

Two-Sided Narration and In-Group Narrator: Examining the Effects of Different Strategies of Mediated Public Diplomacy

TIANRU GUAN^{*1}

YUE YIN

Wuhan University, China

YILU YANG

Tianjin University, China

With the COVID-19 pandemic reducing multilateral cooperation and acting as a multiplier of “decoupling” major-power relations, the potential of public diplomacy for rebuilding trust has been highlighted. The present study examines the effects of different strategies for improving international attitudes with perceived credibility as a mediator. Using China-U.S. relations as case study, a 2×2 between-subject factorial design ($N = 425$) crossed-narration perspective (one-sided vs. two-sided information) with narrator identity (in-group vs. out-group of targeted audiences). Results indicated when American participants were exposed to China-related media content that (a) told stories from both positive and negative perspectives or (b) was produced by in-group members, they perceived the information as having high credibility and showed significant positive attitude increases. However, combining two strategies did not bring additive effects. The findings illustrate that two-sided narration and in-group narrator are effective approaches to mediated public diplomacy. Implications for public diplomacy research and practices in the post-pandemic epoch are discussed.

Keywords: mediated public diplomacy, two-sided information, intergroup perspective, China-U.S. relations

As COVID-19 creates pronounced threats and uncertainty to all humankind and causes maximum harm to the world’s economy, it has significantly undermined international and intergroup trust, understanding, and tolerance. This has led to increasing conflict and zero-sum logic in international relations, especially among geopolitical rivals like the United States and China (e.g., Jaworsky & Qiaoan, 2021). The deteriorated foreign relations further stimulated the public’s skepticism, antagonism, and hostility toward other nations. For instance, according to a survey from the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council, Asian

Tianru Guan: quantianru@hotmail.com

Yue Yin: 98yinyue@gmail.com

Yilu Yang (corresponding author): yilu_yang@outlook.com

Date submitted: 2022-05-09

¹ This research was funded by the National Social Science Fund of China (Grant No. 22CXW009).

Americans reported more than 650 racist attacks within just one week in March 2020, including abuse, physical intimidation, and spitting (NBC News, 2020). On the other side of the Pacific, anti-U.S. sentiment and radical, xenophobic speech targeting the United States continues to rise in Chinese cyberspace. Against this background, the potential of public diplomacy to directly communicate with foreign publics and restore mutual trust and benefit, interdependence, and collaboration among nations deserves careful examination.

This study took the United States and China as the research case, examining the potential for different mediated public diplomacy narration strategies to improve international attitudes. We also investigated the role of perceived credibility as a mediator during the international communication process. For a long time, China's soft power campaigns and public diplomacy initiatives have been viewed as obviously propagandistic and thus have had only limited success in persuading international, especially Western, audiences (Bailard, 2016; Min & Luqiu, 2020; Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018). Creemers (2015) argues that China's public diplomacy discourses lack credibility, which is a significant contributing factor to their failure. China has an established tradition of "positive reporting" of the news, framing national policies and political authority in an overwhelmingly positive and progressive way (Chang & Lin, 2014). This news reportage approach differs from the normative journalism approach of the "fourth estate" and "watchdog" functionalities, which provide a public check on the branches of a government (Benkler, 2013). This, combined with intensified geopolitical and ideological conflicts with the United States, has lowered the credibility of China's public diplomacy discourses among the U.S. public (see, e.g., Edney, 2014). Low news credibility further undermines persuasive power and fosters less-favorable attitudes (Jones, Sinclair, & Courneya, 2003).

The present investigation examines the effects of China's mediated public diplomacy on improving foreign attitudes via increasing content credibility by adopting two-sided narration and engaging in-group members of targeted audiences as narrators. This study uses a 2×2 between-subject factorial design ($N = 425$) that crossed narration perspective (one-sided vs. two-sided) with narrator identity (in-group vs. out-group of targeted audiences). Our results find that when the American participants were exposed to China-related news and content that (a) told stories from both positive and negative perspectives or (b) was produced by their in-group members, they perceived the information as having high credibility and showed significant positive attitude increase toward China. In addition, the study finds that using two strategies together has no additional impact. This means that improving credibility or attitudes through mediated public diplomacy can only be achieved to a certain extent.

Literature on Mediated Public Diplomacy

The notion of public diplomacy was first proposed in 1965, referring to government-sponsored efforts aimed at communicating directly with foreign publics. During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union used international broadcasting to cultivate favorable foreign attitudes toward themselves and negative perceptions toward their rivals (Gilboa, 2008; Golan, 2013). At that time, the term "public diplomacy" worked as an alternative to "propaganda" (Gregory, 2008) and was applied to the process by which states seek to accomplish the goals of their foreign policies by engaging with foreign publics (Cull, 2008) via information and persuasion campaigns.

Since the 1990s, public diplomacy has been increasingly gaining governments' attention and investment and continues to be one of the most salient political communication issues (Snow & Taylor,

2009), playing a crucial role in states' international communicative agenda and working as an instrument in facilitating economic and trade exchange, promoting ideology, and building benign nation images and international relationships (Gregory, 2008). Moreover, the rise of global governance in parallel with the development of information and communication technology significantly diversifies the available public diplomacy actors, adding new participants such as interest groups, media agencies, transnational companies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and individuals (Keohane & Nye, 2000). The "non-state transnational model" put forward by Gilboa (2000) sheds light on the emergence of public diplomacy networks consisting of various communicators who actively cultivate global support for their causes.

In forming foreign attitudes, the media play a vital role since ordinary citizens do not have extensive knowledge of foreign affairs. Mediated public diplomacy is defined as "shorter term and more targeted efforts using mass communication (including the internet) to increase support of a country's specific foreign policies among audiences beyond that country's borders" (Entman, 2008, p. 88). The process can be divided into two dimensions: Agenda building and frame building, which refer to competing for access to the overseas media and competing for control over the dominant interpretation of events and issues (Golan, 2013; Sheaffer & Gabay, 2009). Extant studies shed light on the importance of traditional communication channels as agenda-building tools in the digital age and point out that cultural congruence empowers countries' advantages in promoting agendas and frames (e.g., Albishri, Tarasevich, Proverbs, Kioussis, & Alahmari, 2019; Zhang et al., 2017). Furthermore, the instruments and platforms of mediated public diplomacy have expanded significantly, now consisting of government-sponsored satellite channels, native advertising, and social media (Dodd & Collins, 2017; Tombleson & Wolf, 2017). It is argued that mediated public diplomacy would succeed easily if its goal was building mutual understanding and trust rather than promoting unconditional support toward a given country (Entman, 2008).

As an extra-regional actor and rising power seeking to expand its international influence, China has also poured vast resources into public diplomacy and become vocal more than ever in the global arena to advance its agenda and interests, for example, through constructing the state-run English-language cable TV channels targeting international audiences, China Global Television Network (CGTN; Jia & Li, 2020; Wang, 2011). Existing studies have focused on CGTN's media narratives and communication effects in Latin America and Africa (e.g., Hernández & Madrid-Morales, 2020; Morales, 2021). For instance, Umejei's research (2018) suggests that Chinese media organizations based in Africa are promoting an editorial policy of "positive reporting," which is supposed to dictate a shift away from the Western model of journalism toward subjective support for the state. In Mexico and Argentina, Morales (2021) conducted a series of focus groups and found CGTN's Español channel struggling to catch the attention of viewers due to limited availability, low credibility and trust, and lack of cultural proximity.

Despite the growing interest in public diplomacy in both Western and Chinese contexts, only a small segment of scholarship has focused on the acceptance side of mediated public diplomacy initiatives and narratives and empirically tested what types of discursive strategies, narrations, and messages have better persuasive power in gaining favorable feelings and support from foreign publics and international societies (Kohama, Inamasu, & Tago, 2017). Specifically, Fullerton and Kendrick (2013) found that U.S. tourism advertising did not just increase foreign people's intention to travel to the United States, but it also enhanced international attitudes toward the U.S. government and its people. Lee and Kim (2021) examined the effects of South Korea's nation branding strategies amid COVID-19 using sentiment analyses of social

media comments. One study that is very relevant to our research is Min and Luqiu's (2020) online investigation exploring the persuasive effects of China's "new" versus "old" forms of international propaganda among the U.S. and South Korean publics. Their results demonstrated that new forms of international propaganda (referring to new rhetoric strategies and visualization technologies) enjoy higher credibility than old forms of propaganda and therefore have greater persuasiveness. In addition, Fang and Mutz (2016) measured the source effect of China's international communication, demonstrating that when an online video was credited to a non-CCP brand, its perceived credibility among U.S. audiences was significantly higher than that of the same video when branded as a CCP product.

This study engages in the academic effort of examining the acceptance side of mediated public diplomacy by using U.S.-China relations as a research case and taking information credibility as a critical element and mediator in communication processes. For decades, China's soft power campaigns and public diplomacy initiatives have been viewed as obviously propagandistic and thus have had limited success persuading international, especially Western, audiences (e.g., Min & Luqiu, 2020; Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018). A crucial explanation for China's unconvincing public diplomacy discourse is the lack of credibility. Due to China's decade-long news tradition of "positive reporting"—which differs considerably from the normative journalistic approaches of the fourth estate and watchdog functionalities—and the intensified geopolitical and ideological conflicts between China and the West, the credibility of China's public diplomacy discourses has remained low among the Western public. China's public diplomacy is often considered "inimical and undependable" despite wanting to be regarded as "friendly and trustworthy" (Creemers, 2015, p. 315). Considering the "credibility deficit" of China's public diplomacy and the subsequently less persuasive power and less-favorable feelings toward China (Jones et al., 2003), this study aims to develop effective public diplomacy strategies by highlighting the critical role of credibility in persuading foreign publics and improving international attitudes. In the next section, we discuss the literature on the dynamics of credibility, attitude change, and mediated public diplomacy from the social sciences field of communication, social psychology, business, and marketing and posit two possible approaches to increase content credibility.

Credibility, Attitude Change, and Mediated Public Diplomacy

As "a perceived quality" of information, credibility is "made up of multiple dimensions" (Fogg & Tseng, 1999, p. 80), and it can be defined as "believability," "trustworthiness" (Fogg & Tseng, 1999), "reliability," and "verity" (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Research has shown that using mediated public diplomacy can alter people's attitudes, and the reliability of information is the main reason behind its success (see, e.g., Jia & Li, 2020; Kendrick & Fullerton, 2004). This is because existing literature suggests credibility is a crucial factor contributing to the perceived message quality and its capacity to influence (e.g., Pornpitakpan, 2004). For example, Jia and Li (2020) found that Chinese state-owned media are more likely to create negative attitudes toward China among foreign practitioners than civil actors such as NGOs because civil actors are perceived as more trustworthy and credible. Credibility plays an essential role in the persuasiveness of a message (Wilson & Sherrell, 1993), and its significance in mediated public diplomacy is widely acknowledged. As Nye (2004) wrote in *Soft Power*, "Politics has become a contest of competitive credibility" (p. 106). A reputation for credibility is seen as a critical asset in the struggle for soft power and mediated public diplomacy.

Previous studies reveal that multiple factors can indicate and influence information credibility. In early persuasion studies, authority was widely recognized as a crucial component of information credibility (Lin, Spence, & Lachlan, 2016). Another core indicator of credibility is expertise as perceived credibility aligns with expert-generated content (Flanagin & Metzger, 2011). According to Flanagin, Winter, and Metzger (2018), despite individual differences in credibility evaluation, such as ability, motivation and personality traits, message sidedness and information source are two crucial indicators. Two-sided messages suggest that the storyteller is more honest and fair-minded (Allen, 1991). Therefore, balanced reports increase information credibility more than one-sided messages (Mayweg-Paus & Jucks, 2017). Information sources, especially narrators' identities, influence the trustworthiness of statements since "in-group messages may be seen as more credible regardless of whether or not they are" (Wojcieszak, 2021, p. 692). As the pros of two-sided coverage (Chang, 2013) and in-group identity (Greenaway, Wright, Willingham, Reynolds, & Haslam, 2015) in convincing and persuading the receivers have been acknowledged, we propose two methods to increase information credibility and positive attitudes in mediated public diplomacy, which are two-sided narrative and in-group as narrators.

The first strategy is the use of two-sided narratives, that is, including appropriate negative information in the communication process rather than only positive information, which could enhance information credibility and possibly change attitudes (e.g., Crowley & Hoyer, 1994; Eisend, 2010). The underlying reason is that—when someone behaves in a way that goes against their interests, it can lead to negative consequences. People observing this behavior often assume it is part of the person's disposition. If someone deliberately admits to their shortcomings or weaknesses, it may seem like they are working against their interests. However, this can make the person more trustworthy and honest (Walster, Aronson, & Abrahams, 1966). Acknowledging negative information in a message can help the receiver see the communicator as credible (Eisend, 2007). In advertising contexts, the mechanism of two-sided persuasion may mitigate the negative attitude since the inclusion of both positive and negative information leads a consumer to conclude that the advertiser must be telling the truth. This enhances the perception of the advertiser's credibility, which in turn positively increases attitudes. Since public diplomacy is viewed as state-sponsored "political advertising" with the aim of nation branding, we assume that the advertising strategy of two-sided messages could be applied in mediated public diplomacy discourses to gain source credibility and increase persuasiveness.

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) explains how individuals evaluate themselves by comparing themselves with others. It is applied in communication studies to explore how this psychological mechanism influences credibility (Cheng, Gu, Hua, & Luo, 2021; Mugny, Tafani, Falomir-Pichastor, & Layat, 2000). When more consistency and similarities are identified after social comparison, the information is perceived as more credible (Andsager & Mastin, 2003; Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017). In addition to increasing the credibility of information, the social comparison process—primarily downward social comparison—has been employed to explain why two-sided narration can effectively enhance intergroup relations, resulting in positive attitudes toward the out-group in the cognitive dimension. For example, scholars indicate that negative media portrayals presenting out-groups' as less competitive can ease intergroup tensions, which helps trigger out-group empathy and increase positive attitudes toward out-groups (Sirin, Valentino, & Villalobos, 2017). Harwood (2017) suggests that when out-groups are perceived as threatening, they become the -unfavorable "them" rather than individuals, meaning that media information containing negative and less-threatening out-groups may enhance intergroup relationships. The psychological mechanism of downward comparison suggests that a person who is seen as weak may elicit sympathy and ultimately reverse their situation, a phenomenon often referred to as the

underdog effect. In this vein, groups with low power in disadvantageous situations may more easily build support (Miller & Effron, 2010; Vandello, Michniewicz, & Goldschmied, 2011). Therefore, in this study, we explore the potential of two-sided information, including positive and negative descriptions of the “others,” to convey balanced messages and build more mutual understanding, which could lead to attitude changes beyond those of one-sided messages.

A second potential approach to enhancing the credibility of information and positive attitude is to involve narrators from the targeted audience’s in-group in mediated public diplomacy. This is because the source of information is typically considered a crucial factor in shaping audience judgments (Flanagin et al., 2018). Social psychology studies have shown that messages from people within the same group are generally viewed as more trustworthy, regardless of their content (Greenaway et al., 2015; Mackie, Gastardo-Conaco, & Skelly, 1992; Wojcieszak, 2021), as it is likely that individuals tend to discriminate against those who are not part of their group and view them negatively while simultaneously improving the image of those within their own group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This could be explained by intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), which illustrates that positive interaction among members of different groups can reduce prejudice and hostility and facilitate trustworthiness (Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2009; Voca, Graf, & Rugar, 2023). Research has shown that direct and high-quality intergroup friendships can positively impact attitudes toward those groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). However, considering that actual direct interaction among groups is not practical, extended intergroup contact—mediated intergroup contact is one of the main methods—can still be a highly effective method for building credibility and improving relations (Eller, Abrams, & Gomez, 2012).

The connection between extended intergroup contact and lower prejudice and stronger favorable impressions has been observed in many societies. For instance, Pettigrew, Christ, Wagner, and Stellmacher (2007) showed that extended intergroup contact was related to less anti-foreign and anti-Muslim prejudice in Germany. In the East Asian context, Chiang’s (2021) experiment proved the phenomenon of “indirect reciprocity”—people rewarding the out-group for behaving in a friendly way toward their in-group. Considering that political attitudes could be linked closely with an individual’s social identity (Mason, 2018), we posit in this research that in-group message narrators may trigger the trustworthiness of the information and thus increase positive attitudes toward the out-group than out-group narrators in mediated public diplomacy.

As discussed above, information sidedness and information sources are perceived as two important factors when audiences assess the credibility of information. Thus, we intend to examine how sidedness (one-sided/two-sided narratives) and information sources (in-group/out-group as narrators of targeted audiences) influence credibility, thereby changing the public’s attitude, in the mediated public diplomacy. To this end, we specify our hypotheses as the following:

- H1: Two-sided narration and in-group as narrators in public diplomacy discourse will lead to more perceived credibility than one-sided narration and out-group as narrators.*
- H2: Two-sided narration and in-group as narrators in public diplomacy discourse will have more persuasive power to promote favorable foreign attitudes than one-sided narration and out-group as narrators.*

In addition, since narration sidedness, narrator identity, credibility, and attitudes are tightly intertwined, this study examines the interaction effect between narration perspective and narrator identity in increasing credibility and favorable attitudes. We discussed whether an in-group narrator would magnify a two-sided narration's potential for increasing credibility and persuasive power in mediated public diplomacy practices and whether combining the two strategies would bring additional positive effects. Considering the assumed advantages of two-sided narrations and in-group narrators in promoting the credibility of information in mediated public diplomacy, the close association between information credibility and its capacity to influence attitudes, and the interaction effects between narration perspective and narrator identity, our hypotheses and research questions are as follows:

H3: Media exposure to two-sided narration will enhance perceived credibility, which leads to positive attitude change.

H4: Media exposure to information narrated by in-group members will increase perceived credibility, leading to positive attitude change.

RQ1: Does narration identity moderate the effect of narration perspective on perceived credibility?

RQ2: Does narration identity moderate the effect of narration perspective on attitude change?

Method

Sample

To explore the effects of different mediated public diplomacy strategies, we designed a survey experiment. We obtained ethical clearance and permission before we recruited participants (425 American adults) via Amazon Mechanical Turk in January 2022. Participants were paid \$3 for their participation. Our sample was 49% female and 86% White. The median age of the sample was 30 years, and the median level of education was a four-year college degree.

Design, Stimulus, and Procedure

This study adopted a between-subject experiment with a 2 (narration perspective: one-sided vs. two-sided) × 2 (narrator identity: in-group vs. out-group of targeted audiences) factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experiment conditions about rural vitalization in China.² In each experiment condition, participants were exposed to a video that lasted approximately five minutes. Following

² We chose videos about rural vitalization in China because it was a vital development strategy proposed in 2017 as a key move to develop a modernized economy in China, with the aim of "realizing economic, political, cultural and ecological rejuvenation in rural area" (Long, Zhang, & Tu, 2019, p. 528). The strategy of rural vitalization in China means the nation has made great strides to promote balanced development nationwide, which is meaningful for a country's development and suitable for examination from multiple perspectives.

the manipulation, participants rated the credibility of the video and their attitudes toward China and the Chinese people.

In the first condition (one-sided narration and out-group narrator), the video introduced China's progress in pursuit of rural vitalization. In the second condition (two-sided narration and out-group narrator), the video demonstrated the current situation of rural China, in which people's living standards have been profoundly improved but the social problems of left-behind children and elders are highlighted. For conditions 1 and 2, the narrators and on-camera figures were all Chinese. In the third condition (one-sided narration and in-group narrator), the presenters were two White men with Anglo-Saxon appearance and American accents. In the video, they traveled the Chinese countryside, interviewed villagers, and told a story about the solid progress made in China's pursuit of rural vitalization. In the fourth condition (two-sided narration and in-group narrator), the same presenters from condition 3 traveled the Chinese countryside, interviewed villagers, and told a story about China's progress in pursuit of rural vitalization as well as the associated social problems of left-behind children and elders. To mirror China's mediated public diplomacy practices, we added the label "CGTN" in the top right corner of the videos.

Measurement (Dependent Variables)

Perceived Credibility

This study adopted Meyer's (1988) measurements to assess perceived credibility, in which five levels of perceived credibility were proposed: Fair, unbiased, tell the whole story, accurate, and can be trusted. Thus, participants were asked to rate, on a 1 to 5 Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much), the following three statements: "This video is fair and unbiased"; "This video tells the whole story"; and "This video is trustworthy." ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.04$, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$).

Attitude Change

The Americans' attitude toward the Chinese people were measured before and after exposure to the stimulus by asking: "Generally speaking, what is your opinion of Chinese people?" Participants were asked to provide answers ranging from 1 (very unfavorable) to 5 (very favorable). Many previous studies and global survey institutions such as the Pew Research Center have adopted this measurement. We subsequently calculated the *attitude change* $\Delta att = att_{post} - att_{pre}$ ($M = 0.70$, $SD = 1.24$), which we used as a dependent variable.

Manipulation Check

To assess the degree to which the stimulus videos were perceived as one-sided/two-sided and as having in-group presence/absence, a separate manipulation check was conducted in which respondents were asked to indicate whether the video they watched could be seen as one-sided or two-sided and "our in-group members are included/not included." An independent sample *t*-test found that participants' perception of whether the video could be seen as two-sided was significantly higher for respondents under the two-sided information conditions ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.01$) than for participants under the one-sided

information condition ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.50$). A large effect size was detected (Cohen's $d = 2.03$). Similarly, an independent sample t -test found that participants' perception of the video as "in-group included" was significantly higher for respondents under the in-group presence condition ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.05$) than for participants under the in-group absence condition ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.98$). A very large effect size was also detected. Therefore, the manipulation was successful.

Results

A repeated analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to test the main hypotheses. Estimated marginal means and standard errors were reported in the results. It was hypothesized in H1 that participants would report more perceived credibility from exposure to two-sided narration and in-group narration than from exposure to one-sided narration and out-group narration. Results revealed that the effect of the exposure of narration perspective (one-sided/two-sided narration) on the perceived credibility was significant, $F(1, 423) = 11.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$. This means that participants exposed to the two-sided narration generate more feelings of credibility ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.96$) than those viewing the one-sided narration ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.09$). In addition, results showed that the effect of different narrators (in-group/out-group) was significant on the dependent variable of perceived credibility, $F(1, 423) = 10.36$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$. Participants exposed to narration by their in-group ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.00$) reported more perceived credibility than those viewing information narrated by the out-group members ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.07$). This result indicated that two-sided media exposure and in-group narrators could significantly increase perceived credibility regarding information compared with one-sided media exposure and out-group as narrators. Therefore, H1 was supported (see Table 1).

Table 1. ANCOVA Result for Perceived Credibility.

		<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p value</i>	η^2
Narration perspective	Two-sided	3.28	0.96	11.28	.0009	0.03
	One-sided	2.95	1.09			
Narration identity	In-group	3.27	1.00	10.36	.0014	0.02
	Out-group	2.95	1.07			
Perspective \times identity				5.82	.0163	0.01

Hypothesis 2 predicted that two-sided narration and in-group members as narrators in public diplomacy discourse would lead to more positive attitude change than one-sided narration and out-group narrators. Results indicated that the effect of media exposure to different narration perspectives was significant on attitude change, $F(1, 423) = 4.88$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$. Participants viewing the two-sided narration generated more positive feelings toward China ($M = 0.83$, $SD = 1.15$) than those viewing the one-sided narration ($M = 0.57$, $SD = 1.31$). Similarly, results showed that the effect of narration identity was significant on attitude change, $F(1, 423) = 7.31$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$, which means that participants exposed to information narrated by their in-group generated more positive feelings about the out-group ($M = 0.86$, $SD = 1.14$) than those viewing information narrated by the out-group ($M = 0.54$, $SD = 1.32$). This result revealed that two-sided narration and in-group narration have more persuasive power to promote favorable

foreign attitudes in mediated public diplomacy discourse than one-sided narration and out-group narration. Thus, H2 was supported (see Table 2).

Table 2. ANCOVA Result for Attitude Change.

		<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p value</i>	η^2
Narration perspective	Two-sided	0.83	1.15	4.88	.0277	0.01
	One-sided	0.57	1.31			
Narration identity	In-group	0.86	1.14	7.31	.0071	0.02
	Out-group	0.54	1.32			
Perspective × identity				2.28	.1324	0.01

To answer RQ1 and RQ2, a series of ANCOVAs was conducted. For both the analyses, narration perspective was entered as the independent variable, while narration identity was used as a moderator. Age, gender, and educational backgrounds were entered as covariates in the model, with perceived credibility and attitude change as dependent variables. Results indicated a significant interaction between narration perspective via narration identity on credibility, $F(1, 418) = 5.66, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.01$ (see Figure 1). Participants' perceived credibility regarding the information was the highest for those viewing the two-sided narration by in-group members ($M = 3.32, SD = 0.93$), and lowest for those viewing the one-sided narration by the out-group ($M = 2.67, SD = 1.07$).

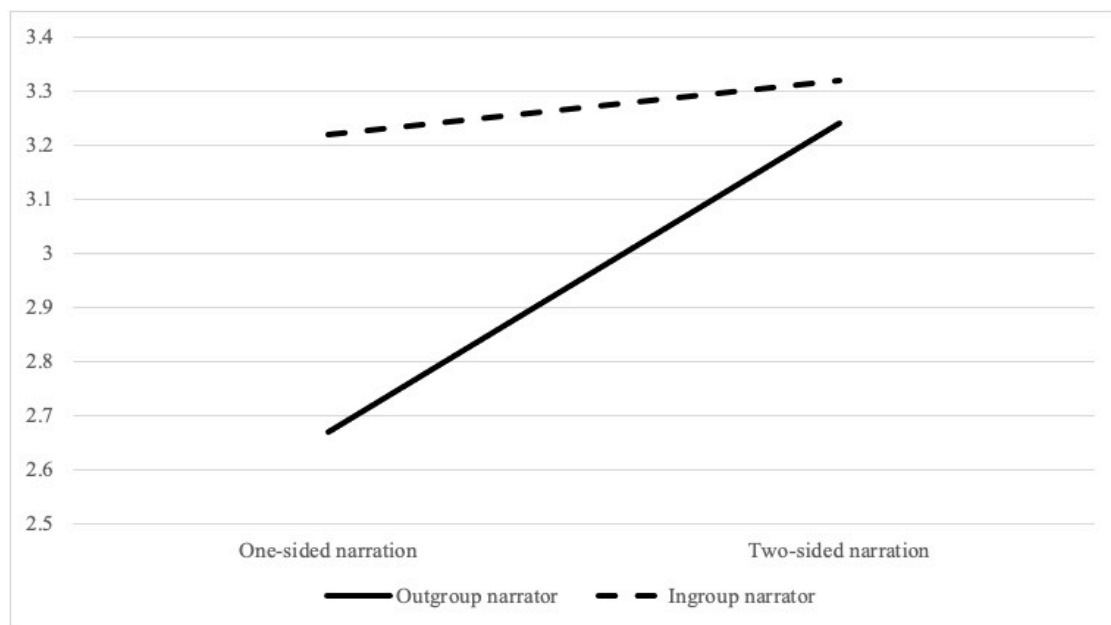


Figure 1. Interaction effect on perceived credibility.

Similarly, results revealed a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 418) = 5.19, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.01$ (see Figure 2). Specifically, participants exposed to the two-sided narration by the out-group members ($M = 0.81, SD = 1.18$) reported significantly more positive attitude change compared with participants exposed to the one-sided narration by the out-group ($M = 0.28, SD = 1.39$). For participants viewing information narrated by the in-group, attitude changes reported by those viewing the two-sided narration ($M = 0.86, SD = 1.12$) and those viewing the one-sided narration ($M = 0.86, SD = 1.17$) were similar.

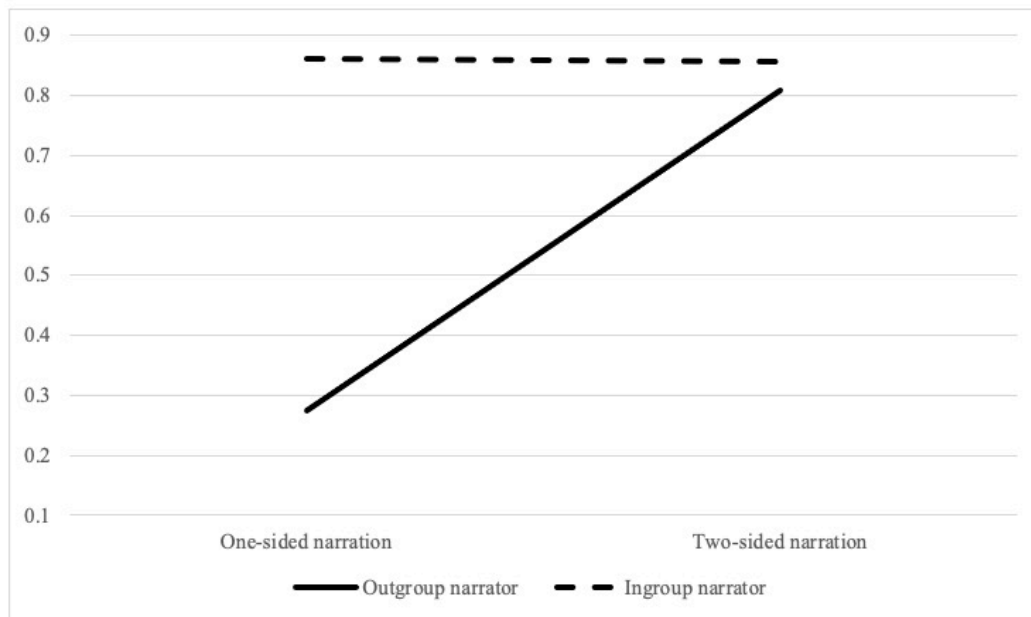


Figure 2. Interaction effect on attitude change.

In this study, we also sought to test if perceived credibility mediates the relationship between narration perspective/identity and attitude change. Hypotheses H3 and H4 predicted that perceived credibility would mediate the effect of narration perspective and narration identity on attitude change. To test these hypotheses, we estimated structural equation models. In the model estimations, exposure to different narration perspectives and narration identities were entered as the independent variables and they were dummy coded, with perceived credibility as the mediator and demographic information as control variables. Attitude change toward out-groups was entered as the dependent variable. Results revealed that the overall model was significant, $F(6, 418) = 73.6, p < .001, R^2 = 0.514$. We then examined the significance of direct, indirect, and total effects through bootstrapping with 1,000 samples to obtain standard errors and confidence intervals (CIs). Results indicated that perceived credibility significantly mediated the relationship between exposure to different narration perspectives (direct effect = -0.03 , bootstrap-generated $SE = 0.06$ and $CI: [-0.20, 0.13]$ at a significance level of 0.01; indirect effect = 0.25 , bootstrap-generated $SE = 0.06$ and $CI: [0.11, 0.40]$ at a significance level of 0.01; total effect = 0.224 , bootstrap-generated $SE = 0.08$ and $CI: [0.02, 0.43]$ at a significance level of 0.01) and attitude change. It also showed that perceived credibility significantly mediated the relationship between exposure to different narration identities (direct

effect = 0.05, bootstrap-generated $SE = 0.06$ and $CI: [-0.09, 0.20]$ at a significance level of 0.01; indirect effect = 0.27, bootstrap-generated $SE = 0.05$ and $CI: [0.13, 0.43]$ at a significance level of 0.01; total effect = 0.32, bootstrap-generated $SE = 0.08$ and $CI: [0.13, 0.53]$ at a significance level of 0.01) and attitude change (see Figure 3, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$). This result suggested that the total effects of narration perspective and/or narrator identity on attitude change are significant, and the total effects were mediated by the perceived credibility of the information. Therefore, watching the two-sided narration enhanced participants' perceived credibility, leading to more positive attitudes toward out-groups compared with watching one-sided media content. Also, the information narrated by the in-group increased people's perceived credibility, which consequently contributed to positive attitude change. Therefore, H3 and H4 were supported.

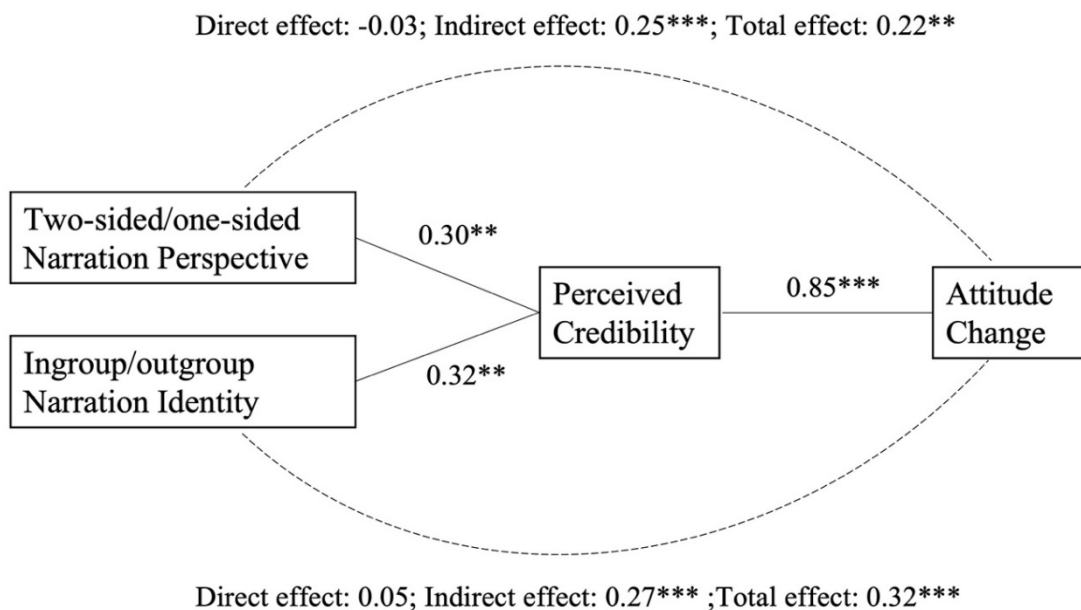


Figure 3. Indirect effects of narration perspective/identity on attitude change.

Discussion

To draw the attention of a targeted foreign public and to persuade and improve international attitudes, public diplomacy initiatives and practitioners need to have a reputation for providing accurate and trustworthy information. However, as the Chinese media have a decades-long reputation as a propaganda instrument of the Chinese state—in both domestic and international arenas—the credibility and related persuasive power of China's mediated diplomacy discourses remain unsatisfactory (Creemers, 2015). As Gass and Seiter (2008) claimed, credibility is in the eye of the beholder. Thus, those seeking to project credibility and subsequently engender favorable feelings through public diplomacy must adopt an audience-centered approach. In the present study, we focused on the acceptance side of mediated public diplomacy and empirically tested the effectiveness of two strategies of adopting two-sided narrations and including in-

group members as narrators in achieving public diplomacy's goal of improving foreign attitudes, which is mediated by increasing the perceived credibility of the source.

The findings of our study echo previous research's assumptions that two-sided information and in-group narrators can effectively increase source credibility, extending the application scope from marketing studies or intergroup communication to mediated public diplomacy. We also demonstrated that exposure to credible mediated public diplomacy content has opinion-changing and attitude-improving power. As predicted by the Elaboration Likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), people are more persuaded by strong arguments than they are by weak ones. Argument quality had a direct effect on attitudes toward a series of social issues. "Credibility" represents a profound feature reflecting a high-quality argument, and people are more open to considering arguments and information when such content is perceived as "credible." Credible information also has better potential to facilitate a "slow" and "systematic thinking." Systematic processing, as an effortful mode of thinking, is characterized as a "comprehensive, analytic orientation in which perceivers access all informational input for its relevance and importance to their judgmental task" (Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989, p. 212). Heuristic processing, by contrast, is described as "a more limited processing mode requiring much less cognitive effort and capacity than systematic processing" (Chaiken et al., 1989, p. 213). The credible, two-sided, and ingroup as tellers discourses are likely to be more engaging and carry more weight, thus prompting individuals to consider mediated public diplomacy more systematically and become more open to changing their attitudes.

In addition to examining the effectiveness of in-group narrators and two-sided narratives from the angle of increased source credibility enhancing mediated public diplomacy influence, the present study also provides explanations from an intergroup relations perspective, which helps illustrate why the two strategies have a direct impact on positive attitude change. This study draws on two social psychology theories, namely social comparison—especially downward social comparison—and extended intergroup contact, to offer insights into the results.

The Positive Effects of Negativity in Mediated Public Diplomacy

The process of downward social comparison involves comparing oneself with those who appear inferior, which is similar to the underdog effect. Although the underdog effect illustrates the human cognitive process from a micro perspective, it could be applied within some broader sociopolitical contexts. Individual motivations for sympathizing with the powerless and favoring the less competent can impact perceptions of out-groups and have profound explanatory and predictive power in understanding intergroup relations and international relations. For conflictive or competitive intergroups, exposure to media discourses portraying rivals using the underdog narrative may decrease feelings of threat and competitive victimhood. Specifically, for our U.S. participants, media content covering China's social problems in the countryside has some potential to lower the influence of the "Thucydides Trap" (which, in this context, means that a rising China would challenge the hegemonic status of the United States), thus easing the group anxiety accompanying superpower games.

By decreasing the feelings of intergroup threat, negative perceptions toward the out-group members can be reduced, and out-group empathy might be realized. Out-group empathy (or ethnocultural

empathy) refers to individuals from one social group coming to understand the perspective of members from potentially threatening or competitive groups. Since empathy likely evolved as a means for in-group members to detect and react to threats, out-group empathy should be rare (Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe, 2011). However, it seems plausible that empathy across group boundaries might help reduce group conflict and violence, thus improving intergroup relations. Considering the merit of group empathy, psychologists have explored when it might occur and found that perceived intergroup competition was negatively associated with group empathy (Sirin et al., 2017). In this vein, the underdog discourses describing China's social issues in rural areas convey the impression that China and the United States are not well-matched in strength, which decreases the competitive stress and possibly facilitates intergroup empathy.

Similarly, stereotype research claims that, in the United States, Asian people (including Chinese people) are often viewed as "cold and competent" and associated with an enviable stereotype (Fiske, 2018). When the provided media content depicts China's development difficulties and struggles of the Chinese people, it decreases the perceived competence accorded to them as an out-group, eases the envy against this stereotype, and promotes group empathy through conveying a sense of camaraderie and similarities in the struggles being experienced, and a sense of that "we all have a cross to bear." Therefore, two-sided information containing both positive and negative narrations of the "competitors" may trigger the audience's empathy and decrease the threatening feelings, which increases the trustworthiness of the information portrayed and consequently generates positive feelings.

Inclusiveness in Mediated Public Diplomacy and Extended Intergroup Contact

The second relevant theory that helps explain the experiment results on the effectiveness of in-group as narrator is extended intergroup contact. With the aim of promoting intergroup peace and mutual understanding, intergroup contact theory proposes that positive, direct intergroup contact may be central to reducing prejudice and intergroup conflict (Allport, 1954). Studies on identity suggest information is perceived as more credible when it comes from an in-group rather than out-groups because individuals may believe that information narrated by in-groups is close to their own attitudes. For example, Greenaway and colleagues (2015) conducted experiments and suggested that communication was perceived as more effective when their interlocutors were in-group members. Considering that actual contact among groups is not as practical and convenient as mediated intergroup contact, the latter was employed to increase the credibility of information and attenuate intergroup stereotypes.

Joyce and Harwood (2014) indicated that viewers have positive attitudes by vicarious mediated intergroup contact—a type of mediated intergroup contact—for example, watching videos depicting intergroup encounters. In our experiment, watching the perceived in-group members travel in China, make friends with Chinese people, and express their interest, trust, and empathy toward them was vicarious mediated intergroup contact. Through exposure to such media information, positive extended intergroup contact experiences were realized, and a sense of connectedness with Chinese out-group members was built among our American participants. Moreover, while direct contact may induce anxiety about the interaction (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), in our study, being an observer of a cross-group relationship was a relatively unthreatening experience. A group member may share the experience of out-group friendships with their in-group. Therefore, we suggest that the mechanisms of extended intergroup contact and the inclusion of

perceived in-group members (of the target audiences) as narrators in mediated public diplomacy practices may be sufficient to promote active voluntary exposure to, and discovery of, the out-group culture. This would thus contribute to achieving public diplomacy goals more effectively.

Finally, results from the interaction effects demonstrate that while the two strategies of two-sided narration and in-group narrator proved their capacity to increase credibility and foster favorable foreign attitudes, combining the two approaches did not provide additional effects. It could be suggested that, due to the decades-long negative reputation of China's propaganda campaigns and increasingly deteriorated bilateral relations, there's a ceiling effect regarding the influence of China's public diplomacy discourse on Americans. As the recent Pew Research Center (2022) report shows, unfavorable views of China have reached historic highs in the United States. Such negativity is not expected to change significantly in the short term or with just one experiment, which leaves a restricted space for public diplomacy interventions.

Conclusion

Although U.S.-China relations were intense before the outbreak of COVID-19, the pandemic has dramatically exacerbated their confrontational relationship with lasting damage to public health, social well-being, and geostrategic stability (Min, 2021). The United States has been permeated with extreme and divided narratives, adopting hawkish postures and policies against China, while China also conducted nationalist rhetoric and aggressive behavior, damaging its external reputation and relationships with many countries. As Kahl and Berengaut (2020) warn, even after the receding of the virus, the geopolitical wreckage left in its wake could be profound. As such, developing effective ways to repair the alienation, at both macro- and micro-levels, represents an urgent agenda for both policy-making experts and social science scholarship.

While the border closures caused by COVID-19 largely hinder direct contact among nations, which is seen as the "golden approach" for improving intergroup relations, our study examined whether trust, understanding, and favorable attitudes can be realized through effectively mediated public diplomacy. We focused on the acceptance side of public diplomacy discourses and empirically proved the potential of two narrating strategies of adopting two-sided narrations and including in-group as narrators in achieving public diplomacy's goal of improving foreign attitudes, which is mediated by increasing perceived source credibility. Although China and the United States were taken as our research case, the findings of this study have important implications for broader international communications at both official and people-to-people levels. Furthermore, it is significant for any country that aims to conduct nation branding and gain global support in the context of a world fraught with fear, uncertainty, and information deficiency.

Although our empirical results demonstrate the beneficial effects of two-sided narration and in-group narrators for gaining credibility and enhancing persuasive power, their implementation in mediated public diplomacy practices should be tactfully designed. For instance, in marketing research, Crowley and Hoyer (1994) claimed that positive effects can be expected for low to moderate amounts of negative information, as the gains in credibility may outweigh the losses in expected benefits. Too much negative information, however, increases the losses due to negative attributes of the product that eventually

outweigh the credibility gains. The authors of this study (Crowley and Hoyer, 1994) suggest that a similar trade-off between gains in credibility and negative effects would be noticed in mediated public diplomacy narratives. Moreover, the heterogeneity of in-group narrators (of targeted audiences) deserves careful examination. For example, Hillary Clinton, Bill Gates, Justin Bieber, and ordinary American people could all be viewed as part of the in-group of American audiences when they act as narrators in a Chinese media program but may produce different persuasive powers based on the target audience demographics.

References

- Albishri, O., Tarasevich, S., Proverbs, P., Kiouisis, S. K., & Alahmari, A. (2019). Mediated public diplomacy in the digital age: Exploring the Saudi and the U.S. governments' agenda-building during Trump's visit to the Middle East. *Public Relations Review*, 45(4), 101820. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.101820
- Allen, M. (1991). Meta-analysis comparing the persuasiveness of one-sided and two-sided messages. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 55(4), 390–404. doi:10.1080/10570319109374395
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
doi:10.4324/9781912282401
- Andsager, J. L., & Mastin, T. (2003). Racial and regional differences in readers' evaluations of the credibility of political columnists by race and sex. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80(1), 57–72. doi:10.1177/107769900308000105
- Bailard, C. S. (2016). China in Africa: An analysis of the effect of Chinese media expansion on African public opinion. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(4), 446–471.
doi:10.1177/1940161216646733
- Benkler, Y. (2013). WikiLeaks and the networked fourth estate. In B. Brevini, A. Hintz, & P. McCurdy (Eds.), *Beyond WikiLeaks* (pp. 11–34). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chaiken, S., Liberman, A., & Eagly, A. H. (1989). Heuristic and systematic processing within and beyond the persuasion context. In J. S. Uleman & J. A. Bargh (Eds.), *Unintended thought* (pp. 212–252). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Chang, C. (2013). Men's and women's responses to two-sided health news coverage: A moderated mediation model. *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*, 18(11), 1326–1344. doi:10.1080/10810730.2013.778363
- Chang, T. K., & Lin, F. (2014). From propaganda to public diplomacy: Assessing China's international practice and its image, 1950–2009. *Public Relations Review*, 40(3), 450–458.
doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.04.008

- Cheng, X., Gu, Y., Hua, Y., & Luo, X. R. (2021). The paradox of word-of-mouth in social commerce: Exploring the juxtaposed impacts of source credibility and information quality on SWOM spreading. *Information & Management*, 58(7), 103505. doi:10.1016/j.im.2021.103505
- Chiang, Y.-S. (2021). Indirect reciprocity for mitigating intergroup hostility: A vignette experiment and an agent-based model on intergroup relations between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 65(2-3), 403-426. doi:10.1177/0022002720962209
- Cikara, M., Bruneau, E. G., & Saxe, R. R. (2011). Us and them: Intergroup failures of empathy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20(3), 149-153. doi:10.1177/0963721411408713
- Creemers, R. (2015). Never the twain shall meet? Rethinking China's public diplomacy policy. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 8(3), 306-322. doi:10.1080/17544750.2015.1046187
- Crowley, A. E., & Hoyer, W. D. (1994). An integrative framework for understanding two-sided persuasion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(4), 561-574. doi:10.1086/209370
- Cull, N. J. (2008). Public diplomacy: Taxonomies and histories. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 31-54. doi:10.1177/0002716207311952
- Dodd, M. D., & Collins, S. J. (2017). Public relations message strategies and public diplomacy 2.0: An empirical analysis using Central-Eastern European and Western Embassy Twitter accounts. *Public Relations Review*, 43(2), 417-425. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.02.004
- Edney, K. (2014). *The globalization of Chinese propaganda: International power and domestic political cohesion*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1057/9781137382153
- Eisend, M. (2007). Understanding two-sided persuasion: An empirical assessment of theoretical approaches. *Psychology & Marketing*, 24(7), 615-640. doi:10.1002/mar.20176
- Eisend, M. (2010). Explaining the joint effect of source credibility and negativity of information in two-sided messages. *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(11), 1032-1049. doi:10.1002/mar.20372
- Eller, A., Abrams, D., & Gomez, A. (2012). When the direct route is blocked: The extended contact pathway to improving intergroup relations. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 36(5), 637-646. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2012.03.005
- Entman, R. M. (2008). Theorizing mediated public diplomacy: The U.S. case. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13(2), 87-102. doi:10.1177/1940161208314657
- Fang, K., & Mutz, D. C. (2016, August 31). *Communist party's soft power in cross-national persuasion videos: Shaping China's image among overseas audiences*. Paper presented at APSA Preconference, Philadelphia, PA.

- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117–140. doi:10.1177/001872675400700202
- Fiske, S. T. (2018). Stereotype content: Warmth and competence endure. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27(2), 67–73. doi:10.1177/0963721417738825
- Flanagin, A. J., & Metzger, M. J. (2000). Perceptions of Internet information credibility. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(3), 515–540. doi:10.1177/107769900007700304
- Flanagin, A. J., & Metzger, M. J. (2011). From Encyclopædia Britannica to Wikipedia: Generational differences in the perceived credibility of online encyclopedia information. *Information, Communication & Society*, 14(3), 355–374. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2010.542823
- Flanagin, A. J., Winter, S., & Metzger, M. J. (2018). Making sense of credibility in complex information environments: The role of message sidedness, information source, and thinking styles in credibility evaluation online. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(7), 1038–1056. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2018.1547411
- Fogg, B. J., & Tseng, H. (1999). The elements of computer credibility. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 80–87). New York, NY: ACM. doi:10.1145/302979.303001
- Fullerton, J., & Kendrick, A. (2013). Strategic uses of mediated public diplomacy: International reaction to U.S. tourism advertising. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(9), 1332–1349. doi:10.1177/0002764213487737
- Gass, R. H., & Seiter, J. S. (2008). Credibility and public diplomacy. In N. Snow & N. Cull (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy* (pp. 174–185). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gilboa, E. (2000). Mass communication and diplomacy: A theoretical framework. *Communication Theory*, 10(3), 275–309. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2000.tb00193.x
- Gilboa, E. (2008). Searching for a theory of public diplomacy. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 55–77. doi:10.1177/0002716207312142
- Golan, G. J. (2013). An integrated approach to public diplomacy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(9), 1251–1255. doi:10.1177/0002764213487711
- Greenaway, K. H., Wright, R. G., Willingham, J., Reynolds, K. J., & Haslam, S. A. (2015). Shared identity is key to effective communication. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(2), 171–182. doi:10.1177/0146167214559709

- Gregory, B. (2008). Public diplomacy: Sunrise of an academic field. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 274–290. doi:10.1177/0002716207311723
- Harwood, J. (2017). Music and intergroup relations: Exacerbating conflict and building harmony through music. *Review of Communication Research*, 5(2017), 1–34. doi:10.12840/issn.2255-4165.2017.05.01.012
- Hernández, M., & Madrid-Morales, D. (2020). Diversifying voice, democratizing the news? A content analysis of citizen news sources in Spanish-language international broadcasting. *Journalism Studies*, 21(8), 1076–1092. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2020.1734857
- Jaworsky, B. N., & Qiaoan, R. (2021). The politics of blaming: The narrative battle between China and the US over COVID-19. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 26(2021), 295–315. doi:10.1007/s11366-020-09690-8
- Jia, R., & Li, W. (2020). Public diplomacy networks: China's public diplomacy communication practices in Twitter during two sessions. *Public Relations Review*, 46(1), 101818. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.101818
- Jones, L. W., Sinclair, R. C., & Courneya, K. S. (2003). The effects of source credibility and message framing on exercise intentions, behaviors, and attitudes: An integration of the elaboration likelihood model and prospect theory. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 33(1), 179–196. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2003.tb02078.x
- Joyce, N., & Harwood, J. (2014). Improving intergroup attitudes through televised vicarious intergroup contact: Social cognitive processing of ingroup and outgroup information. *Communication Research*, 41(5), 627–643. doi:10.1177/0093650212447944
- Kahl, C., & Berengaut, A. (2020, April 10). *Aftershocks: The coronavirus pandemic and the new world disorder. War on the rocks*. Retrieved from <https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/aftershocks-the-coronavirus-pandemic-and-the-new-world-disorder/>
- Kendrick, A., & Fullerton, J. A. (2004). Advertising as public diplomacy: Attitude change among international audiences. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44(3), 297–311. doi:10.1017/S0021849904040255
- Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S., Jr. (2000). Globalization: What's new? What's not? (And so what?). *Foreign Policy*, 118(Spring, 2000), 104–119. doi:10.2307/1149673
- Kohama, S., Inamasu, K., & Tago, A. (2017). To denounce, or not to denounce: Survey experiments on diplomatic quarrels. *Political Communication*, 34(2), 243–260. doi:10.1080/10584609.2016.1200700

- Lee, S. T., & Kim, H. S. (2021). Nation branding in the COVID-19 era: South Korea's pandemic public diplomacy. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 17(4), 382–396. doi:10.1057/s41254-020-00189-w
- Lin, X., Spence, P. R., & Lachlan, K. A. (2016). Social media and credibility indicators: The effect of influence cues. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 63(2016), 264–271. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2016.05.002
- Long, H., Zhang, Y., & Tu, S. (2019). Rural vitalization in China: A perspective of land consolidation. *Journal of Geographical Sciences*, 29(4), 517–530. doi:10.1007/s11442-019-1599-9
- Mackie, D., Gastardo-Conaco, M., & Skelly, J. (1992). Knowledge of the advocated position and the processing of in-group and out-group persuasive messages. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18(2), 145–151. doi:10.1177/0146167292182005
- Mason, L. (2018). *Uncivil agreement: How politics became our identity*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mayweg-Paus, E., & Jucks, R. (2017). Conflicting evidence or conflicting opinions? Two-sided expert discussions contribute to experts' trustworthiness. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 37(2), 203–223. doi:10.1177/0261927X17716102
- Meyer, P. (1988). Defining and measuring credibility of newspapers: Developing an index. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 65(3), 567–574. doi:10.1177/107769908806500301
- Miller, D. T., & Effron, D. A. (2010). Psychological license: When it is needed and how it functions. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 43(3), 115–155. doi:10.1016/S0065-2601(10)43003-8
- Min, Y. (2021). The COVID-19 effect: US-China narratives and realities. *The Washington Quarterly*, 44(1), 89–105. doi:10.1080/0163660X.2021.1893513
- Min, B., & Luqiu, L. R. (2020). How propaganda techniques leverage their advantages: A cross-national study of the effects of Chinese international propaganda on the U.S. and South Korean audiences. *Political Communication*, 38(3), 305–325. doi:10.1080/10584609.2020.1763524
- Morales, P. S. (2021). Mind the (cultural) gap: International news channels and the challenge of attracting Latin American audiences. *Media, Culture & Society*, 43(4), 648–663. doi:10.1177/0163443720972307
- Mugny, G., Tafani, E., Falomir-Pichastor, J. M., & Layat, C. (2000). Source credibility, social comparison and social influence. *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale*, 13(3), 151–175.

- NBC News. (2020). *Asian Americans report over 650 racist acts over last week, new data says*. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/asian-americans-report-nearly-500-racist-acts-over-last-week-n1169821>
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.
- Pettigrew, T. F., Christ, O., Wagner, U., & Stellmacher, J. (2007). Direct and indirect intergroup contact effects on prejudice: A normative interpretation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 31(4), 411–425. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2006.11.003
- Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5), 751–783. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (pp. 123–205). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Pew Research Center. (2022, September 28). *How global public opinion of China has shifted in the Xi Era*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2022/09/28/how-global-public-opinion-of-china-has-shifted-in-the-xi-era/>
- Phua, J., Jin, S. V., & Kim, J. J. (2017). Gratifications of using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat to follow brands: The moderating effect of social comparison, trust, tie strength, and network homophily on brand identification, brand engagement, brand commitment, and membership intention. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(1), 412–424. doi:10.1016/j.tele.2016.06.004
- Pornpitakpan, C. (2004). The persuasiveness of source credibility: A critical review of five decades' evidence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(2), 243–281.
- Sheafer, T., & Gabay, I. (2009). Mediated public diplomacy: A strategic contest over international agenda building and frame building. *Political Communication*, 26(4), 447–467. doi:10.1080/10584600903297240
- Sirin, C. V., Valentino, N. A., & Villalobos, J. D. (2017). The social causes and political consequences of group empathy. *Political Psychology*, 38(3), 427–448. doi:10.1111/pops.12352
- Snow, N., & Taylor, P. M. (Eds.). (2009). *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Stephan, W. G., & Stephan, C. W. (2000). An integrated threat theory of prejudice. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Reducing prejudice and discrimination: Social psychological perspectives* (pp. 23–45). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worshel & W. Austin (Eds.), *The psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.
- Tam, T., Hewstone, M., Kenworthy, J., & Cairns, E. (2009). Intergroup trust in Northern Ireland. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*(1), 45–59. doi:10.1177/0146167208325004
- Tombleson, B., & Wolf, K. (2017). Rethinking the circuit of culture: How participatory culture has transformed cross-cultural communication. *Public Relations Review, 43*(1), 14–25. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.10.017
- Umejei, E. (2018). Chinese media in Africa: Between promise and reality. *African Journalism Studies, 39*(2), 104–120. doi:10.1080/23743670.2018.1473275
- Vandello, J. A., Michniewicz, K., & Goldschmied, N. (2011). Moral judgments of the powerless and powerful in violent intergroup conflicts. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 47*(6), 1173–1178. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2011.04.009
- Voca, S., Graf, S., & Rugar, M. (2023). Victimhood beliefs are linked to willingness to engage in intergroup contact with the former adversary through empathy and trust. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 26*(3), 696–719. doi:10.1177/13684302221084859
- Walster, E., Aronson, E., & Abrahams, D. (1966). On increasing the persuasiveness of a low prestige communicator. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 2*(4), 325–342. doi:10.1016/0022-1031(66)90026-6
- Wang, J. (Ed.). (2011). *Soft power in China: Public diplomacy through communication*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wasserman, H., & Madrid-Morales, D. (2018). How influential are Chinese media in Africa? An audience analysis in Kenya and South Africa. *International Journal of Communication, 12*, 2212–2231.
- Wilson, E. J., & Sherrell, D. L. (1993). Source effects in communication and persuasion research: A meta-analysis of effect size. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 21*(1993), 101–112. doi:10.1007/BF02894421
- Wojcieszak, M. (2021). What predicts selective exposure online: Testing political attitudes, credibility, and social identity. *Communication Research, 48*(5), 687–716. doi:10.1177/0093650219844868
- Zhang, T., Kim, J. Y., Mohr, T.L., Myslik, B. A., Khalitova, L., & Golan, G. J., & Kiouisis, S. (2017). Agenda-building role of state-owned media around the world: 2014 Hong Kong protest case. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 29*(5), 238–254. doi:10.1080/1062726X.2017.1396988