

Interaction Ritual Chain and Affection Mobilization: Exploring the Role of Third Culture Individuals in New Public Diplomacy - A Case Study of the Eileen Gu Phenomenon

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Abstract:

Eileen Gu, a naturalized athlete with Chinese and American cultural backgrounds, has garnered global attention through her exceptional athletic performance and personal charm on social media. She has built cross-cultural emotional connections through emotional interaction with her audience, effectively enhancing the national image and cultural soft power. This study analyzed the affection mobilization mechanism behind Eileen Gu's social media posts from the perspective of interaction ritual chains. We found that Eileen Gu harnesses technology-enabled virtual presence and emotional interactions to deeply connect with global fans on social media. By using algorithmically defined ritual borders to target specific audiences, she achieves precise emotional casting and consensus cohesion, transforming individual emotional energy into a powerful force that promotes cross-cultural understanding and advances new public diplomacy. This article emphasizes the role of affection mobilization in fostering international relations, spreading cultural diversity, and enhancing state image strategies. This research also highlights potential challenges, such as the complexity of identity, media bias, and the complexity of the information environment. Ultimately, we propose strategies to address these challenges, including transparent communication, constructing public opinion monitoring systems, and long-term strategic planning. These strategies aim to optimize affection mobilization mechanisms and promote the sustainable development of new public diplomacy.

Keywords:

Interaction Ritual Chain, Affection Mobilization, New Public Diplomacy, Third Culture Individual, Eileen Gu Phenomenon

1. Introduction

With the development of economic globalization and global information dissemination, on the one hand, the era of new public diplomacy characterized by generalization has arrived. Unlike traditional state-centered public diplomacy, new public diplomacy reduces government involvement. It fully leverages social media platforms' interactivity, transforming "hardcore promotion" into flexible dialogue, achieving cross-cultural communication. On the other hand, sports will play an increasingly important role in promoting social development, maintaining peace, and advancing new human civilizations. [1] Sports diplomacy has long been an important form of public diplomacy. In the new era, sports diplomacy is aligning with the concepts of new public diplomacy, transcending national boundaries in sports, and building new relationships. [2]

At the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, Chinese athlete Eileen Gu won two gold medals and one silver medal. Her outstanding athletic performance and media presence garnered significant attention on mainstream and social media platforms and sparked widespread discussion among people. As a naturalized athlete, Eileen Gu is a third-culture individual. Her social media posts reflect her deep affection for Chinese culture and her respect for cultural diversity. These emotional posts have resonated with the public, especially Generation Z, highlighting the importance of emotional communication in new public diplomacy. They have played a significant role in promoting Sino-Western cultural contact and enhancing China's national image. Therefore, the "Eileen Gu phenomenon" has become a representative case for studying new public diplomacy relationships.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Affection Mobilization Mechanism

The term mobilization originally came from the military field. Over time, its meaning has expanded to systematic promotion and call-to-action activities to achieve specific goals. Affection mobilization is an important component within the framework of social mobilization, which focuses on the irrational forces of emotions in driving individuals to participate in social activities. Research on affection mobilization can be traced back to sociological studies on emotions and social relationships. Combining Hochschild's emotion-management perspective, Bai defined emotional mobilization as invoking, stimulating, or changing people's perceptions, attitudes, and evaluations of things through emotional operations in interactions. [3,4] The Internet is a platform for new forms of social mobilization, reducing the costs of social movements, freeing them from space and time constraints, and providing many participants. [5] In online mobilization, emotions play a crucial role and often influence the ultimate direction of social movements. Emotions are a significant field that plays a crucial role in social movements. [6]

Affection mobilization is not merely an expression of individual emotions but also a concrete manifestation of social culture, norms, and contracts at the individual or group level. It transcends the traditional psychological definition of emotions as irrational behavior, viewing them as results of social construction and conditioned culture. Strategies for implementing affection mobilization include creating emotional resonance, conveying emotional information, and constructing emotion-oriented

labels. These strategies aim to trigger emotional responses in the audience, thus enabling cultural and informational exchange informally and profoundly.

From the new public diplomacy perspective, affection mobilization crosses cultural borders, using emotions as a bridge to resonate with the shared emotional experiences of a global audience, aiming to influence their views of China and related cultural issues. Therefore, analyzing affection mobilization mechanisms—particularly their role in improving international relations and promoting cultural exchange—provides valuable research insights and essential dimensions for exploring and practicing new public diplomacy strategies.

2.2. Third Culture Individual and Affection Mobilization

In the 1960s, the Third Culture Person/Individuals (TCP/TCI) concept began to gain attention in sociology and psychology, which evolved from the Third Culture Kid (TCK), introduced by American sociologist and anthropologist Ruth Useem. [7] It generally refers to individuals who grow up, live, and work in multiple cultural environments or those with parents from different cultural backgrounds. Third-culture individuals possess bicultural and co-cultural characteristics. They are not pure individuals of either culture but are integrated into both, simultaneously participating in two cultures. [8] Research on TCI and TCK indicates that, due to growing up in an international environment, TCIs typically possess an intercultural solid skill set, including fluency in multiple languages, the ability to adjust quickly, (2004), open-mindedness, and interpersonal sensitivity. [9] These traits equip TCIs with strong global competence, enabling them to act as Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) in international communication on social media platforms. They play a significant role in setting media agendas and achieving effective communication outcomes. [10]

Empowered by internet technology, TCIs, as cultural ambassadors, can transcend geographical and cultural boundaries, showing more significant influence across various platforms. Firstly, KOLs use social media to widely broadcast their thoughts, images, and values beyond time and space constraints. This enables them to build an identity of platform cosmopolitanism with a global perspective. Secondly, digital technology allows TCIs to participate in transnational public discussions more efficiently. Their inclusivity in addressing cultural differences and sensitive issues helps build consensus among diverse cultural groups, promoting global cultural development towards diversity and harmony. Thirdly, technological platforms offer TCIs opportunities to shape personal brands. Through celebrity influence, they break the limitations of nation-centeredness in traditional international communication, driving it towards a more personalized and fragmented approach, indirectly promoting the global dissemination of their home culture, making them critical carriers of national image-building and cultural soft power display.

2.3. Interaction Ritual Chain and Affection Mobilization

The Interaction Ritual Chain Theory, proposed by American sociologist Randall Collins, builds on the work of classical sociologists Durkheim and Goffman on rituals and interactions. This theory bridges micro and macro sociology, positing that social dynamics arise from the cumulative effects of daily interactions. These interaction chains continually influence social relationships, group cohesion, and individuals' positions and images within society. Emotional energy is a core element in the interaction process, and Collins attributes people's motivation to engage in communication to the rational choice of emotional energy. [11] For an interaction

ritual chain to have an impact, the following four elements must be met: 1) Two or more people gather in the same place; 2) Barriers are set to outsiders; 3) People focus their attention on a familiar object or activity; 4) People share common emotions or emotional experiences. [12] Interaction ritual chains can foster group solidarity, stimulate individual emotional energy, create representative symbols for the group, and cultivate a sense of morality.

Existing research usually explores emotional mobilization based on the Interaction Ritual Chain Theory. This theory focuses on the immediate resonance of emotions. It emphasizes how these emotions are linked across different fields and time, forming chains of emotional transmission that facilitate interaction among multiple individuals. Therefore, this theoretical perspective can reveal the micro-mechanisms of affection mobilization, such as emotional resonance and symbol interaction experiences between individuals. It also examines, on a macro level, how emotions can transcend borders, integrate diverse individuals, and ultimately foster widespread collective identity and agency, which provides a comprehensive analysis framework that considers individual behavior, group interaction, and social structure in the study of affection mobilization. Consequently, the interaction ritual chain theory can help us profoundly understand emotions' catalytic role in social mobilization.

3. Method

We used Eileen Gu's social media posts as the sample for content analysis. By June 2024, we collected 1,495 posts, including images, text, and short videos, from four representative social media platforms: Little Red Book, Douyin, Weibo, and Instagram. Specifically, there were 380 posts on Instagram and 1,174 comments containing the terms "China," or "Chinese," (Table 1).

Table 1. Eileen Gu's Accounts, Posts, and Followers on Different Social Media Platforms.

Platform	ID	Posts	Followers
Little Red Book	eileengu	111	3.74
Douyin	Frog princess eileengu	106	1.72
Weibo	Frog princess eileengu	898	6.44
Instagram	eileengu	380	2.02

Note: Followers are in millions.

To explore how she adopts affect mobilization strategies to promote the development of new public diplomacy, we used content and text analysis, employing the interaction ritual chain framework to investigate word frequency, post authors, and the interaction between posts and comments.

4. The Affect Mobilization of the "Eileen Gu Phenomenon" from the Perspective of Interaction Ritual Chain Theory

4.1. Virtual Presence and Emotional Interaction Empowered by Technology

Collins proposed interaction element of interaction is group concentration, which refers to the process where two or more individuals come together to form a temporary or permanent social collective due to specific purposes, interests, needs, or situations. With the advancement of internet technology, physical presence's spatial and temporal constraints have largely been overcome. Social media provides a virtual space for communication and interaction, facilitating the formation of user groups with shared interests. Ailing Gu shares her sports achievements, daily training

routines, and personal thoughts on social media. This content is instantly shared by leveraging new media technology, transcending geographical boundaries and attracting followers worldwide. People create a sense of synchronicity through likes, comments, and reposts, allowing participants to interact in real-time within the virtual world. This enables them to engage with the creator and other participants on the same topics, constructing a scene where many are virtually present simultaneously. Thus, a virtual community centered around Ailing Gu is formed.

4.2. Ritual Borders and Emotional Cast in Algorithm Settings

The interaction ritual chains theory emphasizes that repeated and emotional interactions within a community foster internal cohesion and identification. This, in turn, strengthens and expands interpersonal connections at the social structural level. Algorithmic recommendations act as the “gatekeepers” of these rituals. Personalized content was recommended based on the intensity and frequency of user interactions. This process enhances emotional engagement among community members, laying the foundation for group identity and a sense of belonging. It ensures the depth and continuity of interaction rituals, shaping the uniqueness and cohesion of virtual community culture. Algorithmic recommendation technology allows online platforms to suggest content based on users’ reading habits and interests. Posts by Eileen Gu are precisely pushed to interested users rather than all users. This border helps her content reach the target audience more accurately, improving communication efficiency and establishing a ritual boundary for the virtual community, thus promoting cultural cohesion. Emotional resonance plays a key role in this communication process. Eileen Gu employs a self-disclosure communication strategy, actively setting the agenda by frequently sharing fragmented moments of personal glory, daily life, and topics reflecting multicultural themes based on global consensus. This strategy reinforces her status as a sports star and successfully constructs an image of a friend that transcends cultural boundaries, combining approachability and diversity.

The content Eileen Gu shares on social media attracts fans interested in her sports career and personal life. These fans gather around their common interest, creating brief and superficial emotional interactions in their daily lives. This aligns with social media users’ consumption habits and largely satisfies fans’ needs for intimacy, self-fulfillment, and social belonging. It also triggers affection mobilization as the public casts their emotions, values, and aspirations for success and excellence onto her. As the frequency of emotional interactions increases, feelings gradually deepen and transform into long-term emotions, which are then conveyed to other participants, creating group dependency and emotional casts. The algorithmic recommendation mechanisms of new media platforms further amplify these interactions, ensuring that relevant content reaches more potential users. This attracts new participants and reinforces the loyalty of existing members, promoting community growth.

Table 2. *Examples of Eileen Gu’s Instagram posts promoting Sino-foreign friendship.*

Created_at	Text	Likes	Comments
2019-6-7 3:13	I have decided to compete for China in the upcoming 2022 Winter Olympics. This was an incredibly tough decision for me to make. I am extremely thankful for U.S. Ski & Snowboard (@usfreeskiteam) and the Chinese Ski Association for having the vision and belief in me to make my dreams come true. I am proud of my heritage, and equally proud of my American	12034	3445

	upbringings. The opportunity to help inspire millions of young people where my mom was born, during the 2022 Beijing Olympic Winter Games is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help to promote the sport I love. Through skiing, I hope to unite people, promote common understanding, create communication, and forge friendships between nations. If I can help to inspire one young girl to break a boundary, my wishes will have come true.US♥CN		
2023-12-14 9:37	What a special afternoon it was spending some time on snow w the local kids after my World Cup win in China. Thank you @iwcwatches for putting this together and keeping me on time from here to there ;)	102597	448
2022-2-21 22:59	These feelings and people capture the essence of what skiing is to me: joyous, inspiring, and full of love. I've always said my goal is to be an ambassador for the sport & create bridges by breaking boundaries and records, and I'm proud to say that in addition to plenty of sleepless nights, moments of doubt and fear, and immeasurable growth, I had the best 2 weeks of my life and became: The youngest freeski Olympic gold medalist in history.The first action-sport athlete to win three medals at the same Olympics.The only female freeskier to have won each major pro-level event (world cup, @xgames, world championships, and olympics).The first olympic freeski medalist in Chinese history. Thank you to my mom, coaches, & sponsors for supporting me, and thank you to all the girls in the contest who not only push the limit but do so with a smile and a sense of togetherness. You all inspire me every day and I'm so lucky to be a part of this amazing community. Lastly, thank u skiing♥#olympics #winterolympics #beijing2022	323814	9242
2022-4-27 21:32	Thank you China for the unforgettable few months & for the endless love. ♥	126778	8185
2022-04-17 00:59:47	Honored to have spoken on the power we as young people hold to change the world, from beauty standards to sport culture, at the China Central TV Gala tonight. One voice at a time, the next generation is ready to make waves and bridge divides through genuine passion, openminded friendships, and empowered mindsets. Many hugs & thank u for all the love ♥	119867	3352
2022-05-20 05:45:44	Happy Chinese Valentine's Day (520)♥ #520 #TiffanyPartner #TiffanyAndCo	38447	1255
2023-01-01 10:57:46	I could write a book on 2022, but I'll try to keep this recap short: From Olympic gold(s) to being named one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people to having my writing published in the New York Times to starting my freshman year at Stanford, 2022 was full of highlights I'll	119080	1407

	never forget. Honestly, this year felt like 10. I learned so much about myself and the person I want to be in the process of dealing with unexpected adversities. Trying my best to advocate for freeskiing (especially for girls and young people) has been immensely rewarding on a personal level, and seeing the enthusiasm growing around the sport both in China and worldwide is absolutely mindblowing. Thank you to everyone who believed in me, happy new year and cheers to 2023 ❤️		
2023-01-23 06:22:16	2 for 2 on World Cups this week in Calgary hyped to have hit my 10th World Cup win at one of my favorite venues. Thanks to the fans for the support and for all the kind messages. Happy Chinese New Year!! ❤️	79995	1222
2021-08-21 09:23:07	Click the link in bio to shop my pro model ski and other new drops in @factionskis new collection!! They are available for pre-order in the US and are already in stock in Europe! We drew inspiration from Chinese culture, with dragon's body formed by the words 'a dragon amongst people,' an ancient Chinese proverb imploring the listener to surpass limits holding others back in a quest for greatness and a celebration of individuality. This is what skiing is to me, and I'm so excited to share this with everyone! ❤️	15425	154
2022-01-20 16:57:13	Cover of Vogue!! I have been working on Guest Editing this #VOGUE EILEENGU February Issue since April last year from Beijing to New York to Neustift (Austria) and back again. I'm so proud of what the @VOGUEplus team and I created for you around the central theme of "code switching" between different identities and roles. I wanted to explore and showcase the inherently malleable nature of adolescent identities, a quality I've found myself tapping into time and time again as I display different facets of myself (athlete, model, student, Chinese, American, teenager, writer, public persona, etc) in different environments. Everyone code switches, however minutely, and I think it's time we start celebrating that multifaceted nature. Over the course of the project, I wrote an essay, acted in and learned about directing from @dorothisingzhang in my first short film, and curated a series of artists' works focusing on climate change's impact on varying environments, from halfpipes to skyscrapers. Cant wait for u guys to see more in the coming weeks!! Thank you to @margaretzhang and @VOGUEplus team's support, guidance, and inspiration on this journey.	33815	365
2022-02-03 13:18:10	I was 'coaching' a small Chinese trampoline summer camp in Beijing when we all gathered in front of the TV to watch the olympic 2022 bid. Even then, I was resolute to achieve the two	68153	2992

	equally ambitious goals of 1) competing in the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and 2) spreading the (then-unheard of) sport of freeskiing in China. Having been introduced to the sport growing up in the US, I wanted to encourage Chinese skiers the same way my American role models inspired me. 9 years ago, I pitched the idea of a freeski competition. The result was the first slopestyle competition in China. I've always said my goal is to globally spread the sport I love to kids, especially girls, and to shift sport culture toward one motivated by passion. Now, after hearing that over 300 MILLION Chinese people have started winter sports for fun, I'm blown away by how far we have come. I'm proud to have done my best to spread a positive and personal message, and to have reached audiences willing to listen to me. Going into my first Olympics, my goal is to simply do my best, enjoy the process, and continue to inspire others and be inspired by this sport and everyone in it :)		
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Note: The release time is subject to Beijing time.

Table 3. Examples of comments on Eileen Gu's Instagram posts.

Created_at	Username	Text
2020-03-16 11:27:06	lumoscx33 0	Love your confidence, sunshine and effort! You really give Chinese girls a lot of power.
2022-02-09 13:55:46	alisayang22 7	I watched this video after you won the Winter Olympics in China. Every success is hard to win, I learned a lot from your sportsmanship.
2022-05-02 16:14:09	saifuli2008	I only know that she is a Chinese freestyle skier recognized by the Chinese government, she promotes the Chinese ice and snow, she lets more people know what freestyle skiing is, she is sunny and confident, and brings the power of role models to many girls.
2022-04-06 10:21:23	zhangfeng5 30	Ailing, you are so excellent and like you. You have inspired thousands of Chinese girls.
2022-06-02 23:08:53	lxq08	@yiii470 i love China
2022-05-01 19:28:04	zhangfeng5 30	Eillen, you have too many advantages, your efforts to health image, affecting millions of teenagers and girls. You always maintain an optimistic and confident attitude towards life. The first impression you give to ordinary people is that you love to laugh, speak Mandarin very well, often give interviews to the media, and you are a very optimistic person in life. Your optimism and confidence is very impressive, as if there are no problems in front of you, everything can be solved. Of course, we all know that. You will also encounter difficulties and setbacks in life, study and competition, such as you will be injured, your coach can not go to the United States because of the epidemic, you need to squeeze time to take the college entrance examination one year in advance... However, you never flinch in the face of difficulties and always try to find ways to solve problems. Full of confidence, face the difficulties! We all know that many of the problems you face are not small, you were born in the United States, and you come back to live in China every summer vacation. The cultural atmosphere you face, the eating habits, the perception of life, all have a huge difference. Especially

		when you decide to join the Chinese nationality and come to China to develop and live, you are also facing various problems, but you are not intimidated by these problems, and you always face life with a very optimistic attitude. Because you have a strong and beautiful belief in your heart: love skiing, and promote skiing to more teenagers and girls! You dare to “challenge the unknown” challenge spirit. It really affected friends all over the world, even President Bach applauded you, it can be said that every progress you make, every award you win, is the result of your “challenge to the unknown”. You like skiing, you always learn a ski action, take the initiative to learn and master the skills of another ski action. Especially those difficult actions that she has never done before, but also in this “challenge the unknown” challenge spirit to complete. I remember that you have been interviewed by the media, you said that you are doing those difficult actions that have never been done before, and your heart is also very afraid and nervous. However, instead of backing down, you bravely accepted the challenge, and even fell in love with the fear and pressure! I remember Love Ling you once had such a paragraph: “three kilometers, five kilometers can not run; There is no sun, this is not beautiful, because it is not healthy; It’s beautiful, it’s powerful, it’s confident, it’s healthy.” This paragraph has really affected millions of teenagers, especially girls, you not only re-taught us the concept of true beauty, but also encouraged us to go out and participate in sports, especially every time we see you running in the streets of Beijing, we will be inspired, and also want to go sports with you, and become healthier together!! Thank you love Ling, you bring us a lot of joy, a lot of inspiration. Because of you, we are trying to become more positive, sunny, more confident and healthy! You are in the United States, take care of yourself and ignore the remarks of those who have no quality. We will always love you, because of you, we have changed a lot!! Love you ❤️❤️❤️ These friends of ours will follow you to progress together!! Come on, Eillen!
2022-05-13 13:27:10	baobiao520	@anna_sara_x Eillen’s stage has always been world-class, as an outstanding Asian representative, she has acted as a bridge to spread Chinese culture, 666 [praise]
2022-05-21 14:41:41	xd007t	Lovely, strong, confident brave girl, love the Chinese people! Love world peace! Pray you better than today’s you!
2023-12-02 07:31:03	s._zhang	Hi, Eillen, my name is John Zhang. I am a Chinese Mandarin teacher in northern Utah. Thank you for serving as the Winter Olympics Ambassador for the US. Now that Salt Lake City is chosen as the preferred host for 2034 by the IOC, our students look forward to greeting you here in Utah with their fluent Chinese Mandarin.
2022-07-05 02:36:14	qianmooiii	I really liked you before you went to the Olympics. It’s also you who made a lot of girls realize what real beauty is. Your self-confidence and outlook on health also make many girls confident. I was still celebrating your championship on Instagram, and I was so happy when I found out that you saw my story, and I was so proud of my friend Eileen. Through this Olympic Games, many girls also recognized the sport. I especially like the way you love China, and of course China loves you very much.
2022-10-17 11:00:59	jiangyun870	@arsimata90 Five thousand years of Chinese culture, Broad and profound! Chinese characters are the most perfect characters in the world!
2023-01-06 22:38:38	moliyuanyuan	The Chinese are super proud of you! My friend ~ ❤️ you are my role model, I want to be a confident and vibrant girl just like you.
2021-03-15	eric_cartma	We whole family are sososo proud of you, you inspire so Chinese

09:38:10	ny	young people to pay more attention to winter Olympics games.
2021-04-27 00:24:52	canvans.su n	Nice to see you in my life, what you have did really encourage a lot of people teenager in this world, especially in China. Best wishes to you.
2023-04-02 16:07:23	the_taste_o f_butter	The pride of the Chinese people, the national hero, the light of the nation, is you!
2021-07-31 08:10:53	rogerxieee	Hiii I'm a 27yo Chinese-Australian mathematician working in Sports Analytics. I recently came across your interviews in both English & Mando, super impressed!! You have such great vibes! I'm your biggest fan now, looking forward to meeting you one day!
2022-02-08 02:05:23	lowcarbone co	eileen's story inspired that if US and China united, we can achieve so many amazing world records.
2022-02-23 17:56:31	dark.circles	This Chinese dragon is well designed.
2022-06-07 18:04:54	la_ricky1	@nfpstl China call for peace
2022-05-21 23:33:07	fenggao861	You did it. Many Chinese girls look to you as a benchmark, trying to do what they love ❤️

4.3. The Emotional Energy and Empowerment of Consensus Building

The interaction ritual chain theory posits that during rituals, participants generate and share common emotions and experiences. Through shared emotional experiences and symbols, group cohesion and collective consciousness are gradually built, accumulating emotional energy. With continued interaction, this energy continuously accumulates and is eventually released. Individuals not only feel a sense of belonging but are also motivated to take actions such as imitation, participating in discussions, or supporting specific issues. These actions further strengthen emotional bonds, forming strong social cohesion and collective memory.

On one hand, Eileen Gu is not only a skiing champion, fashion model, and Stanford student, but also “your friend”, embodying a friendly, confident, optimistic, and courageous demeanor. She sets an example for global youth and showcases the sunny, positive image of China’s younger generation to the world. On the other hand, Eileen Gu is also a cultural ambassador. She has frequently participated in various international cultural exchange events, demonstrating her global perspective as a world citizen. Eileen Gu conveys the openness, inclusiveness, and progress of Chinese society to the world, inspiring many online users to actively explore Chinese culture.

Each time Eileen Gu posts a new update, it sparks an interaction ritual within the community. Fans actively comment, share, and even imitate her actions or lifestyle. Eileen Gu’s fans build consensus within the community, accumulate emotional energy, and are empowered to take action through her unique emotional energy. The “Eileen Gu Phenomenon” is evidence of emotional empowerment, demonstrating how individual influence can transcend borders, promote cultural communication, foster cross-cultural consensus, and inspire global, positive emotional actions.

5. Discussion

This study primarily explores the concept of third culture kids and their advantages in the internet era. Using the interaction ritual chain theory as a framework, the study analyzes how Eileen Gu, a naturalized athlete with Chinese and American cultural backgrounds, leverages her outstanding performance and personal charm to engage

with global fans through social media emotionally. This interaction builds cross-cultural emotional bonds, enhancing national image and cultural soft power. From this, it can be concluded that affection mobilization from the perspective of interaction ritual chains can serve as a new public diplomacy strategy. It effectively transcends cultural borders, promoting cultural diversity and fostering international consensus.

However, the new public diplomacy strategy involving “Third Culture Kids” also presents complexities and uncertainties. Firstly, as a naturalized athlete with Chinese and American cultural backgrounds, Eileen Gu faces complexities in identity recognition. Public perceptions may vary due to cultural backgrounds, political opinions, and other factors, leading to misunderstandings and biases in cross-cultural communication. Secondly, the media is a double-edged sword. Media coverage can lead to a stereotyped portrayal of individuals, posing threats to personal reputation and national image. Additionally, political opinions, economic interests, and personal emotions often influence public opinion on social media platforms, demonstrating complexity and unpredictability. Thirdly, developing new public diplomacy is a multifaceted, long-term, and systematic endeavor that faces a series of challenges. These challenges include insufficient resource integration and coordination mechanisms, the digital divide, information overload, the spread of misinformation, low public participation in primarily government-led initiatives, a need for higher marketization levels, inadequate cross-cultural communication skills, and theoretical construction and innovation lagging behind practice. Exploring the challenges faced by new public diplomacy and its potential negative impacts will also become a direction for future research.

Finally, this paper proposes the following new public diplomacy strategies to fully harness the potential of affection mobilization mechanisms in new public diplomacy. Firstly, it is essential to strengthen transparent communication mechanisms, particularly in crisis management. Enhancing the openness and accessibility of information can increase public trust. This includes training cross-cultural individuals like Eileen Gu to improve their sensitivity and respect for diverse cultures. Additionally, enhancing their communication skills in different cultural contexts ensures that information communication can overcome cultural barriers and effectively reach the target audience. Secondly, it is essential to establish public opinion monitoring and rapid response mechanisms. They are developing a sensitive and technically supported system to capture and analyze global public opinion on national image and critical issues. Quick action should be taken in response to negative information, with data-driven adjustments to communication strategies.

Additionally, efforts should be intensified to promote positive narratives on mainstream and social media platforms, shaping an optimistic national image. Finally, a long-term national image strategy should be developed to promote deep integration and collaborative innovation between the government, media, and organizations. The plan should focus on cultivating a talent pool with both international perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills, making them bridges between different cultures and markets to deepen international emotional bonds. Additionally, it is essential to nurture international cultural ambassadors, such as Eileen Gu and other influential public figures, using their personal charm and global fan base to expand the impact of affection mobilization.

6. Conclusions

In summary, China needs to build a three-dimensional and emotionally driven new public diplomacy system that can effectively respond to the rapidly changing international public opinion and continuously foster global emotional resonance, laying a solid foundation for the strength of new public diplomacy.

Conflicts of Interest

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