, May 30, 2007). Though not an editorial, the article was clearly presented in a manner to show the extent to which smoking is a problem in China, the efforts the country and its capital are making to address it, and that foreign countries have gone further to resolve it. The article serves as yet another example that the Chinese government wants to reduce smoking.

As the Olympic Games approached, *The China Daily* began including in its weekend edition an additional publication called *The Olympian*. It occasionally included articles that addressed smoking. An editorial by Wen Gu argued that smokers need to recognize that their habit is leading to their own respective deaths (*The Olympian*, August 3, 2007). He also described efforts to reduce smoking at the Olympics, but he included the point that the Olympics could in turn help address the problem more broadly in the country. “However, a smoke-free Olympics may provide a rare opportunity to help people truly understand the medical dangers of smoking, even though many may feel they are invulnerable to smoking-related diseases” (Gu, *The Olympian*, August 3, 2007).

Chinese efforts to reduce smoking are not just occurring in Beijing. Further attempts to curb the practice are happening elsewhere in the country. They are intensifying in Shanghai, and it is also because of an upcoming international event. The city government in Shanghai is toughening an existing law that regulates smoking. In the mid-1990s, Shanghai’s city government passed a law that outlawed smoking in several public places (*The China Daily*, May 11, 2007). The new law would be expanded to include restaurants. “According to the authorities, there is strong demand for Shanghai to forbid smoking in public, particularly with the 2008 Olympics and 2010 World Expo both drawing close” (*The China Daily*, May 11, 2007). Thus, this suggests that modernization was probably the primary factor in

initial efforts to reduce smoking, but that major international events are accelerating these attempts.

Beijing and Shanghai are not the only locations in China where attempts to curb smoking have occurred. In addition, such actions are being taken even in places that did not nor will not hold Olympic events or the World Expo. Eighty-nine cities in 14 different provinces have adopted laws that restrict smoking. Guangzhou, a large city on China's southeastern coast, adopted a law in 2007, just one year before the Beijing Olympics, that would prohibit smoking in most public places. The list of places is quite numerous, as it includes theatres, concert halls, department stores, museums, stadiums, libraries and waiting rooms at public transportation hubs. Hong Kong passed the toughest anti-smoking law in Asia in 2007. Those who violate the law could be fined as much as HK\$5,000 (U. S.\$640) (China Daily, May 30, 2007).

These actions suggest that the Chinese government is serious about trying to reduce smoking. As China has economically progressed, it has started to adopt some policies similar to those of other economically developed countries in other areas of society. In this case, it has attempted to reduce smoking. Though some governmental restrictions on smoking were adopted prior to 2001, the efforts have clearly intensified since being awarded to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. Indeed, many statements by Communist Party officials gave the Olympics as the reason to adopt such measures. They indicated that they wanted to be respected by the international community. The smoking regulations are being adopted in places where Olympic events were not held. This suggests that the efforts of the Chinese government are not just intended to curb smoking while the games are taking place.

As is stressed throughout the paper, however, China would not have been chosen to host the Olympic Games if it had not demonstrated that it had the ability to construct the necessary facilities and infrastructure for the event. Thus, it had to be sufficiently developed economically to do so. This suggests the initial importance of modernization.

Promoting Queuing . In addition to stop spitting and smoking, efforts have been made to promote queuing. This is an act that may initially seem very minor. Interestingly enough, other countries have also had problems getting people to form lines when performing tasks such as making purchases or waiting to get on a bus. It was a common problem in the former Communist countries in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Some people have wondered if disorderly queuing emerges in places where various goods and services are not plentiful. Certainly, the lack of goods on store shelves was a common problem in Communist countries. Perhaps this explains its emergence in China.

Times, however, are changing. One can notice numerous articles in the Chinese media that encourage forming a lines when waiting to purchase products at a counter. Since the government owns the media, one can suspect that this is their strategy to promoted orderly queuing. As goods are now more readily available, there is less need of pushing one's way ahead of others. Furthermore, one can notice these efforts being linked to the upcoming Olympics. These attempts mostly involved a public relations campaign.

As mentioned earlier, during the May Day holiday, one of the biggest travelling periods in China, the government put up several posters and handed out pamphlets around the country instructing tourists on proper behavior. One of the behaviors from which they were encouraged to abstain was cutting in line. Simultaneously, as with the issue of spitting, the China National Tourism Administration issued a statement that made travel agencies and tour guides responsible for addressing the poor behavior of their customers (*The China Daily*; May 7, 2007). These government actions were explicitly linked to the Olympics. The deputy director of an institution within the Chinese Communist Party said: "Promoting civilized behavior among Chinese travelers is a long-term task. To achieve short-term results before the Games, we need to focus our resources on the main problems. Tens of thousands of foreign journalists will be covering the Games next year, which means both China's positive and negative sides will be amplified. A bad impression lasts" (Weihua Zhai, quoted in *The China Daily*, May 7, 2007).

This official's comments demonstrate that the government is trying to alter Chinese culture. By stating these changes are a long-term task, he is acknowledging that this policy is not just for the Olympics. It clearly suggests that orderly queuing is something that they desire permanently. Furthermore, the signs and pamphlets were in Chinese, thus indicating that the messages were aimed at the country's citizens instead of foreign media. The point is that it seems the Chinese government truly wants to promote the formation of orderly lines. Their actions are not mostly a propaganda campaign to show the world they are a civilized country, without actually trying to change the behaviors of their people in the long run. They want international recognition, but for actually conforming to established etiquette by the West. All of this clearly demonstrates that Chinese officials are encouraging queuing at least partially because of the fast-approach Beijing Olympics. Simultaneously, the situation appears to reflect that changing such behaviors is a long-term goal of the government.

In the case of promoting queuing, the Chinese government has used a media campaign to promote its efforts at cultural change. On May 14, 2007, *The China Daily* included an editorial promoting queuing. It was one of a few that appeared during the spring and summer of 2007. The editorial states that queuing leads to quick and efficient service. Twice in this short editorial, it argues that queuing is

civilized, “but queue jumping is most uncivilized” (*The China Daily*, May 14, 2007). Finally, it states that the local campaign in Beijing should be expanded nationally. As previously stated, editorials in this newspaper are likely endorsed by the government. Thus, it suggests they are also part of the government’s efforts to promote a change of culture in this realm.

Another interesting component of the editorial was the list of situations that were provided to argue in favor of orderly queuing. The editorial includes waiting to buy railway tickets, for a bus, and to see a doctor. It emphasizes, however, drivers who cut in line when traffic is bad (*China Daily*, May 14, 2007). “This is particularly so of hasty-busy drivers, who put themselves and their co-passengers at great risk when they try to cut the line to get ahead. Such haste actually worsens the traffic situation and slows down both them and others” (*China Daily*, May 14, 2007).

All of the situations reflect a society that has at least partially developed economically. Furthermore, the stress placed on the importance of queuing while driving is revealing. It is a more dangerous situation and is obviously going to be a concern in places where motor vehicles are prevalent. This is a condition in China, especially in Beijing and Shanghai. If the country had not experienced much economic development, then this would not be as much of an issue. Finally, prior to and during the Olympics, it became even more of a concern, as they wanted people to be able to get to the venues safely and on time.

Another example is the July 13th edition of the *China Daily*. It had an editorial on queuing. Hanru Zou, the author, praised the citizens of Hong Kong for becoming orderly when forming lines. He argues that they are known for being well-mannered, but that even campaigns were being launched there in the late 1960s to encourage people to queue. He continues to say that it did not become common in Hong Kong until the 1980s. “It was achieved by education of the general public—a proper queuing culture is to their benefit and a reasonable requirement for members of a civilized society” (Zou, *China Daily*, July 13, 2007). The author continues to describe efforts in Beijing that encourage queuing. He states that Beijing has made the 11th day of each month “Queuing Day,” but that it is targeted more at creating a civic culture than it is to satisfy requirements for the upcoming Olympics (Zou, *China Daily*, July 13, 2007). Obviously, this demonstrates how disorderly queuing is now considered a problem. It also suggests, however, that efforts to change it have followed years of economic development, both in Hong Kong and now in mainland China. Furthermore, the ideas in the article indicate that both modernization and the upcoming Olympics have played a role in making queuing an issue. Finally, as with the other articles, since the government must give their approval for them to be published, it reflects an attempt by China to alter this aspect of culture.

The examination of reducing spitting, curbing smoking, and promoting queuing demonstrates that the Chinese government is attempting to change long-standing practices within the country. Most of these efforts began after Beijing was awarded to host the 2008 Summer Olympics back in 2001. As earlier evidence suggests, Beijing would not have been selected as a host if it had not experienced such dramatic economic modernization. In addition, some of the attempts to alter culture occurred before Beijing was chosen. As mentioned earlier, some regulations restricting smoking were adopted in the 1990s. The evidence presented shows that the great economic progress was vital to Beijing's winning the bid to host the Olympics, and this in turn accelerated the efforts to alter these three aspects of Chinese culture.

Conclusion

China has experienced significant economic growth in the past three decades. This may be considered as the primary indicator of modernization. This modernization has brought about many changes in the country, one of which is to its culture. Certain habits are being viewed differently than they were not long ago. In addition, China's modernization was a necessary condition for Beijing to be awarded the 2008 Olympics. As a result, efforts to alter long-standing practices, such as reducing spitting and smoking, along with encouraging queuing, have intensified. China wants to present a positive image to the world. They perceived the Olympics as an excellent opportunity to do so.

The implications of the study seem important. It demonstrates that economic progress contributes to cultural change, not only directly, but even more so indirectly. Furthermore, it shows how wealthier countries set the standard for what is considered to be appropriate behavior. As globalization continues, more events may become international in orientation, with increasing potential for earning money for the hosts and an opportunity to reveal what they have to offer. As a result, hosts will have a chance to use the event as a tool to attract more foreign investment and international travelers. To do so, hosts will need to demonstrate that they conform to certain norms of behavior. Thus, this process could facilitate such cultural change in other places in the non-Western world. Further research should examine other Third World countries that have hosted major international events to discover whether or not they have also contributed to a faster pace of cultural alteration, and whether or not it is long-term. This study suggests that it has probably accelerated such change in those places as well. Even if it has not accelerated, governmental attempts to make such changes may have increased.

References

- Apter, David E. *The Politics of Modernization*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).
- Brownell, Susan. *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).
- China Daily*, March 13, 17-18, 2007; April 7-8, 19, 28-29, 2007; May 7, 8, 11, 14, 30, 2007; June 8, 2007; July 13, 2007.
- Conrad, Mark. *The Business of Sports: A Primer for Journalists*, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2006).
- deLisle, Jacques. "'One World, Different Dreams': The Contest to Define the Beijing Olympics," in *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*, edited by Monroe E. Price and Daniel Dayan, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008).
- Lampton, David M. "The Faces of Chinese Power," *Foreign Affairs*, 86, no. 1 (January/February 2007), pp. 115-127.
- Nye, Joseph S., Jr. *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Olympian*, May 11; August 3, 2007.
- Price, Monroe E. "Introduction," in *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*, edited by Monroe E. Price and Daniel Dayan, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008).
- Rostow, Walt. W. *The Stages of Economic Growth*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).
- Tomlinson, Alan. "Olympic Values, Beijing's Olympic Games, and the Universal Market Place," in *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*, edited by Monroe E. Price and Daniel Dayan, (Ann Arbor: Un. of Michigan Press, 2008).
- Toohy, Kristine and A. J. Veal. *The Olympic Games: A Social Science Perspective*, (New York: CAB International, 2000).
- Xu, Xin. "Modernizing China in the Olympic Spotlight: China's National Identity and The 2008 Beijing Olympiad," in *Sociological Review*, Volume 54, Number 2, December 2006, pp. 90-107.
- Yardley, Jim. "As Games Near, Beijing Tackles 'Auspicious Clods,'" *New York Times*, April 18, 2007.