

# Fragile Friendship ?: Chinese Views of EU

——An Analysis of 6 Focus Group Interviews

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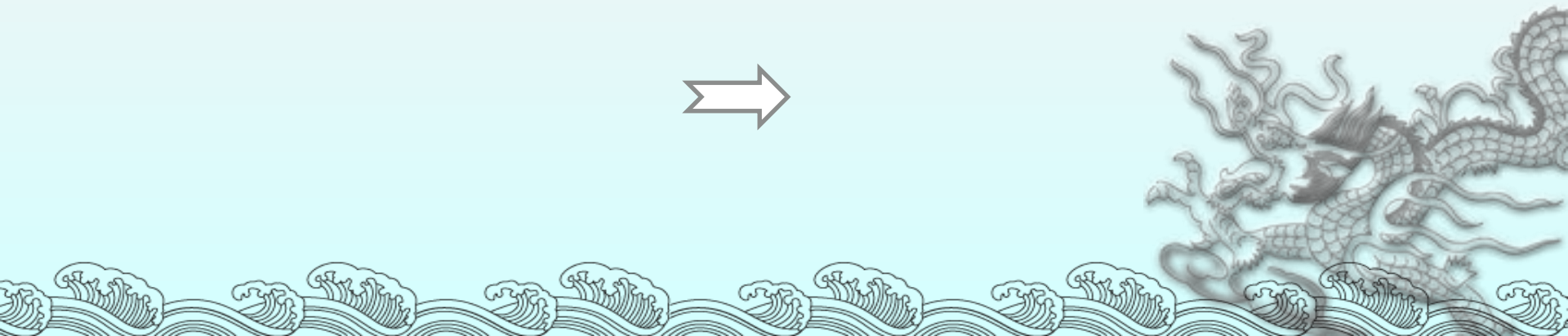
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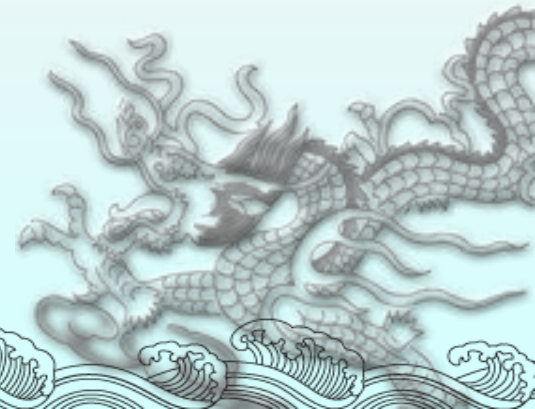
# Why Focus Group Interview (FGI)?

- ◆ easy to organize  $\Rightarrow$  low cost
- ◆ longer time  $\Rightarrow$  more information
- ◆ flexible agenda  $\Rightarrow$  more probing



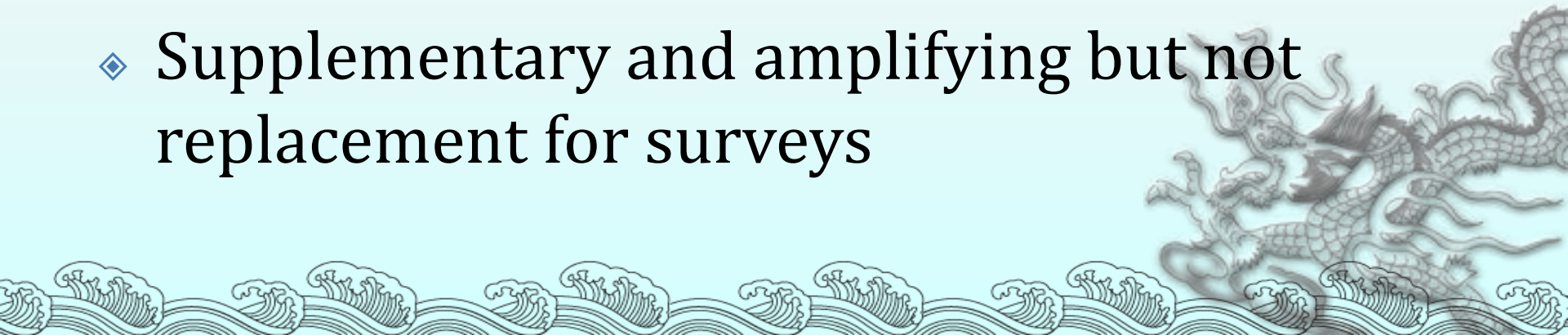
# Investigation Process

- ◆ March to July, 2010
- ◆ household residents in Chinese Cities
  - ◆ 5 cities (Beijing, Nanning, Guangzhou, Xi'an and Shanghai), **6 FGIs** in all
  - ◆ 2 FGIs in Xi'an, to compare different age groups
- ◆ judgmental and quotas sampling

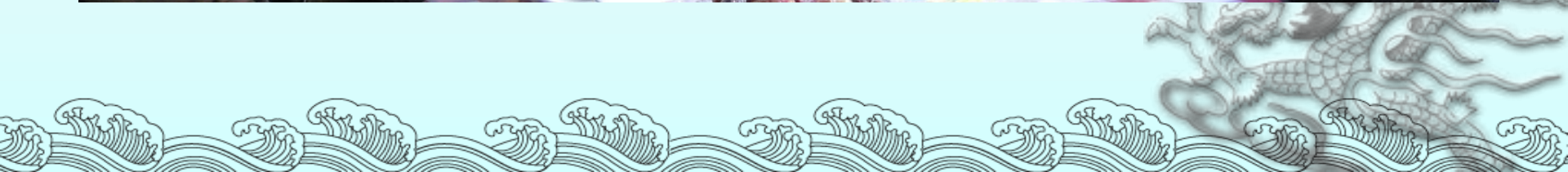


# Limitations of Focus Groups

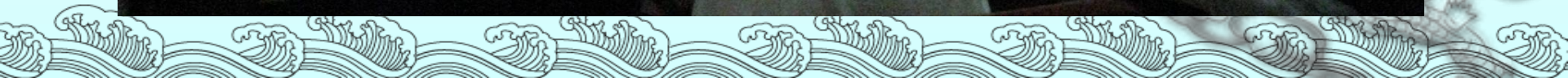
- ◆ Group dynamics – mutual influence
- ◆ Dominant individuals can lead others
- ◆ Reinforcement of prejudices
- ◆ Supplementary and amplifying but not replacement for surveys



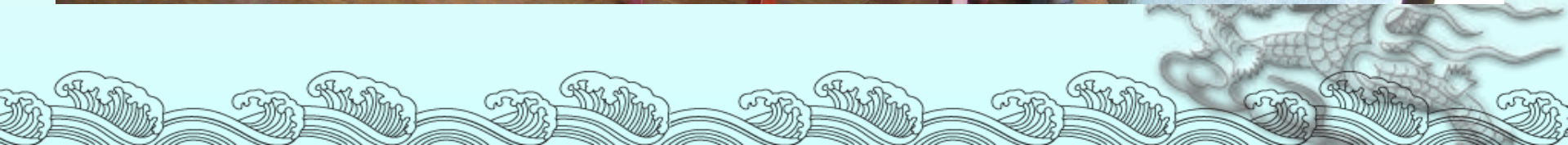
# Beijing Group



# Nanning Group



# Xi'an Group I

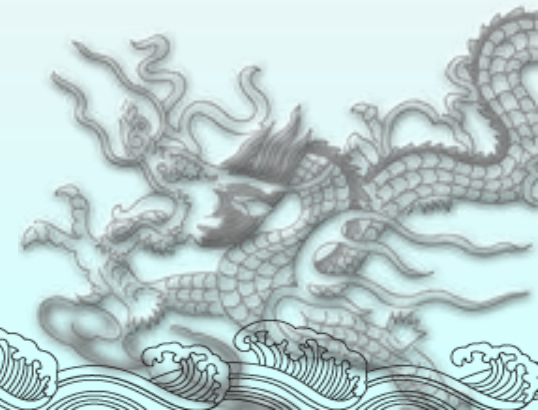
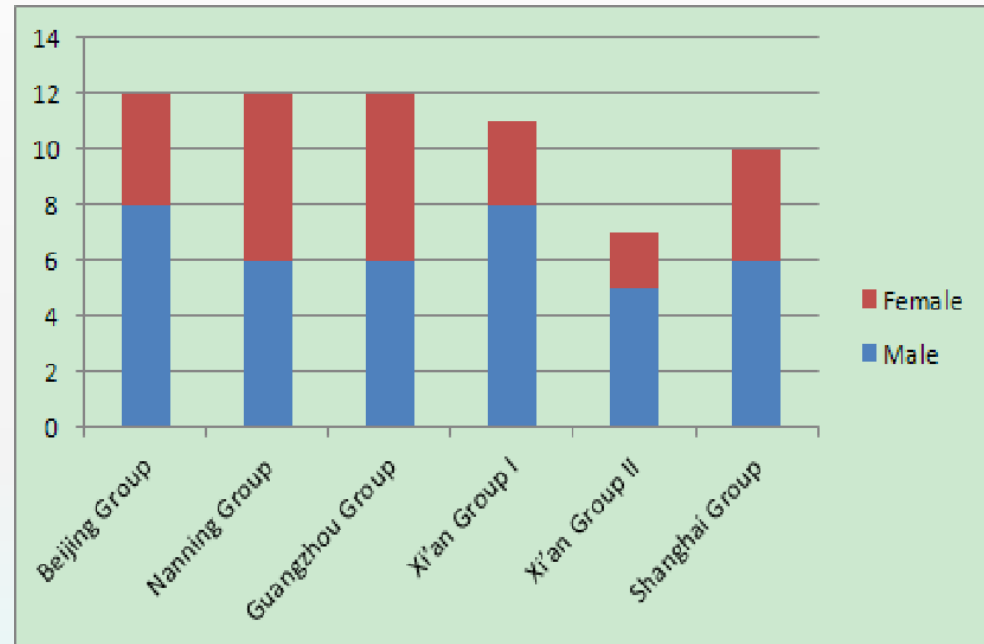


## Xi'an Group II



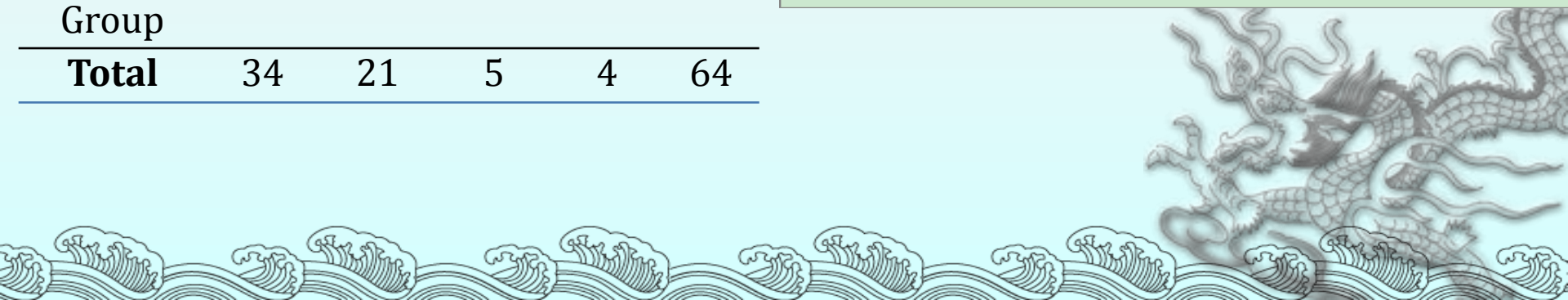
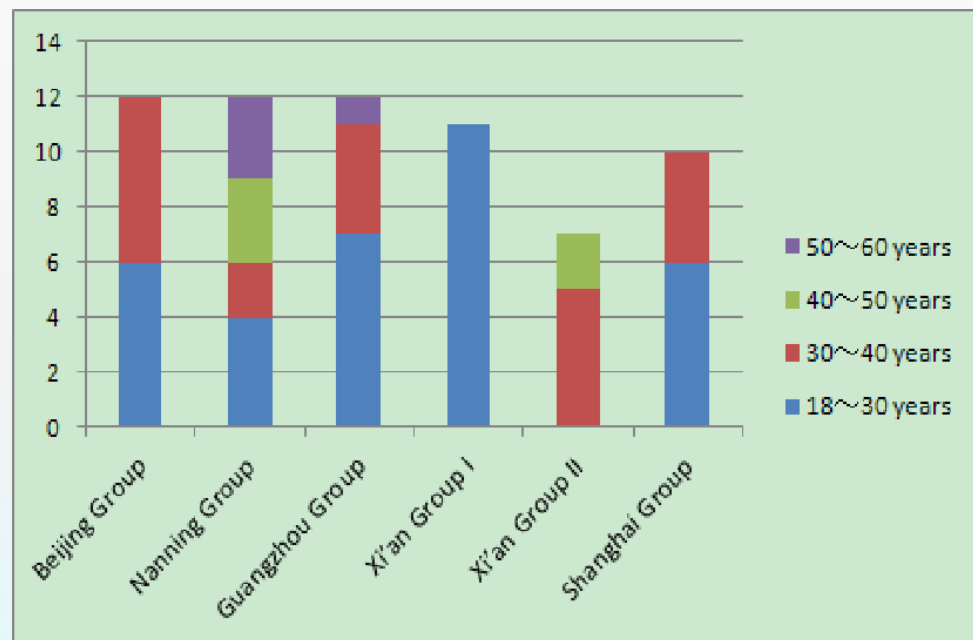
# Gender Composition of 6 FGIs (unit: person)

Name	Male	Female	Total
Beijing Group	8	4	12
Nanning Group	6	6	12
Guangzhou Group	6	6	12
Xi'an Group I	8	3	11
Xi'an Group II	5	2	7
Shanghai Group	6	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>64</b>



# Age Composition of 6 FGIs (unit: person)

Name	18~ 30	30~ 40	40~ 50	50~ 60	Total
Beijing Group	6	6	0	0	12
Nanning Group	4	2	3	3	12
Guangzhou Group	7	4	0	1	12
Xi'an Group I	11	0	0	0	11
Xi'an Group II	0	5	2	0	7
Shanghai Group	6	4	0	0	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>64</b>



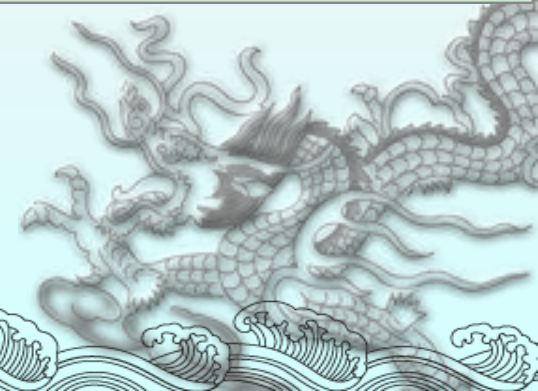
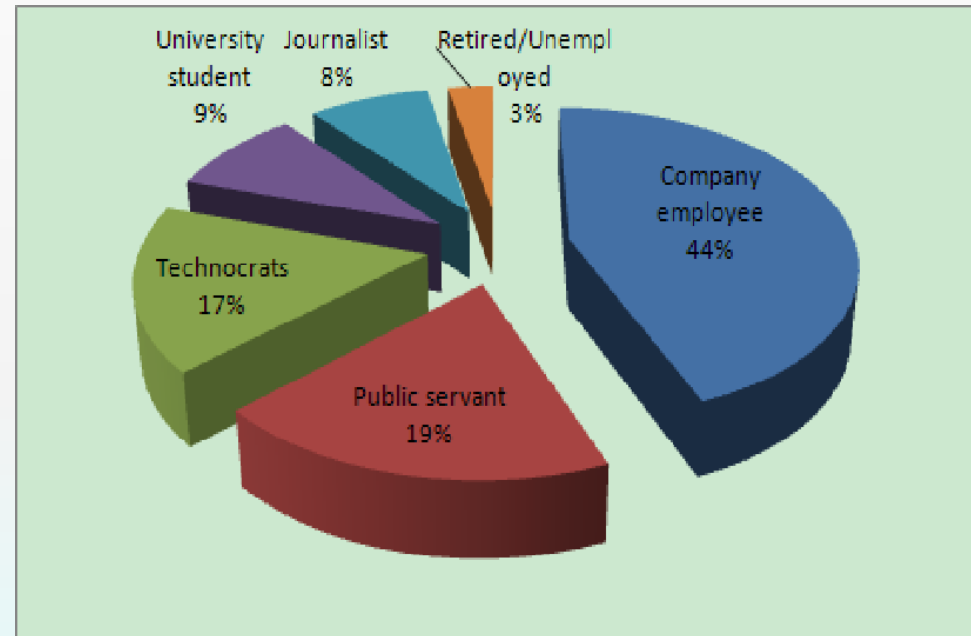
# Occupation Composition of 6 FGIs

Beijing Group	Nanning Group	Guangzhou Group	Xi'an Group I	Xi'an Group II	Shanghai Group
Civil servant <sup>↵</sup>	Civil servant (2) <sup>↵</sup>	Civil servant (4) <sup>↵</sup>	Civil servant <sup>↵</sup>	Civil servant <sup>↵</sup>	Economic analyzer of
Press editor <sup>↵</sup>	Elementary and primary	Press editor <sup>↵</sup>	Overseas College student <sup>↵</sup>	College lecturer <sup>↵</sup>	government agency <sup>↵</sup>
journalist <sup>↵</sup>	school teacher (3) <sup>↵</sup>	Vocation education school	Postgraduate student <sup>↵</sup>	State-owned electric	Journalist <sup>↵</sup>
Media marketing <sup>↵</sup>	Accountants (2) <sup>↵</sup>	teacher <sup>↵</sup>	Lawyer <sup>↵</sup>	enterprise worker <sup>↵</sup>	College student (3) <sup>↵</sup>
Doctor <sup>↵</sup>	Sales man <sup>↵</sup>	Postgraduate student <sup>↵</sup>	Private company worker (3) <sup>↵</sup>	State-owned import &	Private company owner <sup>↵</sup>
Market analyzer <sup>↵</sup>	Community worker (2) <sup>↵</sup>	Telecom company	Company program manager <sup>↵</sup>	export enterprise worker <sup>↵</sup>	IT company manager <sup>↵</sup>
Engineer (2) <sup>↵</sup>	Company bureaucrat <sup>↵</sup>	secretary <sup>↵</sup>	Musician <sup>↵</sup>	Private company worker <sup>↵</sup>	Unemployed <sup>↵</sup>
Actuary <sup>↵</sup>	Free occupation <sup>↵</sup>	IT private company boss <sup>↵</sup>	Doctor <sup>↵</sup>	Company buyer <sup>↵</sup>	English translator <sup>↵</sup>
Programmer <sup>↵</sup>		Company quality examiner <sup>↵</sup>	Engineer <sup>↵</sup>	Financial consultant <sup>↵</sup>	company cashier <sup>↵</sup>
Sales man (2) <sup>↵</sup>		CFO <sup>↵</sup>	<sup>↵</sup>		
<sup>↵</sup>		Retiree <sup>↵</sup>			
Total: 12 <sup>↵</sup>	Total: 12 <sup>↵</sup>	Total: 12 <sup>↵</sup>	Total: 11 <sup>↵</sup>	Total: 7 <sup>↵</sup>	Total: 10 <sup>↵</sup>



# Occupation Composition of 6 FGIs

Occupation	Number (person)	Proportion
Company employee	28	44%
Public servant	12	19%
Technocrats	11	17%
University student	6	9%
Journalist	5	8%
Retired/Unemployed	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100%</b>



## 2. Good News



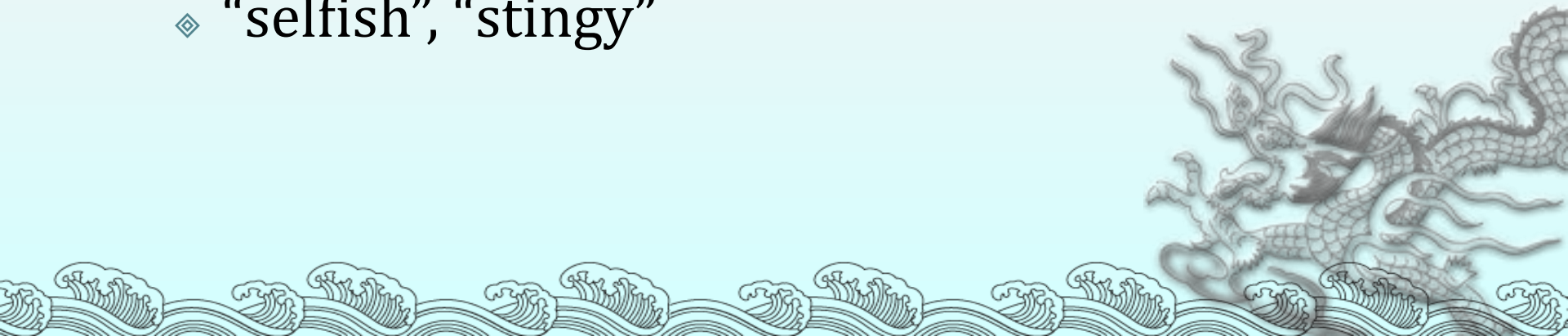
## Q: “What’s your basic impressions of EU?”

- ◆ Answers are positive in general:
  - ◆ “developed economy“, “advanced technology“, “beatiful scenery“, “long history“, “high welfare“
- ◆ but EU’s political image is not very positive:
  - ◆ “full of internal disagreement“, “loose“, “dispute over trifles”



## Q: “What’s your basic impressions of Europeans?”

- ◆ Answers are positive in general, too:
  - ◆ “civilized”, “good integrity”, “law-abiding”, “work strictly”, “innovative”
- ◆ Some minor negative impressions:
  - ◆ “conservative”, “inflexible”
  - ◆ “selfish”, “stingy”



## Q: “Is EU important for China?” -- Basic Attitudes

- ◆ **High evaluation:** affirm EU is an important economic and political partner of China, all anticipate China could establish intimate relations with EU
  - ◆ “EU is very important to China, whether in economic, political or military respect, it is **a strategic card** for China to check USA.”--from *Nanning Group*



- ◆ **Strong security trust:** stress EU poses no territorial threat to China
  - ◆ “We have **no fundamental interest conflicts** with the EU, unlike with the USA and Japan” -- from *Nanning Group*
  - ◆ “I believe the EU is **more important than Russia** for China, because the latter is next door to us and threatened China greatly in history, whereas European countries have been friendly to us since the Mao era.” – *from Xi’an II Group*



- ◆ **High respect:** all agree China could and should learn from EU, including “advanced technology”, “advanced administration experience”, “advanced idea” and even “institutional civilization”



# 3. Bad News



## ◆ **Weak Knowledge:**

- ◆ many interviewees are not sure about the EU's history, composition and system, often making some wrong assumptions about the EU
- ◆ mainly talk about Germany, France and UK, and rarely mention the other member states of the EU



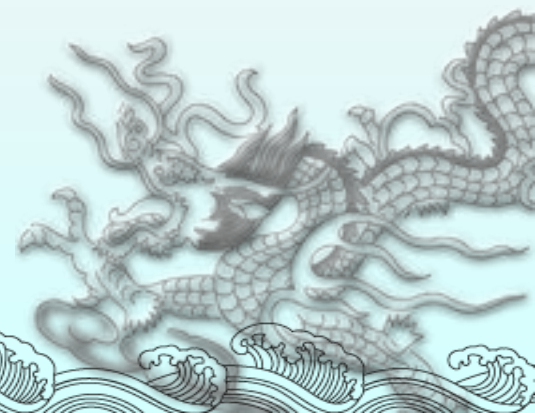
## ◆ **Low Attention:**

- ◆ “I **rarely pay attention** to the news of the EU.”--  
*from Beijing Group*
- ◆ “the Chinese are definitely **less concerned with the EU** than they are with the USA.”--*from Xi'an II Group*



## ◆ Short of cultural channels:

- ◆ “The simplest and most effective way of communication is cultural products. What foreign **films** we watch are almost all from Korea and the USA, **rarely from Europe.**” — from *Xi'an II Group*
- ◆ “The EU’s **cultural influence** in China is definitely **not as great as the USA’s.**” —from *Nanning Group*



## ◆ Shocked by the 2008 conflicts

- ◆ “**Once** the EU is mentioned, I am immediately reminded of Sarkozy’s meeting with the Dalai Lama, and Tibetan Separatists’ grabbing of the Beijing Olympic torch in Paris.”—from *Xi’an I Group*
- ◆ “I originally thought the China-France relationship was friendly, or at least not hostile. But the Olympic torch-grabbing events made me suddenly discover French dislike of China. This made me feel **shocked**.”—from *Xi’an II Group*
- ◆ “I had a good impression of European countries before 2008, deeming them as China’s friends. But after the Olympic torch-grabbing events, **wow**, I realized how wrong I am.”—from *Guangzhou Group*



- ◆ “Political things hardly ever catch my attention, for they are far removed from my daily life, but when the Olympic torch relay was violated, I cared a lot about it.” --*from Beijing Group*
- ◆ “Most Chinese had no idea about foreign countries in the past. Now there comes some news like the Olympic torch being grabbed, and we **can't understand** why it would happen. This created a bad impression of the EU .” --*from Beijing Group*



# Negative Impressions

- ◆ Europeans have a “superiority complex”, “prejudice” and “misunderstanding” toward China
  - “Europeans are different, but for me, they have one characteristic in common at least, that **is a superiority complex**. They are accustomed to **look down** upon other people.” -- *from Beijing Group*
  - “I feel they have **great misunderstandings** of us.”—*from Guangzhou group*



# Negative Emotions

## ◆ Complain

- ◆ “ My **feelings (about the EU) have worsened** greatly” --  
*from Guangzhou group*
- ◆ “ (The EU is) taking every chance to **find quarrels** with  
China” -- *from Nanning group*
- ◆ “China wants to be a good friend of European countries,  
but European countries **only think about their self-interest  
and getting things from China**” -- *from Xi'an I group*



# Colder Attitude

## ◆ Fading enthusiasm:

- ◆ “The Sino-EU relationship is far from based on friendship, but is only based on interests.” --*from Nanning Group*
- ◆ “It is hard to be intimate friends as well as hard to be enemies – we are just in the middle.” --*from Xi’an I Group*
- ◆ “I feel the EU is more close with the USA than with us” --*from Beijing Group*

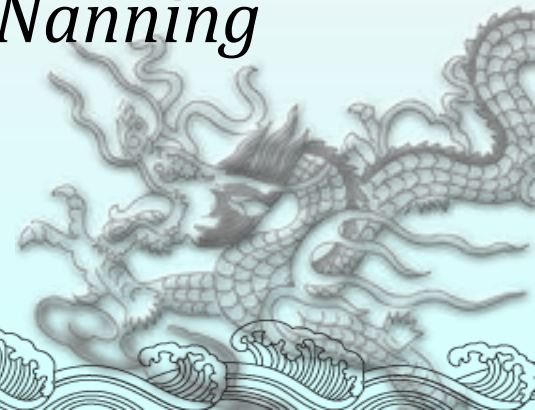
## ◆ Rising Vigilance:

- ◆ “I suggest our government not only should develop cooperation with the EU, but also **should be on guard against the EU.**” --*from Nanning Group*



# On Tibet Problem

- ◆ **Widespread doubt:** the EU only makes use of the Tibet issue as a political tool to contain China, “**not really for democracy and liberty**”.
- ◆ The majority clearly oppose the EU intervening in China’s affairs, and many argue that the EU should respect China’s “core interests“, “stop making an issue of Tibet“.
- ◆ “Some member-states of the EU are **irresponsible** about China’s national unity.” --*from Nanning Group*



# On Anti-dumping and the “Market Economy” Position Problem

- ◆ They acknowledged that the EU has reasons for refusing market economy status for China, but the majority believe the frequent anti-dumping actions taken by the EU against Chinese Companies are **unfair** and constitute protectionism.
- ◆ They want the EU to grant China’s market economy status, recognizing the facts.
  - ◆ “The EU’s rejection of market economy status for China **is a kind of double standard** used to protect its trade position. This is what disappoints me most about the EU – i.e. the EU only thinks about its own interests.” -- *from Nanning Group*



# On the Human Rights Problem

- ◆ The majority of interviewees accept human rights as universal values.
- ◆ Some say they are less sensitive to the EU's criticism of China than the USA's on human rights. But suspicious of EU's motives in criticizing China.
- ◆ Most disagree with the EU imposing its own standards on China, stressing that China's "national conditions" are different.

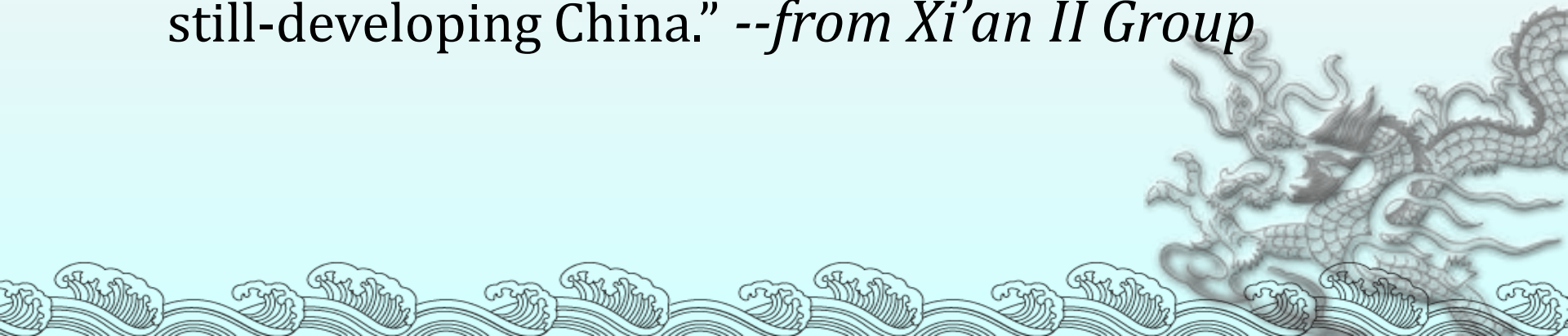


“There are many **common values** pursued by all of us.”  
--*from Xi'an I Group*

“If Europeans only pursue the improvement of human rights in China, I welcome it. Nonetheless, **their motives are impure**, blended with many other motives.” -- *from Shanghai Group*

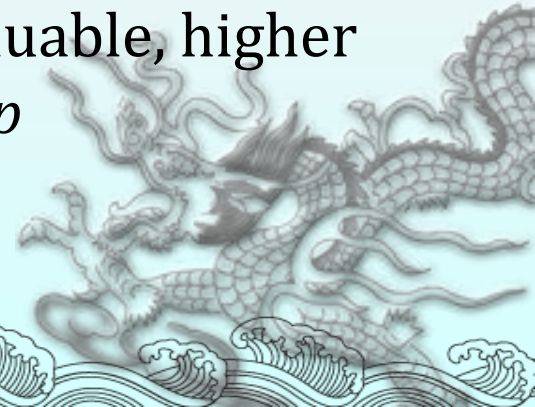
“If China can reach the level of EU social development, China should and would protect human rights.” —*from Guangzhou Group*

“EU shouldn't press its own (developed) standards on a still-developing China.” --*from Xi'an II Group*



# General Inclination

- ◆ **Calls for hard-line stance on China's interests**
  - ◆ “China, the Chinese nation and the **CCP should protect their core interests resolutely**. Anyway, it's China's **turn to be hard-line.**” --*from Nanning Group*
- ◆ **Stress equality and dignity**
  - ◆ China “**should not look up** to the EU”. “The most important thing is treat each other with sincerity, communicating equally.” --*from Xi'an I Group*
  - ◆ “China could concede to the EU on interests , but never compromise on dignity.” “Dignity is invaluable, higher than any interest.” --*from Shanghai Group*

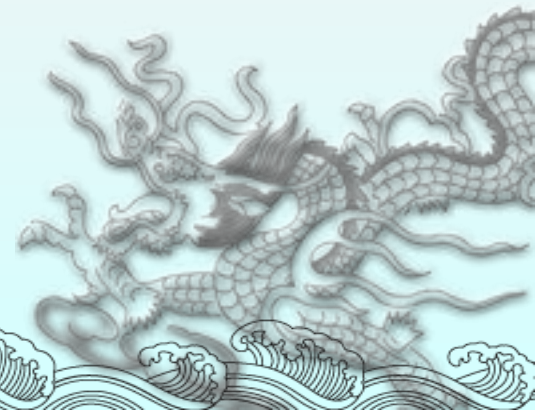


# 4. Comment



# Hopes and Risks (2010)

- ◆ The basic state of Chinese views of the EU was positive in 2010
- ◆ But this state does not have a solid basis. From the results of the 6 FGIs, we could find that risks are increasing, and that some of them are serious:
  - ◆ Weak knowledge, lack of cultural communication
  - ◆ Hurt feelings over the Olympic torch protests, negative impressions becoming the stereotype
  - ◆ Fading enthusiasm and colder attitude
  - ◆ Hard-line positions formed



- ◆ The misunderstanding and “cognitive dissonance” between the two sides has deepened, which could make the China-EU “strategic partnership” relationship fragile.



**Thank You !**

