

## **Do International Students' Direct Experiences With the Host Country Lead to Strong Attitude-Behavior Relations? Advancing Public Diplomacy Research and Beyond**

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The attitude-behavior (AB) relation with direct experience has produced a decades-long debate between two camps. Early on, Regan and Fazio first argued for a strong AB relation, whereas Schlegel and DiTecco found the opposite. This article examines the issue in the context of the attitudinal domain of international students as to their host country. Using the SEM technique to analyze a survey of 300 Chinese students in Korea, the study found a weak AB relation among the whole group and indicated that more direct experience led to a weaker AB relation in two split subgroups (long stay vs. short stay). This article discusses the implications not only for public diplomacy research on international students but for attitude literature in general.

*Keywords: public diplomacy, international students, direct experience*

Research on international students is resurging as the sojourners have gained more significance for public diplomacy than ever before. Research stalled during the 1990s as the Cold War was winding down, and the decline continued into the 2000s. The stagnation of academic research in the field speaks, symbolically, to the diminishing interest on the American side. The 1990s and onward have not seen,<sup>2</sup> for example, the once-a-decade volume on the current state of research affairs from *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, a leading journal that began in the 1950s and continued for almost 40 years, producing a state-of-the-art review of research every decade up until 1987.

Subsequently, research interest returned, rekindled by the expansion of the global education market at the turn of the 21st century. The global market for education has increased by 75% since 2000, growing to 3.43 million in 2009 (UNESCO, 2010). It is now forecast to almost triple by 2025, to 8 million (Goddard, 2012). For now, the challenge for public diplomacy research is clear: whether to put “the old wine” (i.e., international students) into “the old bottle” (i.e., old practices of research) or to explore a new direction based on critical learning from the past.

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There is no doubt that public diplomacy research centers on how the study abroad experience shapes students' attitudes toward their host country, which in turn leads to behaviors relevant to public diplomacy. In this regard, Flack's (1976) review, among the voluminous early literature, still resonates today. The research was, he concluded, preoccupied with an attitude primacy: The focal concept is attitude toward the host country being the primary dependent variable to be explained. This view is still relevant today. Accordingly, the main research thrust has turned to attitude formation (i.e., the causes of attitude). What is most striking, though, is that the literature has not paid as much attention to the causal link between attitude and behavior. After all, attempts to understand attitude are meaningful only if attitude proves to be the key to behavior.

Although Flack did not go on to discuss why this tendency exists, a possible reason might be the assumption that attitude has a strong, causal relation with behavior. This assumption could seem more viable with support from Fazio and his associates' program of research on strong attitude-behavior (AB) relations with direct experience-based attitude (Regan & Fazio, 1977). The implicit rationale would be that an attitude formed through a direct experience has a strong AB relation; international students' attitudes, due to their direct experience with the host country, surely leads to behavior; therefore, it would suffice to stop at the attitude study without proving the final path. Opposite to Fazio's view, however, is Schlegel and DiTecco's (1982) long-standing school of thought. This camp argues for a weak AB relation with direct experience: An attitude formed through a direct experience has a weak, causal relation with behavior. Their debate further continues in the general literature on attitude.

If it should turn out to be that direct experience leads to a weak AB relation, what is the point of so many past studies with attitude primacy on international students? The research focus must have misguided the studies. More troubling is that research from 2000 onward has increasingly subscribed back to attitude primacy (Han, Chen, & Fang, 2013; Han & Zweig, 2010; Korean Educational Developmental Institute, 2010; Lee, 2013; Yun & Vibber, 2012). Moreover, practitioners of public diplomacy are simply content with discovering foreign students' positive attitude toward the host country: "Among the lessons of 9/11 is that our educational and cultural exchanges, be they of young leaders, academics, students, or others are almost always positive, literally transforming, experiences," Charlotte L. Beers, a former under secretary of state for public diplomacy, said in a congressional hearing. "This is a hugely significant conclusion" (Beers, 2003, p. 2).

Hence, current affairs make it vital and urgent to verify attitude primacy. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the research practice is viable by examining whether direct experience leads to a strong or weak AB relation. To this end, the study employs structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze a survey of Chinese students in Korea. The findings offer significant theoretical implications for both public diplomacy research on international students and the general literature of attitude, in addition to providing guidance for practitioners on how to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of exchange programs. This article begins with a review of the literature of public diplomacy on international students from the perspective of attitude theory, constructs two competing models (Fazio's and Schlegel's) for the causal structure of the attitudinal domain regarding Korea among the Chinese, and arrives at three hypotheses to test.

### **Review of Public Diplomacy Literature**

The history of public diplomacy research on international students can be broken into two periods. The first occurred during the Cold War era (between the early 1950s and the 1980s); the second, newly burgeoning period began in the late 2000s. As Morris (1956) rightly noted, the older literature set out with

the sole focus on attitude formation and change, delving into what caused "the images of America" held by foreign students. In so doing, the literature did not make as many clear-cut distinctions between constructs of the attitudinal domain as there are today. Presenting the findings from the mid-1950s, Selltitz and Cook (1962) stated, "We are using 'attitudes' to refer to students' statements of beliefs, feelings, and evaluations" (p. 8). By the current practices, the images of America in the literature do not fit into the mainstream notion of attitude, defined specifically as a summary evaluation of an object, or as the overall degree of favorability (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000). Rather, almost all of the studies treated and measured foreign students' beliefs on the attributes of America as their attitude. Hence, the images of America were in fact a set of cognitive responses to the country's whole array of attributes. Thus, a more accurate term for the literature's attitude primacy would be "a belief primacy," where belief formation (factors) and change are at the center as the final dependent variables.

Set in this milieu, the work of Davis (1971) embodied the typical methods used for measuring the images of America at the time. He assessed the beliefs of Turkish returnees from America on five broad aspects of the country: (1) social structure (political/economical), (2) American character or personality, (3) education, (4) diplomacy, and (5) family life. Concurrently, the literature, upon measures of "the images," set out to comprehensively study their potential antecedents of individual, cultural, political, and sociological nature. According to Selltitz and Cook (1962), among the factors considered were the individual student's preconception (e.g., before-attitude/expectations) and motivation, cultural distance or similarity ("contrast-effects"), between-country political relations, cultural adaptation and social contact with the host nationals, and national status ("the two-way mirror"). This framework of research served as the hotbed for a prolific body of public diplomacy research over the following four decades. But at the same time, as observed today, it confined the boundary of research to the attitude primacy view, with a focus only on attitude formation/change.

Reviewing the literature as a whole, Flack (1976) stated that attitude studies abounded, but research on the AB relation was scarce: "We have studies on attitudes, stereotypes, and links—but how these relate to action, public behavior, or the existence of influence within the national and international circumstances has not been adequately researched." (p. 117). More than 30 years later, his observation still regrettably holds true for a new generation of research: Burgeoning studies are following in the footsteps of the earlier research and are guided by attitude primacy, with a minor difference. Recent studies from China, Japan, Korea, and the United States tend to make a distinction between beliefs and attitude, and define attitude as a global summary evaluation of the host country. But they still hold on to the same staples of research question and theory imbued with attitude primacy.

In Han and Zweig (2010), the focal dependent variable was the attitude of Chinese student returnees toward their host country, Japan. Their attitude was highly favorable—statistically much more so than their views on six other countries, including America, used for comparison. Han and Zweig concluded that attracting foreign students is "a wise policy, as it enhances a host country's soft power [favorable attitude]" (2010, p. 304). Lee (2013) tested a structural path model for attitude formation among Chinese students in Korea in order to determine the impact of national status, between-country political relations, and cultural adaptation on their attitudes toward Korea. In a similar vein, Han, Chen, and Fang (2013) found a favorable attitude among Chinese scholars and students toward their host country, the United States, and examined the influence of values such as nationalism and ethnocentrism on attitude.

Amid this return of the old paradigm, a critical look at Zweig and Han (2007) makes a case for doubting the strong AB relation assumption underlying attitude primacy. They measured the attitude of 1,38

1 Chinese student returnees toward Japan in overall favorability. Through a multiple regression analysis, Zweig and Han examined the influence of attitude, along with other factors, on the students' professional interactions with Japanese colleagues—an important behavioral outcome for public diplomacy. As in the case of Han and Zweig (2010), the returnees showed a strong favorability toward Japan, equivalent to a score of 72 on a 100-point scale; yet, their attitude turned out to have a small, insignificant effect ( $\beta = .16$ ) on partnership behavior. That is, their attitude was significantly favorable, but did not exert a strong influence on behavior. Most important, this finding suggests that focusing only on attitude and conclusions from the favorable attitude likely fails to support any claim of success in achieving behavioral goals for public diplomacy.

However, Zweig and Han's (2007) study is not without problems. Its finding of a weak AB relation is not based within the causal structure of the Chinese's attitudinal domain regarding Japan. This is because research—old and new alike—on international students has not attempted to study the causal structure of their attitudinal domain regarding the host country, perhaps due to a preoccupation with belief (the old literature) or attitude (the new) primacy.

### **Conceptualization**

#### ***Fazio's Complete Mediation Model for Direct Experience-Based Attitude***

International students forge their attitude toward the host country through direct experiences with it. Fazio's research program on direct experience, however, has not delved into the causal structure of the direct experience-based attitudinal domain. Instead, the research focused on a single path (i.e., the AB relation), partly as a response to the crisis of attitude concept in the decade following Wicker's (1969) review of 47 empirical studies on attitude. Concluding that attitudes were generally "unrelated or only slightly related to overt behaviors" (p. 65), Wicker argued that attitude-behavior correlations were rarely above .30 and, therefore, rarely accounted for more than 10% of the behavioral variance. The conceptual line of work in reaction to the crisis, including Fazio's, attempted to identify the moderating factors that make attitudes more or less predict behaviors and to probe the processes leading to such strong or weak AB relations.

Regan and Fazio (1977) first distinguished two general modes of attitude formation—one formed through a direct behavioral interaction with the object and the other through an indirect, nonbehavioral experience. They went on to find empirical evidence that people who form their attitude based on direct experience with an attitude object show greater AB relation than do those whose attitude is built upon indirect experience. This moderating effect was attributed to the unique nature of a direct experience-based attitude, such that it is "more clearly, confidently, and stably maintained than an attitude formed through indirect experience" (Regan and Fazio, 1977, p. 231).

A stream of research followed parsing qualities of the attitude itself: Direct experience was found to produce strong AB relations by strengthening attitudinal confidence (Fazio & Zanna, 1978a, 1978b) and clarity (Fazio & Zanna, 1978b). Later research further elaborated the process: Attitudes formed by direct experience are characterized by strong object-evaluation associations, making the attitudes highly accessible from memory, which in turn leads to strong AB relations (Fazio, Chen, McDonel, & Sherman, 1982; Fazio & Williams, 1986).

Those studies and others, mostly experimental, compiled evidence of strong AB relations when attitudes were formed by direct experience: correlations of .54 (Regan & Fazio, 1977), .52 (Fazio & Zanna,

1978a), .70 (Fazio & Zanna, 1978b), .78 (Berger & Mitchell, 1989), and .80 (Doll & Mallü, 1990). The link between direct experience and strong AB relations was consistently supported by subsequent large-scale meta-analyses (Cooke & Sheeran, 2004; Glasman & Albarracín, 2006; Kraus, 1995).

As such, the literature addressed the nature and characteristics of direct experience-based attitude, but left largely unexamined its immediate, prior causal path—the belief-attitude (BA) relation. Thus, it requires interpretation to establish the characteristics of a BA relation that results in strong AB relations, and to ultimately determine the type of causal structure for a direct experience-based attitude. The BA relation, in fact, has been known as “affect-cognition consistency” (or a-c consistency) in the tradition of the multicomponent view of attitude. Norman (1975) viewed it as a structural characteristic of attitude that affects the AB relation, and found that attitudes (i.e., affective measures) with high a-c consistency yielded a stronger influence on behavior than those with low consistency. For groups with high a-c consistency that displayed stronger AB relations, the correlations between affective and cognitive measures across the three experiments were quite strong: .87, .89, and .88. The attitude Norman examined was not one of direct experience in nature; he studied attitudes about volunteering for psychological research.

His findings are nevertheless applicable to understanding direct experience-based attitudes. Once high a-c consistency is determined to be a structural property for more stable and clearer attitude with strong AB relations, so should the consistency for direct experience-based attitudes. Then, from the uniview's perspective, the a-c consistency indeed becomes the state in which belief has a strong causal impact on attitude—that is, a strong BA relation, which is the prerequisite condition for a strong AB relation. In the logic of the uniview, the presence of strong BA and AB relations weakens the direct path from belief to behavior. Hence, the resulting causal structure for strong AB relations with direct experience-based attitude should be the complete mediation model. In support of this view, Ajzen and Fishbein (1977)—reviewing the extant research, mostly experimental—argued not only that beliefs and attitudes are highly related, with correlations between .60 and .80, but also that correlations between attitude and behavior are greater than .40. In addition, no significant direct impact was found resulting from belief to behavioral intention (Lutz, 1977). To conclude, the conceptual discussion so far following Fazio's line of research predicts the complete model to represent international students' attitudinal causal structure as to the host nation.

### ***Schlegel's Partial Mediation Model for Direct Experience-Based Attitude***

While Fazio's complete mediation model is constructed from strong AB relations to strong BA relations in a deductive, bottom-up fashion, an alternative causal structure predicated on the perspective of Schlegel (1975) is derived from belief in an inductive, top-down method: a partial mediation model. His argument for weak AB relations with direct experience-based attitudes accompanies a partial causal structure, whose core theoretical logic flows from the belief structure: A complex belief system sets out two separate causal paths, one through BA to AB and another directly to behavior.

The nature of belief has been the most studied aspect of the attitude structure, according to Ajzen (1989). Prior to Schlegel (1975), Scott (1969) developed indices to tap into the structural properties of belief within four domains of cognition: nations, celebrities, acquaintances, and self. Among the indices are, for example, dimensionality, which is defined as the degree to which a subject distinguishes among the beliefs regarding an attitude object (e.g., a nation); affective-evaluative consistency, referring to a mode of cognitive integration in which objects are liked to the extent that they are seen as possessing desirables—that is, for the uniview, the degree of BA relations and for the multiview, affective-cognitive consistency. Scott (1969) then found that in structures of low dimensionality (a few dimensions), the BA relation tends

to be strong. He further hypothesized that increased knowledge of the attitude object makes the belief structure more complex and differentiated (with more dimensions), making it hard for a single affective response to sufficiently capture the multidimensional structure.

It is Schlegel (1975) and Schlegel and DiTecco (1982) who most thoroughly applied a theoretical and empirical approach to the structural properties of the belief system. The researchers, linking the properties to varying AB relations, argued for weak AB relations with direct experience-based attitudes and a partial model for the attitudes' causal structure. Moreover, they further developed a set of indices of the belief structure from previous research, based on a high-order, factorial conceptualization of the structure. Their indices consisted of differentiation, organization, centrality, and complexity, among which Schlegel and DiTecco (1982) emphasized the critical importance of centrality for AB relations. Centrality refers to the importance of the highest-order, underlying dimension for explaining the total communality of the solution and is interpreted as the degree of integration of belief attributes into a single affective dimension. In the uniview's frame, centrality determines the AB relation, such that a complex belief structure is not sufficiently captured by a single general evaluative dimension (i.e., weak BA relation); therefore, the dimension has a weak impact on behavior (i.e., weak AB relation), while belief itself is directly related to behavior.

Overall, for them, it is direct experience that engenders a complex belief structure, weak AB relations, and a partial-mediation causal structure. As for the link from direct experience to a complex belief structure, Schlegel (1975) compared belief structures across five groups with different stages of marijuana use (nonuse, initial use, causal, occasional, and regular use). He found that the more direct experience the group had with marijuana, the more complex its belief structure, with less centrality and a greater differentiation. Schlegel and DiTecco (1982) then investigated the link between belief structure and AB relation and found evidence for weak AB relations with more experience: A more experienced group with complex belief structures yielded a correlation of .18, compared with .36 for a less experienced group with more integrated structures.

As such, when considering the moderating impact of direct experience on the AB relation, Schlegel's argument stands opposite to Fazio's. The possible reason for the contradictory findings, Ajzen (1989) interpreted, may lie in the different nature of the direct experiences and, thus, the attitude objects in their respective studies. Not all direct experiences are the same in nature, nor are all attitude objects. In support of Ajzen's point, studies by Fazio and his colleagues examined, mostly, direct experiences with simple attitude objects (e.g., puzzles) in experimental settings. International students' direct experiences with the host nation, in contrast, should be far more complex than experiences with puzzles and even marijuana because a country, as an attitude object, can be all too complex—with its people, culture, social institutions, political/economic system, foreign policy, history, and weather/landscapes, to name a few. Direct experiences through living and studying in the host country are thus bound to make the sojourners' beliefs about the nation quite complex, leading to the partial mediation causal structure within which weak AB relations result. In fact, from the very beginning, public diplomacy literature on international students has been replete with consensual findings on their complex beliefs. "The sojourn and educational experience," Flack (1976) argued, "tends to engender a more sophisticated, differentiated, personalized, and concretized knowledge and perception of the host society, its achievements and problems, its peoples and policies, and of its ways of life" (p. 111). His original observation of the sojourners' differentiated, ambivalent, and complex beliefs is still relevant today and can be applied to a range of countries. Reflecting on his study abroad experience in the United Kingdom, Joseph Nye also attested to it: "At the end of two years I thought I can see Britain's faults and I can see Britain's greatnesses and they are all mixed up together" (as cited in Leonard, Stead, & Smewing, 2002, p. 19). In sum, such a conceptual construction based on Schlegel's logic expect

ts the partial mediation model to fit the casual structure of international students' attitude toward the host nation.

### Hypotheses

- *Hypothesis 1. Schlegel's partial mediation model should outperform Fazio's complete mediation model in fitting the attitudinal domain of Chinese students regarding their host country, Korea.*
- *Hypothesis 2. The strength of the AB relation among the Chinese should turn out to be weak.*
- *Hypothesis 3. Direct experience should have a moderating effect on the strength of the AB relation: the more direct experience, the weaker the AB relation.*

### Method

#### Sample

A total of 310 Chinese students studying at two universities in Seoul, Korea, participated in a survey on campus and in class between April and May 2012. Of the 310 questionnaires returned, 10 turned out to be unusable due to various degrees of missing data; the remaining 300, with complete data, were used as a convenient sample for analysis. The researcher initially worded the questionnaire in Korean, which was then translated into Chinese by a bilingual Chinese and put under review by another bilingual Chinese to ensure translation accuracy. Both translators were graduate students at the researcher's department. In terms of demographics, males and females accounted for 35% (105) and 65% (195), respectively; the average age was 24 years; the average length of stay was 31.68 months, or approximately two and half years. As for the levels of study, 78% of the students (234) were undergraduates, 16.7% (50) graduate students, and 5.3% (16) language-course takers.

### Construct Instrumentation and Specification

**Country belief.** A belief in each attribute of Korea was measured using the evaluation-laden statement format (Kelleher, Kuncek, & Kharaman, 2003; Liu & Mizerski, 2002) instead of a semantic differential format. Liu and Mizerski, in particular, found that their Chinese subjects for some cultural reason tended to better understand the statement format. Thus, Chinese subjects in this study were asked to respond to valence-laden statements on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree"). In the literature of country-of-origin, where country belief has been extensively studied, Li, Fu, and Murray (1997) specified country belief as a reflective second-order model with three subdimensions—political, economic, and technologic—for which Martin and Eroglu (1993) developed a 14-item scale. In parallel with Li et al., the current study specifies Chinese students' country belief to be a reflective second-order latent construct, but with four subdimensions and a total of 11 items included: public life (three items), techno-economic (three items), diplomatic (three items), and natural landscape/historical heritage (two items). The dimension of public life, for example, concerns the state of public life in Korean society in regards to public services offered by the government and the maturity of the country's civil citizenship. (See Table 1 for a list of the items.)

The belief construct can also be based on a formative structure, as argued by Roth and Diamantopoulos (2006), in which different sets of beliefs on attributes hierarchically cause and form—rather than are reflective of and caused by—the latent construct of country belief. The formative model, however, was judged to perform disservice to assessing the reliability of the belief construct in both competing models of this study. First, the complete mediation model, with only one path emitting from belief to attitude, can on

ly be identified by fixing the construct-level error term for belief to zero (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). Second, although the partial mediation model has two paths from belief to both attitude and behavior (MacCallum & Browne, 1993), the model is identifiable only by imposing on belief the same problematic assumption of zero measurement error, owing to the model's unique rank condition (i.e., a partial mediation system). To resolve this type of identification problem, Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2003) recommended adding a priori two reflective indicators to belief. To the formative construct "consumer satisfaction," they suggested adding two reflective indicators (i.e., two consequences of the construct and, for example, the overall satisfaction felt). However, this alternative would pose theoretical confusion to the interpretation of the models in this study because any conceivable reflective indicator of country belief for this purpose is likely of direct, immediate structural consequences (i.e., country attitude and behavior). For this reason, a reflective structure was used in this study.

**Country attitude.** Country attitude in this study is the general nature held by Chinese students toward their host country, Korea, as a whole, not a behavioral attitude toward a specific behavior regarding the country. In line with Ajzen and Fishbein (2000), attitude here is defined as a global summary evaluation of, or overall favorability toward, Korea. The construct was measured with a single indicator: Subjects responded to the question "In general, what is your overall evaluation of Korea?" using a 7-point semantic differential scale ranging from "strongly dislike" (1) to "strongly like" (7). Although attitude is typically assessed by a set of semantic differential items, a single indicator for country attitude is in wide use in global polls by such organizations as the Pew Research Center and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs for measuring foreign attitudes toward the United States.

The single observed indicator, however, was not incorporated as-is into the specification of both the complete and partial mediation models. Rather, country attitude was treated as a latent construct with a single indicator. The factor loading was fixed to 1, whereas the error variance of the single indicator was not fixed to zero because it is unrealistic. Instead, Hayduk's (1987) procedure was used to obtain a corrected estimate of the error variance:  $(1 - \text{scale reliability}) \times \text{scale variance}$ . In this study, the single scale has a variance of 1.374. With scale reliability, the convention is to use, somewhat arbitrarily, either .70 or .80; however, a better approach is to use an established level of reliability from extant literature (e.g., Oberski & Satorra, 2013). Much of previous research has been in consensus that measurements of attitudes on multiple semantic differential indicators consistently yield highly reliable levels of Cronbach's alpha above .90. For example, Bagozzi (1982) reported .95 with five items for attitude toward blood donation; Berger and Mitchell (1989) found .94 with two items for candy brands; Haddock and Zanna (1998) discovered .93 with three items for capital punishment; and most recently and pertinently, Yin (2013) obtained .94 with four items for Korean students' attitude toward their host country, China. As for scale reliability, the cutoff  $\alpha$  of .90 was put into the formula, and the resulting estimate of the error variance to be fixed was  $.137 = (1 - .90) \times 1.374$ .

**Country behavior.** This construct refers to the future behavioral intention regarding Korea, captured on a continuum of approaching vs. avoiding it. Evaluation studies for exchange programs at large measure behavior in actual terms (i.e., performed or actual behavior) because their subjects are returnees; this study, however, measures behavior in terms of intention for future behavior because its subjects, Chinese students, are not back home yet. Behavioral intention is a person's subjective estimate of the likelihood that he or she will engage in a behavior (Lutz, 1981). The Chinese students in this study were asked to estimate on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = "very unlikely" to 5 = "very likely") their subjective likelihood to engage in eight behaviors after returning home. Meanwhile, the literature on international students, particularly with an interest in outcome evaluation for exchange programs like the



Fulbright, has long measured the achievement of an array of behavioral goals relevant to public diplomacy (Bhandari & Belyavina, 2010).

Among the behavioral goals, the primary focus is on relationship linkages, or ties. Relationship linkages consist of two dimensions: One concerns the maintenance and development of personal-level relationships with the host nationals; the other involves the same nurturing of country-level relationships at all levels, which engenders both host and home countries to come together. Upon these two relationship domains, this study adds a third concerning international students' economic promotional behaviors for the host country. A total of eight items were used for the three domains: personal-level relationship (three items), country-level relationship (three items), and economic promotion (two items). (See Table 1 for a list of the items.) In terms of model specification, country behavior in this study is conceptualized into a reflective second-order latent construct with the three subdimensions. Finally, Figure 1 graphically presents the specification of both complete and partial mediation models.

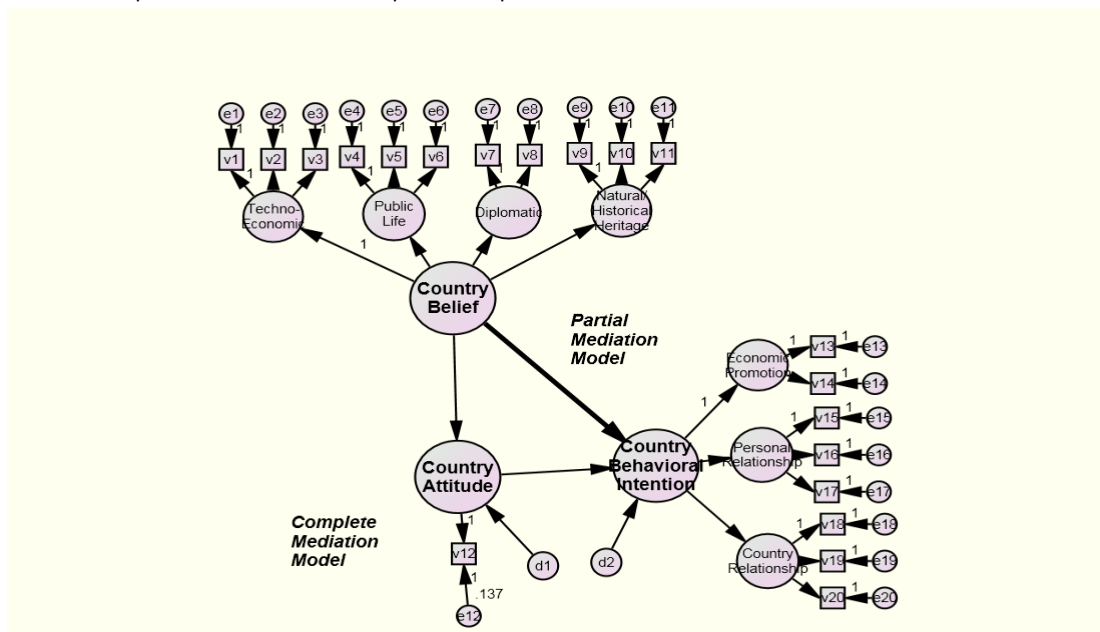


Figure 1. Research models.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

**Data normality and descriptive statistics.** The statistical program SPSS 18 was used to check data normality as well as to assess the descriptive statistics (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Data Normality and Descriptive Statistics (N = 300).**

Construct/Dimension/Items	M	SD	Skew	Kurtosis	CM*
<b>Country Belief</b>					
TE1: Korea has advanced science and technologies	4.88	.99	-.14	.29	
TE2: Korea produces top-quality products and services	5.21	1.04	-.37	.29	5.06
TE3: Korea houses world-class multinational corporations	5.08	1.12	-.17	.06	
PL1: The Korean government provides its citizens with transparent, efficient public services	4.51	1.14	.05	.09	
PL2: Korean citizenry observes public order and etiquette up to high standards	4.72	1.08	-.10	.18	4.64
PL3: Korean citizenry enjoys high standards of living, welfare, and public security	4.67	1.06	-.06	.02	
D1: The Korean government respects the sovereignty of other countries	4.18	.99	.17	.78	
D2: The Korean government builds trustful and cooperative relations with other countries	4.31	.95	.33	.63	4.34
D3: The Korean government helps other countries in disasters with humanitarian aid	4.52	1.01	.41	.17	
NH1: Korea has attractive natural scenery	4.37	1.08	-.10	.48	
NH2: Korea has rich, historical cultural heritages	4.08	1.06	-.13	.71	4.23
<b>Country Behavioral Intention</b>					
EP1: After returning to China, how likely are you to recommend your family members, Chinese friends, and acquaintances visit Korea for tourism?	3.73	.85	-.51	.25	
EP2: . . . recommend. . . purchase Korean products and services?	3.67	.79	-.16	-.37	3.70
PR1: After returning to China, how likely will you continue to contact your Korean friends?	3.88	.90	-.36	-.45	
PR2: . . . keep in touch with your Korean professors?	3.56	.93	-.21	-.47	3.75
PR3: . . . keep in contact with your Korean acquaintances?	3.80	.88	-.33	-.32	
CR1: After returning to China, how likely will you promote relations at all levels between China and Korea?	3.68	.87	-.17	-.04	
CR2: . . . work in the public or private sectors forging relations between China and Korea?	3.82	.81	-.30	-.20	3.76
CR3: . . . help your family members, Chinese friends and acquaintances, and the Chinese public better understand Korea?	3.78	.85	-.37	.08	
<b>Country Attitude</b>					
CA1: In general, what is your overall evaluation of Korea?	4.49	1.17	-.27	.11	

Note. CM\* = the composite means for all indicators of a construct dimension.

TE = Techno-economic dimension; PL = Public life; D = Diplomatic; NH = Natural landscape/Historical heritage

EP = Economic-promotion dimension; PR = Personal relationship; CR = Country relationship; CA = Country attitude.

Kline (2005) suggested that only variables with skew index absolute values greater than 3 and kurtosis absolute values greater than 10 indicate a violation of normal distribution. On this measure, all 20 variables in this study were judged normal, with the greatest skew and kurtosis absolute values being .51 and .78, respectively.

### ***CFA of Measurement Models***

Using the statistical program AMOS 18, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to assess the model fit, reliability, and validity for two types of measurement models. The first consists of the seven first-order constructs with 19 observed indicators for country belief and behavioral intention. The construct of country attitude was not included in the measurement model because it has a single indicator. Another type is the high-order measurement model, based on which country belief and behavioral intention were each conceptualized as second-order constructs, explaining the covariance between their respective first-order constructs with the corresponding observed indicators. In assessing the model fit, the following recommendations from Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006) were consulted: chi-square, CFI > .90, TLI > .90, and SRMR and RMSEA < .08). Table 2 presents the results of CFA for the first-order measurement model.

***Table 2. CFA for First-Order Constructs.***

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Construct Reliability	AVE
Techo-Economy	TE1	.66	.78	.54
	TE2	.76		
	TE3	.77		
Public Life	PL1	.72	.84	.64
	PL2	.85		
	PL3	.83		
Diplomacy	D1	.77	.85	.66
	D2	.86		
	D3	.80		
Natural/Heritage	NH1	.90	.85	.74
	NH2	.82		
Economic-Promotion	EP1	.72	.70	.54
	EP2	.74		
Personal Relationship	PR1	.81	.84	.64
	PR2	.74		
	PR3	.84		
Country Relationship	CR1	.80	.78	.54
	CR2	.64		
	CR3	.75		

On the fit indices and their associated cutoffs, the model showed a reasonable fit to the data:  $\chi^2$  (59) = 249.07,  $p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 1.90$ ; CFI = .955; TLI = .941; SRMR = .040 and RMSEA = .055. Also F

ornell and Larcker's (1981) guidelines were followed for assessing construct reliability ( $CR > .70$ ), convergent validity (Averaged Variance Extracted  $> .50$ ), and discriminant validity ( $AVE > \text{Squared Multiple Correlation}$ ). All standardized factor loadings on the designated observed indicators were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), and their magnitudes are above the criterion cutoff of  $.70$ , except for two indicators: TE1 (.66) and CR2 (.64). Although low, these loadings are close to the standard and can be deemed acceptable. Accordingly, the squared factor loading for each indicator meets the standard ( $> .50$ ) reasonably well. Overall, these findings suggest that the first-order measurement model was valid and reliable on the individual indicator level. On the construct level as well, the model displays acceptable degrees of construct reliability and convergent validity. Discriminant validity exists when AVEs for a pair of two constructs exceed the squared correlation between the two (i.e., SMC). As desired, the smallest AVE (.54) was greater than the biggest SMC (.50) between the personal- and country-level relationship ( $r = .71$ ).

The CFA of a second-order measurement model focuses on the structural part between the second-order and its first-order constructs, or subdimensions, treating them as indicators for the high-order. The procedure for assessing the model's construct reliability and convergent validity is identical to what is used for the first-order measurement (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011). Table 3 presents information on the model fit, reliability, and validity for each of the two second-order models.

**Table 3. CFA for Second-Order Constructs.**

Second-Order	First-Order	Factor Loading	Construct Reliability	AVE
Country Belief	Techo-Economy	.70	.81	.53
	Public Life	.89		
	Diplomacy	.75		
	Natural/Heritage	.53		
Behavioral Intention	Economic-Promotion	.70	.84	.64
	Personal Relationship	.77		
	Country Relationship	.91		

First, the country belief model showed a reasonably acceptable model fit:  $\chi^2(40) = 105.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.64$ ; CFI = .958; TLI = .942; SRMR = .045 and RMSEA = .072. On the indicator level, the reliability and validity were verified for three subdimensions (techno-economy, public life, and diplomacy) against the standard of Fornell and Larcker (1981). These dimensions had statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) factor loadings (standardized), all above  $.70$ . The remaining dimension (natural/heritage), however, had a statistically significant yet smaller loading (.53) than  $.70$ ; yet the factor loading was still above Bagozzi and Yi's (1988) minimal cutoff value of  $.50$ . Moreover, country belief as a whole (i.e., on the construct level) showed acceptable construct reliability ( $CR = .81$ ) and convergent validity ( $AVE = .53$ ). Next, the second-order model for country behavioral intention also displayed a good fit to the data:  $\chi^2(17) = 36.10$ ,  $p$

$< .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.12$ ; CFI = .979; TLI = .965; SRMR = .032 and RMSEA = .061. All the significant factor loadings ( $p < .001$ ) were above .70, indicating acceptable reliability and validity at the indicator level. In addition, the construct as a whole was reliable and valid (CR = .84 and AVE = .64).

The results of CFAs also provide information on not only the validity for the second-order model for country belief, but also the degree of complexity or integration in the model. According to Schlegel and DiTecco (1982), the notion of centrality takes precedence over other indices for the structural complexity of a construct. In this study's context, centrality is the degree of integration of the four first-order constructs into the second-order country belief. Thus, the country belief's centrality is the same as its AVE (.53), the amount of the total variance in the subdimensions explained by the second-order. The AVE index therefore suggests that the structure was barely integrated and thus complex in nature.

### Main Analyses

Hypothesis 1 predicts Schlegel's partial mediation model to better fit the causal structure of Chinese students' attitudinal domain as to Korea than Fazio's complete model. To test it, SEM analyses were conducted in two ways. First, each model was tested separately concerning its fit to the data, and then a more stringent chi-square difference test followed because the complete model is nested in the partial. For these analyses, country attitude was included in both structural models as a latent construct with a single di-slike-like indicator, with the error variance being fixed to .137.

The complete mediation model resulted in  $\chi^2(162) = 374.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.31$ ; CFI = .921; TLI = .908 and RMSEA = .066—which are all acceptable levels. However, it also had an unacceptable SRMR of .101 ( $> .08$ ). In contrast, the model fit indices for the partial model all proved to be acceptable and reasonably good:  $\chi^2(161) = 334.16$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.08$ ; CFI = .936; TLI = .924; SRMR = .062 and RMSEA = .060. These absolute-level evaluations of the model fit indicate the partial model to be a better approximation to the causal structure than the complete model. Furthermore, a nested comparison using chi-square difference statistics confirmed better performance of the partial over the complete model:  $\Delta\chi^2(\Delta df) = 40.10$ ,  $p < .001$ . Hence, the absolute and comparative analyses all led to the conclusion that the partial model better represented the attitudinal casual structure. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was supported, and the partial model was retained to further test Hypothesis 2 and 3.

Hypothesis 2 predicts the strength of AB relation among the Chinese to be weak. Two kinds of procedures were followed to explore the prediction. One involved parsing correlations between the three constructs (country belief, attitude, and behavioral intention)—the manner in which much of the previous findings were derived on the strength of AB relations and for which their validity are seriously questioned, nonetheless (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). The greatest association, in comparison, was found in country belief vs. behavioral intention ( $r = .64$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by country attitude vs. behavioral intention ( $r = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and country belief vs. attitude ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Here, the focus is the correlation between attitude and behavioral intention. The magnitude (.53) in absolute terms can be seen as being moderate, but still falls in the lower bottom of the range for AB correlations reported in support of strong AB relations

from the literature of direct experience (see the conceptualization section). This finding seems to lend support to strong AB relations with direct experience, but is likely misleading due to the limits of the correlation analysis.

A more valid approach is to examine the strength of AB relations in the partial mediation model, bringing in the statistical control. This scheme also allows for examining the strength of AB relations on another measure—partitioning the explained variance in the criterion variable among the predictor variables. Table 4 presents the model's parameter estimates, including the regression coefficient from country attitude to behavioral intention (A→BI). With all coefficients being significant ( $p < .001$ ), the three standardized coefficients were in the following order of magnitude: .51 for country belief to behavioral intention (B→BI), .43 for belief to attitude (B→A), and .31 for A→BI. Further, to determine whether these coefficients were statistically different from each other in size, critical ratios for differences were examined for each pair. The results show the coefficients were significantly different from one another and that the order of magnitude was B→BI>B→A>A→BI. More specifically, the test statistics were B→BI vs. B→A ( $z = 2.78, p < .01$ ); B→BI vs. A→BI ( $z = 2.88, p < .01$ ); and B→A vs. A→BI ( $z = 4.42, p < .001$ ). It is more informative for determining the strength of AB relations to partition the explained variance (49%) in behavioral intention among the two predictors, belief and attitude. The findings indicate that 21% of the explained variance is uniquely contributed by belief, whereas only 8% came from attitude; the remaining 20% variance was shared (i.e., confounded) by both. Contrary to Wicker's (1969) verdict—attitude rarely accounts for more than 10% of the behavioral variance—these findings indicate the AB relation (8%) is not strong; instead it is weak among Chinese students with direct experience in Korea.

**Table 4. Parameter Estimates, Variances Explained and Partitioned for the Whole Group.**  
(N = 300)

Parameter	$r$ (C.R.)	$\beta$ (C.R.)	$R^2$		$R^2$ Partitioned
			BI	A	
A→BI	.53(5.828)	.31(4.199)	49%		8% (A)
B→BI	.64(5.611)	.51(5.257)			21% (B)
B→A	.43(5.298)	.43(5.757)		18%	20% (A+B)

Note.  $r$  = correlations between constructs. All  $r$ s and  $\beta$ s are significant ( $p < .001$ ).

Hypothesis 3 predicts that the more direct experience, the weaker the AB relation. It was tested with two split subgroups of short (i.e., less direct experience) and long stays (i.e., more direct experience). In preparation for a multigroup analysis, both groups were created using the average length of stay (31.68 months) for the whole group. The short-stay group comprises 153 subjects who stayed in Korea for less than the average time; the long-stay group is made up of 147 subjects who stayed longer than the average. An analysis proceeded first by simultaneously fitting the groups to the partial mediation model and then by examining the critical ratio for difference between A→BIs for the two groups.

The resulting model fit indices are deemed acceptable:  $\chi^2(322) = 567.47, p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 1.76$ ; CFI = .912; TLI = .902; RMSEA = .051 and SRMR = .073. Table 5 comparatively presents each group

's parameter estimates, with variances explained and partitioned. With correlations between attitude and behavioral intention, the short-stay group had a greater coefficient (.58) than the long (.44), all being significant ( $p < .001$ ). The pattern of a smaller coefficient in the long-stay group is similar to what Schlegel (1975) reported. As for regression coefficients for  $A \rightarrow BI$ , the short-stay group had a significant  $\beta = .40$  at  $p < .001$ ; however, the long group had an insignificant  $\beta = .21$  at  $p > .05$ . This indicates that even before a statistical test of equality for  $\beta$  across both groups, there was more direct experience, the weaker  $A \rightarrow BI$ . It was further confirmed by the statistically significant critical ratio for the difference between the two parameters ( $z = 1.98, p < .05$ ).

As for the variance partitioned, country attitude in the short-stay group uniquely contributed 12% to the variance explained in total (52%) for behavioral intention, but did so only for 4% in the long-stay group (41%). Moreover, the insignificant regression coefficient of .21 at  $p > .05$  in the long-stay group means that the 4% variance uniquely accounted for by country attitude in this group was not significant either. Everything considered, the final conclusion is that the more direct experience Chinese students had with Korea, the weaker the AB relation, which supports Hypothesis 3.

**Table 5. Parameter Estimates, Variances Explained and Partitioned for Two Groups.**

Group Parameter	$r$ (C.R.)	$\beta$ (C.R.)	$R^2$		$R^2$ Partitioned
			BI	A	
A $\rightarrow$ BI	.58(4.824)	.40(4.226)	52%		12% (A)
Short Stay B $\rightarrow$ BI ( $n = 153$ )	.63(4.345)	.47(4.077)			18% (B)
B $\rightarrow$ A	.41(3.733)	.41(4.069)		17%	22% (A+B)
A $\rightarrow$ BI	.44(3.258)	.21(1.843)	41%		4% (A)
Long Stay B $\rightarrow$ BI ( $n = 147$ )	.61(3.346)	.51(3.220)			22% (B)
B $\rightarrow$ A	.45(3.843)	.45(4.198)		21%	15% (A+B)

Note.  $r$  = correlations between constructs. All  $r$ s and  $\beta$ s are significant ( $p < .001$ ) except for  $\beta$  (A  $\rightarrow$  BI) for long stay group, which is insignificant ( $p > .05$ ).

### Conclusion

### Implications

First of all, the findings on weak AB relations calls into question the emphasis on attitude primacy that has long guided public diplomacy research. The findings therefore caution researchers to be wary of a blind, single focus on attitude alone with the unwarranted assumption of a strong AB relation. The findings, however, should not be interpreted as rejecting the central place that the attitude concept itself occupies in explaining general human behavior. Rather, the findings suggest that attitude does not hold as much predictive and explanatory power for behavior in a specific human context—that is, in the direct experience

e-based attitudinal domain of international students for their host country. And the finding makes one thing explicit: Attitude primacy has wrongly set attitude as the focal dependent variable to be explained while erroneously taking it as the hallmark of, or the evidence on, the achievement of behavioral goals. This critical discovery, thus, should further inform practitioners in need of guidance for better evaluating the effectiveness of exchange programs: What to focus on is not attitude alone but beliefs and behaviors.

Further implications tie into the general literature on attitude. Schlegel's partial model proved a better fit for the attitudinal domain, supporting its core theoretical fabric. Direct experience tends to make the belief structure complex; the structure in turn becomes hard to integrate into the summary evaluative construct of attitude, and, thus, attitude ends up being impotent for influencing behavior. In line with the logic, the current study found that country belief, conceptualized into a second-order construct, had a marginal degree of centrality ( $AVE = .53$ ), indicating the belief structure is by no means highly integrated. From such a complex belief structure followed a modest BA relation ( $r$  and  $\beta = .43$ ) and, subsequently, a weak AB relation ( $\beta = .31$ , unique  $R^2$  explained = 8%). The findings are contrary to Fazio's view that direct experience-based attitudes are characterized by strong object-evaluation associations, making the attitudes highly accessible from memory, which in turn leads to strong AB relations (Fazio & Williams, 1986).

The partial model adds anew a direct path between belief and behavioral intention based on the logic of a complex belief structure leading to a weak belief-attitude and attitude-behavioral intention; however, it falls short of exactly predicting whether the direct path would be strong or weak. An interesting finding from this study is that country belief exerted a much stronger influence on intention ( $\beta = .51$ ) than attitude did, nearly three times more in terms of the unique variance explained (21%). Further, the strength of country belief seems to be larger than what was found from extant literature on the partial medial model. In field studies based on the model, Bagozzi (1982) found a regression coefficient of .39 for belief to be behavioral intention concerning attitude toward blood donation; Yi (1989) reported .17 for the same path on attitude toward buying a particular brand of car.

A promising explanation for this particular salience of country belief in this study may come from the congruence between the types of attitude and behavior (Millar & Millar, 1996). Millar and Millar's perspective is not based on the uniview of attitude, but on a two-component view: Attitude consists of cognition and affect, which Ajzen (2001) narrowly defined as general moods (happiness and sadness) and specifically aroused emotions (fear, anger, and envy) in an experiential sense. Its relevance to this study, however, boils down to cognition (i.e., belief) exerting a much stronger effect on instrumental behavior, "a behavior performed to accomplish a goal beyond the activity involved in performing it" (Millar & Millar, 1996, p. 563). In an instrumental situation, people focus more on the attributes (i.e., cognition) of the attitude object as they relate to the goal of the behavior. In this sense, the far stronger path from country belief to behavioral intention compared to Bagozzi (1982) and Yi (1989) could make sense, because the public diplomacy-relevant behaviors—economic promotion, personal- and country-level relationship cultivation—are all far more instrumental than the acts of donating blood and buying a particular type of car. For the Chinese, their beliefs on Korea, albeit not well integrated, could exert a stronger influence on their behaviors than their undercharged attitude does, due not only to their ongoing direct experience with Korea, but to the high degree of relevance of their beliefs on Korea to instrumental behaviors.



Last but not least is this study's finding on the moderating effects of direct experience on the AB relation, such that the more direct experience, the weaker the relation. The AB relation ( $\beta = .21$ ) in the long-stay group turned out statistically insignificant, while smaller than its counterpart ( $\beta = .40$ ) in the short-stay group. The finding came not from an experimental and correlational probe, unlike almost all previous studies on the matter. Rather, it came from a field study based on a structural analysis.

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

Because this study is based on a small-scale, convenient sample, the generalizability of the findings is subject to doubt. It can be best viewed as a critical case study from Korea, and the Chinese subjects studying at two universities in Seoul, Korea cannot be claimed to represent the entire population. In regards to internal validity, the study's potentially biggest weakness likely resides in the use of a single indicator for country attitude—the use of a corrected-estimate of error variance for the construct in examining the structural models. The estimate was obtained from an established level of reliability in the literature, but its validity is still open to question. Future studies need to use multiple indicators for country attitude in order to address the threat from an unknown measurement error.

Another limitation may lie with the construct of country belief. Its primary source is not the reflective second-order conception, but rather, a missing of some essential country dimensions. The country belief was constructed with only four subdimensions (techno-economy, public life, diplomacy, and natural/historical heritage). These dimensions may well be regarded as not being sufficiently comprehensive; hence, future studies are better advised to include, among other things, the people dimension heavily touched upon in the older literature. In addition, another important dimension would be the host country's culture. Such a limitation might have biased the estimated parameters in the structural models: The paths from belief to attitude and from attitude to behavioral intention were potentially inflated from their true strengths. The dimensionality would increase with more dimensions added and, thus, the integration of country beliefs would further decrease, resulting in both weaker BA and AB relations. Therefore, future research with a comprehensive conception of country belief would arrive at the same findings as this study (direct experience's weak AB relation), but with more accurate estimates for the structural paths.

Also, this article invites future research to expand on the second-order conception of country behavior and to add more behavioral domains to the three in this study (economic promotion and personal- and country-level relationship cultivation). The second-order construct of specific country behaviors has merits not only with ensuring its correspondence in levels of abstraction with the general country attitude, but with properly representing the presence of differentiated behavioral domains among international students. Moreover, further discriminating the domains would benefit public diplomacy research on other types of sojourners from abroad, such as migrant workers. Among the potential candidates for inclusion are the domains of immigration (international students are talented laborers fiercely sought after by countries nowadays), professional interaction, and so-called "multiplier effects" (SRI, 2005), which concern international students who are back home acting as spokespersons to create a favorable public opinion for their host country. This line of work will engender a rich understanding of what types of behavioral domain direct experience activates most or least, thus allowing for a bottom-line profile of the host country's competitive edges. Also, future research will benefit from further examining the consequences of international students' dir

ect experience, other than for behavior. As a discerning scholar might suggest, behavior is not the only justification for exchange programs. Of the same relevance are diffusion of skills and capacity building, for example.

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