



# An analysis of the narrative differences between Chinese and American PSAs

## —The theme of combating domestic violence as an example

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**Abstract.** Public service announcements (PSAs) are a form of advertising that communicate social values and social issues through communication channels, and have an important role in guiding and influencing public behaviour in society. The fight against domestic violence is a global social issue, and both China and the United States have been promoting and publicizing PSAs against domestic violence. This paper compares and analyses the narrative styles of public service announcements against domestic violence in China and the United States, examining the differences in narrative styles between the two countries and analysing the cultural and social factors behind them. Through the analysis of several specific examples of Chinese and American anti-domestic violence PSAs, this paper finds that there are obvious differences in the narrative styles of Chinese and American anti-domestic violence PSAs, including the narrative structure, emotional expression, character positioning and social values. These differences reflect the differences in the perception of domestic violence issues, social and cultural backgrounds and communication styles between China and the US, thus providing a new perspective for an in-depth understanding of the differences in narrative styles between Chinese and US PSAs.

**Keywords:** Public service announcements, domestic violence, narrative style, differences, China and the United States

## 1 Introducing the theme

Domestic violence, as an act of physical, psychological or sexual abuse against family members, causes serious harm to individuals and society. To address this problem, governments, NGOs and social institutions have actively taken a series of measures against domestic violence, including publicity, education and intervention. Public service announcements, as an important communication tool, play an active role in combating domestic violence.[1] Both China and the United States, as two important countries in the world, have conducted extensive PSA campaigns and promotions against domestic violence. However, although both countries face similar social issues, there may be

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differences in the narratives of PSAs against domestic violence in the two countries due to differences in their cultural and social backgrounds.

## **2 Relevant concepts and theoretical foundations**

### **2.1 Literature Review**

In China, domestic violence has long received widespread attention as a violation of social justice, morality and ethics. In Chinese public service announcements against domestic violence, they often use emotional and sentimental narratives to emphasise the emotional relationship between family members, affection and love, and to arouse public resonance and concern through an emotional approach. For example, some anti-domestic violence PSAs focus on themes such as "family love comes first" and "family harmony makes everything happy", calling public attention to the issue of domestic violence and advocating care and respect for the emotional relationships between family members.[1,2]

And in the United States, domestic violence is also a serious social problem that has long received extensive attention and research. The US government and social organisations have called for public attention and participation in action against domestic violence through a variety of forms of public service announcements and social campaigns. Research shows that in US PSAs against domestic violence, a more objective, fact-oriented narrative is often used, emphasising legal, moral and social responsibility and conveying the message against domestic violence to the public through an objective and rational approach. For example, some US PSAs against domestic violence may use real-life cases, facts and figures to highlight the prevalence and seriousness of the problem of domestic violence by presenting the serious consequences, legal consequences and social implications of violence, thereby arousing public awareness and engagement.[3]

### **2.2 Research Methodology:**

This study adopts a literature review and content analysis method to explore the differences in narrative approaches between Chinese and American PSAs against domestic violence through a comprehensive review and analysis of the existing Chinese and American PSA literature, as well as a content analysis of actual cases of Chinese and American PSAs against domestic violence. The research findings and perspectives are combined with in-depth discussions and analyses to explore the reasons for and implications of the differences in narrative styles between Chinese and American PSAs against domestic violence.

## **3 Specific case studies**

Combating domestic violence is an issue that involves the physical, psychological and financial rights and interests of family members and causes serious harm to both

individuals and families. In both China and the United States, public service announcements against domestic violence are usually disseminated through various channels such as television, radio, newspapers and social media, aiming to draw public attention and concern, and calling on all sectors of society to join in the action against domestic violence.

### **3.1 China**

In China, for example, in recent years, the Chinese government and social organisations have carried out a wide range of public service announcement campaigns against domestic violence. For example, the Public Service Announcement (PSA) "Domestic Violence Alert" released by the China Women and Children's Harm Prevention and Control Centre focuses on a couple and calls for public attention and active participation in the issue of domestic violence through the story of the woman who is subjected to domestic violence and resists bravely. In addition, the PSA 'Revisiting Family Letters', released by the Women and Children's Rights Protection Committee of the China Association of Advertisers, shows a young girl writing a letter to her father, highlighting the psychological damage domestic violence inflicts on the victim and calling for attention and care for the victim.

### **3.2 America**

In the United States, PSAs against domestic violence are also proliferating. For example, the National Domestic Violence Hotline's PSA 'Love Shouldn't Hurt' highlights domestic violence and encourages victims to seek help by showing a young couple embracing intimately at their wedding, only to reveal at the end that the woman is being abused by her husband. The film highlights domestic violence and encourages victims to seek help. In addition, the Domestic Violence Prevention and Control Coalition of America has launched a series of stories about domestic violence survivors, calling public attention to the issue of domestic violence through authentic narratives and advocating for the voices of survivors to be heard and supported.

## **4 Analysis of the reasons for the differences between the narratives of PSAs against domestic violence in China and the United States**

### **4.1 Cultural background and value differences**

The differences in cultural backgrounds and values between China and the United States have a direct impact on the narrative of PSAs against domestic violence. In China, the family has always been regarded as the supreme and important unit in traditional culture, emphasising harmony and unity within the family. As a result, Chinese PSAs against domestic violence usually emphasise the importance of family ties, and resonate with the public through emotional factors such as affection and love between

family members. For example, in some Chinese public service announcements against domestic violence, the damage that domestic violence can do to the relationship between family members and family harmony is often emphasised by showing the bonding relationship between husband and wife, parents and children.[3,4]

In the United States, on the other hand, the family is also important in the culture, but with a greater emphasis on individual rights and autonomy than in China. The American culture emphasises individual rights and freedom and the individual's pursuit of happiness and safety. As a result, public service announcements against domestic violence in the US often focus on the rights and autonomy of victims, encouraging them to be brave and stand up for their rights. For example, in some US PSAs against domestic violence, the courage and persistence of victims is often highlighted through their own personal experiences and voices, advocating support for the rights and autonomous decision-making of survivors.[3,5]

## **4.2 Differences in storyline and emotional appeal**

There are differences in the storylines and emotional appeals of PSAs against domestic violence between the US and China. In Chinese PSAs against domestic violence, an emotional narrative is often used to evoke emotional resonance in the public. For example, by showing the emotional entanglement between the victim and the perpetrator, the damage and pain of domestic violence to the victim and the destruction of family harmony is emphasised. This emotive narrative approach inspires the public to engage with the emotional resonance of domestic violence. In the US, PSAs against domestic violence often use real-life survivor stories to call for public attention and support for victims. Such real-life survivor stories resonate with the public and inspire public awareness of domestic violence issues and advocate for the voices of survivors.[5,6]

## **4.3 Differences in social background and legal environment**

The social context and legal environment in both China and the US have also had an impact on the narrative approach of PSAs against domestic violence. In China, although attention to the issue of domestic violence has gradually increased in recent years, it is still somewhat ignored and hidden under the influence of traditional social attitudes and family privacy. As a result, Chinese public service announcements against domestic violence are usually more moderate and subtle in their narrative approach. At the same time, the legal environment in China is also somewhat restrictive in dealing with domestic violence, and it is often difficult to obtain effective legal protection and sanctions within the family.[4,6] As a result, Chinese PSAs against domestic violence often advocate the prevention and resolution of domestic violence through love and support between family members.

In the US, the legal framework and social awareness against domestic violence are relatively mature and well developed. The US government and social organisations are more proactive in their attention to and intervention in the issue of domestic violence, and the law is clearer in its definition and sanctions.

#### 4.4 Differences in cultural values and emotional expression

The cultural values and emotional expressions of China and the United States also have an impact on the narrative of PSAs against domestic violence. In China, family harmony, family honour and the culture of saving face occupy an important place in society. As a result, Chinese PSAs against domestic violence usually emphasise family harmony and familial relationships in their narratives, focus on positive emotions such as family love, friendship and love in their emotional expressions, emphasise the negative impact of domestic violence issues on families and households, and advocate the resolution of domestic violence issues through the repair and reconciliation of family relationships. In the US, on the other hand, the cultural values of individual independence, freedom and self-expression are more prominent. As a result, American PSAs against domestic violence usually emphasise individual rights and autonomy, individual emotions and self-worth in emotional expression, the autonomy and choice of victims of violence, and the right and responsibility of each individual to protect themselves.[4-6]

## 5 Conclusion

Although there are differences in the narrative approaches of PSAs against domestic violence in China and the US, it does not necessarily mean that one approach is more effective than the other. Each narrative style has its own characteristics and applicable scenarios, and its effectiveness may be influenced by a variety of factors, such as cultural background, social environment, and audience groups. Therefore, when designing and implementing public service announcements against domestic violence, it is important to consider the needs of audiences in different cultural contexts and social environments and to use different narrative approaches flexibly in order to improve the effectiveness of the advertisements.[1,3-6]

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