

NATALIA OŻEGALSKA-LUKASIK  
Jagiellonian University

## **Emotions Behind the Mask— from Fear for One’s Health to National Pride An Analysis of Chinese COVID-19 Educational Materials for Children**

*Abstract:* In early 2020, the “new coronavirus”, SARS-CoV-2, started one of the most significant health crises in the modern world. China was the initial source of the pandemic and the first country to deal with its broad consequences which, apart from medical concerns, included severe social and economic costs. The far-reaching adverse outcomes of the pandemic meant a need for intensive educational campaigns, explaining the epidemiological aspects related to COVID-19. This paper studies Chinese materials educating children on health, and ways to protect against infection and further virus spread. It concentrates on cultural values, emotions, and means of expressions present in the analyzed resources. Among significant findings, notions of Confucian values, the Taoist vision of harmony, patriotic content, and nationalist resentment are identified. The study also recognizes unique forms of expression represented by metaphors, symbols, and specific local audiovisual themes.

*Keywords:* COVID-19; pandemic; China; education; emotions; discourse analysis; visual materials.

### **Introduction**

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization assessed that COVID-19—started by the coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China—can be characterized as a pandemic. This pandemic is sometimes called the “plague of the twenty-first century.” It has taken an enormous toll not only in the form of high mortality but, most of all, the effect of how the inhabitants of the entire globe experienced and lived with the connected strong accompanying emotions. Despite the images of both empty streets during lockdowns announced in other countries and overcrowded hospitals slowly fading from memory, most people still remember the range of emotions that accompanied everyday life in the first months of the greatest health crisis in the modern world.

At the beginning of 2020, the eyes of the world turned to China. It was known that the new coronavirus spread rapidly in this vast country and probably also was transmitted to other Asian states. Conspiracy theories about the so-called “Chinese” virus grew in popularity. Nevertheless, the risk of an epidemic on different continents was somewhat ignored. Even when, in mid-February 2020, outbreaks of infections broke out in other countries, e.g., South Korea, Italy, and Iran, many stakeholders—also in European Union countries—treated reports about the outbreaks as examples of fake news or mass media panic, and ignored the threat and the need to start preparations (Forman et al. 2020). As the

pandemic began to rapidly escalate in Europe, China, in turn, grew bolder in reporting its successes in tackling the situation in its country by implementing extreme sanitary restrictions and the ability of its society to adapt to recommendations in a crisis. At the turn of March and April 2020, in over 90 countries worldwide, the introduction of various travel bans came into force. Historically, an unprecedented event.

According to various estimates, from 2.6 to 3.9 billion people were prohibited from leaving their homes and travelling, i.e., from 33.3% to 50% of the world's population (van Hoof 2020). Among the first effects of the pandemic, solutions in preventive health care were implemented, e.g., recommendations to maintain “social distancing,” wearing masks, or using disinfectants. In addition to activities in the field of health protection, there was a need for intensive educational campaigns. They primarily aimed to explain the epidemiological aspects of COVID-19 to protect against infection and further virus spread. They also catalyzed emotions and tools to fight the scourge of fake news and the accompanying infodemic, i.e., a flood of incoherent, often fragmented information (Eysenbach 2020) which only aggravated the crisis. These activities concerned everyone, regardless of age. Still, it seems particularly interesting to look at the narrative about the epidemic created for the youngest, whose age-limited cognition determined the perception of the situation and meant that the children significantly required education.

This article analyzes Chinese educational materials on COVID-19 dedicated to children. In this study, Internet-published materials were collected and analyzed using a qualitative approach. The obtained data was considered in the context of three key categories, i.e. cultural values, emotions, and means of expressions. In the first area, we have identified cultural values specific to the Middle Kingdom,<sup>1</sup> clearly revealing themselves in the gathered materials. The time of the pandemic was associated with various emotions—from fear, doubt, and panic, to hope, joy, and pride. Thus, traces of these emotions are also tracked in the analyzed materials. In addition, the study focuses on the specific means of expression and methods used by the authors of these materials. This paper analyzes the materials originating from the People's Republic of China (PRC); these materials are particularly interesting in terms of both the temporal context and specific culture. This work is part of a more extensive study of pandemic-related educational materials developed in a few selected European countries, China, and the USA. The broader context of this research is contained in the publication (Świ ątkiewicz-Mośny et al. 2022).

This article is structured into six sections. In the following section, the cultural context, with the specificity of the Chinese Internet, is briefly discussed. The third section contains the theoretical background of the work and presents the role of the image in education and health education in particular. It focuses on the scientific analysis of emotions, their categorization, and extracting them from existing materials. In the fourth and the fifth sections, an outline of the conducted research methodology and its results are presented. The work ends with conclusions and summarizing comments included in section six.

---

<sup>1</sup> Name for China derived from the translation of its native Chinese name *Zhongguo* (Simplified Chinese: 中国).

## Cultural Background

### *The Chinese Cultural Context*

China has been an authoritarian country for over seventy years, ruled by one Party—the Communist Party of China. The ideology in force in the state is the so-called socialism with Chinese specificity. This is a combination of Marxism-Leninism with the doctrines of successive party leaders: Mao Zedong’s thoughts, Deng Xiaoping’s theory, Jiang Zemin’s Principle of Three Representations, Hu Jintao’s Concept of Scientific Development, and Xi Jinping’s Thoughts. Maintaining this state of affairs requires the Party leadership to engage in much effort to prevent the development of movements that could threaten the monopoly of their power. Currently, no one questions the country’s economic position as a world leader. At the same time, the nationalist sentiments aroused in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries strongly refer to the cultural chauvinism known from imperial times, known as Sinocentrism (Kang 2019). This was based on the belief that the Chinese share a common, unique cultural heritage based on Confucianism. Sinocentrism corresponded to the sense of separateness from the surrounding peoples who are viewed as culturally inferior. While those outside Chinese civilization may have become—and have become—a military threat, they were not considered true rivals because, as representatives of lower culture, they could not rule better than Chinese leaders. In recent times, for over 40 years, China has undergone intense modernization, initiated in the late 1970s with Deng Xiaoping’s reforms. Social changes resulting from modernization and globalization are noticeable. However, for hundreds of years, the Chinese culture that was shaped by native philosophical thought, among others, Confucianism and Taoism, still embraces the so-called Chinese specificity. Even during the turbulent times of Cultural Revolution, the criticism of Confucianism was performed with the appropriation of Confucian terms and concepts (Mierzejewski, Kowalski 2019). It is a natural consequence of the fact that the ancient philosophies have influenced Chinese society to a great extent. Traditional rules of conduct that organize social relations guaranteed the self-discipline of the community. All relations were based on hierarchy, and the basis of mutual relations was obedience. The foundation of adhering to these principles was authority. The Confucian understanding of human relations resulted in society’s hierarchization and everyday life’s ritualization. The Chinese tradition of collectivism held that society should judge human actions (Fairbank 1979). Social harmony can only be achieved when one is a part of a community. Individuals’ lives have been replaced by collective life (Fan 2000). Instead of guilt regulating European morality, there was a sense of shame (Murata 2011). A characteristic feature of Chinese society is paying attention to the impact of an individual’s given activity on individual members of the community (Hofstede 2001). The Chinese system of syncretism in philosophical doctrines was formed due to a compiled synthesis of Confucianism, Moism, Taoism, Buddhism, and more recently, socialism with Chinese characteristics. The presence of the above can be seen in various features of the system. Confucianism is visible in the field of ethics and family and social relations, including the relations with the state. In the Analects, Confucius states, “To govern means to rectify. If you lead on the people with correctness, who will dare not to be correct?” (Legge 2017). Likewise, elements of the Taoist doctrine are noticeable in

the field of beliefs and rituals (Hua 2019). Finally, Chinese socialistic thought contributes, among other things, pragmatism, a scientific outlook on development, and efforts to build a harmonious society (Solé-Farràs 2008).

Intercultural research conducted over the years by successive foreign researchers outlines the differences in thinking from the perspective of the so-called West. In terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede 2001), Chinese culture scores high on power distance, high on collectivity (low on individualism), low on uncertainty avoidance, high on masculinity (low on femininity), and high on Confucian dynamism. Triandis' research also highlights the collective attitude of the Chinese (Triandis 2019). In turn, Hall's research (Hall 1977) places China among countries with the culture of the so-called high context, in which, you must read between the lines to understand the message. The message is not direct and literal; it is latent, i.e., we need to read the nuances of the cultural context and know the social norms and forms of the language used to understand what the other party wants to convey to us. High-context cultures are more likely to adopt the visual effects offered by the Internet to convey their messages efficiently than their low-context counterparts (Würtz 2005).

### *Chinese Internet*

The Internet has become the most common medium for transmitting images and information in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is widely recognized that technology influences society but, at the same time, people using new technology in everyday life create society's final shape. It is impossible to underestimate the importance of popularizing the Internet and its impact on contemporary Chinese society (Yang 2003). However, the political context of the PRC powerfully shapes both the manner of transmission and the content of the messages sent. Censorship of the press and television and the ban on organizing protests have made the Internet, although not without limitations, a special place for the Chinese to demonstrate and express various views. The Internet can and is often perceived as a medium promoting pluralism, supporting the building of civil society, and forcing political elites to consider the community's opinion. However, the case of China shows that despite the dynamic development of the Internet and popularization of the network among citizens, government policy does not allow it to be used as a medium supporting the democratization process. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), while aware of the role of the development of the IT sector for the country's economic prosperity, blocks liberalization by controlling messages sent within the country, limiting access to foreign news portals, and preventing the formation of independent virtual communities. Conscious that unlimited access to information could result in the loss of the legitimacy of their power, the CCP has built the institutional foundations for content censorship (Yang 2003). The legal regulations that constitute the foundation of the PRC's Internet policy are based on the paradigm of protected privacy. The policy strives to obtain the most significant economic benefits from the exchange of information with the outside world while, at the same time, to protect the country from foreign domination and movements that could threaten the current position of power (Walton 2001). Search engines, chats, and blogs are subject to content filtering in a unique way. The authorities also promote self-censorship which forces Internet users to refrain from ex-

pressing views that are inconsistent with the official interpretation, or presenting the CCP in a negative light. Legislation assumes that authors, internet portals, and network connectivity providers involved in publishing inappropriate content are punishable under law. Still, in many online communities, a collective behavior, regarding political discussion, develops among community managers and ordinary members. In those online communities, self-censorship is treated as a collective task to be performed by ordinary members and not as the responsibility of the managers alone (Pang 2008). This specific climate and particular communication platform through which users can report information or names of people publishing harmful comments and receiving a monetary reward for it, certainly does not favor the development of civil society. However, this Internet control also effectively reduces harmful content, e.g., fake news, by monopolizing the message sent to Chinese netizens. This control can also be used to direct the message to the general public. In the first stage of the pandemic, official discourse was focused on the informational aspect using one-way communication (Liao et al. 2020). Chinese government agencies adopted the traditional form of press conferences, information conferences, and government official website releases (Carvajal-Miranda et al. 2020). Still, as pointed out by Chen (2020), during the COVID-19 outbreak, social media outlets became spaces of active public engagement in which Chinese citizens expressed care and solidarity, engaged in claim-making and resistance, and negotiated with authorities.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Picture worth a thousand words—the role of images in health education*

Humans today have evolved from homo sapiens to homo videns, i.e., a being who prefers an image, and what is shown is more important to them than what is spoken or written (Sartori 2005). William J. Thomas Mitchell made a similar diagnosis of contemporary reality. He proposed the term “pictorial turn,” which somewhat restores the iconological concept of Erwin Panofsky and conceptualizes it as a “polinguistic and post-semiotic rediscovery of the image as a complex mutual play of visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies and figurativeness” (Mitchell 1995). This perspective emphasizes the vital difference between the theoretical entities of the material carrier of the image and the image itself. We live in a world where visual images with various goals and intended effects are of most importance, and society becomes modern when one of its main activities is producing and consuming images (Garoian and Gaudelius 2004). As John Berger notes, in none of the earlier societies did they have to deal with such a concentration of images and a density of visual messages (Berger 2019). For example, the shaping of visual culture can be demonstrated by the dominance of media based on images. Moreover, we are dealing with information overload; we cannot consume the entire multitude of images that bombard us. This situation is aggravated as various people may interpret the same image differently, conjuring different associations and connotations. Douglas Harper, a visual sociologist, suggested various possibilities for the scientific use of graphical materials. In his influential work (Harper 1988), he underlines that photographs can be read to

understand nuances of interaction, presentations of self, and relations among people to their material environments. These images are an object of interest for visual sociology, not for their content alone but also for their context (temporal or geographical). As Howard Becker pointed out, “context gives images meaning” (Becker 1995).

Pictures and images play an essential part in the education process. They can be used to learn how to read, teach mathematics, provide intercultural education, or solve problems (Elia and Philippou 2004). Education using pictures is crucial for this part of the population for which the message content represented in the form of written language cannot be adequately absorbed, e.g., illiterate adults and children. Nevertheless, it is also important to stress that nowadays, the literate population often prefers using visual elements for communication. Pictures are more effortless to recognize and process than words, and are also easier to recall (Dewan 2015).

This form of education is also exceptionally useful in achieving health literacy which can be defined in the context of public health as acquiring the ability of an individual to obtain and translate knowledge and information to maintain and improve health in a way that is appropriate to the individual and system contexts (Liu et al. 2020). Various studies demonstrate the positive effects of using image-based communication in health education. Among others, it includes instruction on the proper use of pharmacological substances, hygiene, or first-aid (Barros et al. 2014). Images also played a paramount role in rapidly disseminating accurate public health information during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hamaguchi et al. 2020; Delicado, Rowland 2021).

It is essential to highlight that the design of visual aids needs to include stakeholders and be culturally specific (Mbanda et al. 2021). If local cultural conventions are not considered and understood, or if the cognitive skill required to understand a certain kind of visual image is either absent among the learner population or out of context from their point of view, images containing such, specific visual images will not be understood (Mangan 1981).

### *Mining emotions*

Emotion is a “psychological state that arises spontaneously rather than through conscious effort and is sometimes accompanied by physiological changes” (American Heritage Dictionary 2005). Emotion, as noted by Elspeth Probyn (Probyn 2005: 25), differs from affect as emotion is the social expression of the affect. Although emotions are universal, there are huge differences between cultures and individuals in how, and the extent to which, these emotions are expressed (Yassine, Hajj 2010). Paul Ekman identified six basic emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise (Ekman 1992). Similarly, W. Gerrod Parrott (2001) suggested tree-structured emotion categorization, with love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness, and fear composing the first level, the so-called primary emotions. Other approaches do not seek to classify emotions in specific categories but rather characterize them using two scales, i.e., the sentiment of the emotion indicating if the feeling is positive or negative and the stimulation level indicating the energy intensity associated with the emotion (Murgia et al. 2018). The sociological perspective suggests that emotions should be perceived primarily as a social phenomenon—the result of the complex relationship between the individual and society which influences the lives of societies

and the people who compose them. Thomas Scheff, the eminent sociologist of emotions, introduced the concept of “social emotion” which binds individuals into society (Scheff 1990). He treated emotion as a residual element in the individual and did not refer to specific emotions, or the interactive and relational contexts of their occurrence or disappearance. On the other hand, Hubert Blumer connects sociological theories of emotions to a specific understanding of society as a “pattern of interaction, created by individuals signaling and interpreting their behavior and others” (Fields et al. 2006). Erving Goffman also proposed a place for emotions in society understood in this way. According to his concept, people actively participate in maintaining the social order. Emotions become a signal that makes it possible for them to find out about interactions and inform themselves if their participation in those interactions is proper. Emotions “thus help to establish and sustain social arrangements” (Fields et al. 2006). In the constructivist interpretation, emotions are judgments of situations based on cultural beliefs and values. They are learned and perform a specific function in the system of meanings and social relations (Lynch 1990). According to researchers with cultural orientations, cultural meanings created by a given human community affect other components of emotions (Peterson 2006). They assume that the contents of the mental life of people and belonging to this community are inherently shaped by the “language” and “resources of ideas” (Elias 2001). Thus, the physiological aspect of feeling is determined and shaped by culture, at least to some extent.

### Research Goal and Methodology

The resources used for the analysis consist of educational materials designed for children, teenagers, and their parents. The data analyzed within this study was sampled purposefully on websites from China. The goal was to identify educational materials that covered topics, e.g., COVID-19, the pandemic, the consequences of the pandemic, and COVID-19 vaccinations. Web services and websites relevant to the Chinese context were used to perform the search and included: Baidu (a Chinese Search Engine), Youku (the Chinese equivalent of YouTube), Sina, and the Chinese WHO, UNICEF, and UNESCO websites.

It should be noted that only items published or backed by a clearly marked publisher (individual or organization) were considered. As a result, 33 educational text materials (including picture books, infographics and posters) and 16 audio/video content in Chinese produced in the first six months of the pandemic were collected (for a summary of the sample, see the Appendix). The obtained material was coded deductively using MAXQDA. The created codebook consisted of 13 codes and 96 sub-codes referring to relevant aspects of the analyzed material. The codes covered elements such as the type of narrative and metaphors applied to describe the virus and pandemic, heroes, main characters, and other elements that are interesting culturally. The codes also included visual elements like colors, symbols, and music, i.e., investigating means of expression. The aspect of emotions was examined by coding the materials using secondary emotions from the Parrot classification (Parrott 2001). The textual and visual material was analyzed with three main themes organizing the research and allowing the research to concisely present its results, i.e., emotions, means of expression, and cultural values. To organize the process of extracting



discursive features and strategies, the methodology of the Discourse-Historical Approach was also used (Wodak 2001). By following this concept, our analysis focuses on addressing the following questions, as given in (Reisigl 2017: 52–53).

1. How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions named and referred to linguistically in the discourse in question?
2. What characteristics or qualities are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions mentioned in the discourse?
3. What arguments are employed in the discourse?
4. From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, and arguments expressed?
5. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, or are they intensified or mitigated?

## Results

The analysis of the collected materials focused on extracting from their content the elements that were not only related to health education. It can be seen that the CCP, in the situation of the paralysis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, resorted to a proven and well-known communication strategy. Appropriate management of emotions were effective in increasing levels of national pride and legitimized the Party's power as a leader who could rule over society and manage a crisis. Epidemic and children's health education materials promoted cultural values of particular importance to Chinese society. Conclusions drawn from the analysis of the visual layer and means of expression are also important. In all of the aspects mentioned above, it was noticed that the analyzed materials were not universal. Due to their local specificity, it would be impossible to use them to educate children in other countries. A broader discussion of the results—structured based on cultural values, emotions, and means of expression—is presented below.



Figure 1

Analyzed educational campaigns frequently referred to the common themes of Chinese culture. In the vast majority of studied materials, the protagonists were a virus and a child. There was also a figure of a guardian (most often a parent) or, less frequently, a teacher or grandparents, with a simultaneous emphasis on the child's inferiority relationship to an adult which should be obeyed. This formula and these recommendations firmly bring to mind the Confucian idea of obedience and hierarchy. One of the examples of the materials comprising this element is shown in Figure 1.

It was interesting to see the use of “authorities” (specialists) or characters that have significant cultural meaning, e.g., Confucius, for disseminating COVID-19-related messages. An example of this motive is demonstrated in Figure 2. The heroes of the stories were also animals which are the symbols of China, e.g., the giant panda or the red panda. Another interesting element is the repeated



gestures in the materials performed by subsequent characters, e.g., a fist raised or put to the temple which draws associations with military service. Similarly, revolutionary gestures known from communist propaganda posters or a hand raised in a waving gesture resembling greetings from parades or marches could be observed.

Moreover, Chinese materials uniquely refer to ecology and sustainable development motives when educating about COVID-19. They demonstrate human wrongdoing, namely: interfering with the environment by bringing bats (or other animals) to the food market. In this way, a connection with the Taoist principle of *wuwei*—referring to behavior that arises from a sense of oneself as connected to others and to one’s environment—can be identified (Luo 2009). One of the materials demonstrating this element is enclosed in Figure 3. It is worth underlining that this theme is not identified in children’s materials published in other countries, analyzed in the previous studies (Świątkiewicz-Mośny et al. 2022).



Figure 2



Figure 3

The narrative of the pandemic in Chinese educational materials was emotionally charged. The vast majority of items describing the situation of pandemic were based on extreme emotions, i.e., fear, tension, and panic, which, later in the story, turned into a narrative showing great collective solidarity (as an example, see Figure 4), dedication and perseverance, which had to drive away fear, leaving in one’s heart hope and national pride of how the Chinese fought the virus. It was implied that China would demonstrate how a swift recovery from the pandemic is possible.

The analysis of the collected educational materials for children about the pandemic clearly shows the theme of nationalist resentment. Similar conclusions were reached by Yang and Chen (Yang, Chen 2021) who analyzed Chinese official discourse in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak in media in their research. They note that this nationalist sentiment encourages the Chinese population to actively stimulate “positive energy” while ignoring dissenting opinions disclosing the mismanagement of the crisis during the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak. They also point out that some media reports even pointed out with pride that Western countries can only learn from Beijing’s experience and “copy



Figure 4

China’s homework,” i.e., to implement the same actions to contain the epidemic. It was also observed that mass media helped the discursive construction and symbolic representation of national identity by drawing on the logic of “the self” and “the other” or “us” and “them.” Accordingly, analyzing media discourse on national identity can facilitate an understanding of political (official) discourse in China, particularly in terms of identity performance during a global public health crisis such as the COVID-19 outbreak (Yang, Chen 2021).



Figure 5

The depiction of the pandemic and the new virus alluded to the form of a children’s story and a struggle against evil (personified as the virus being a monster). This struggle, often simply called “war,” will end with the victory of good (personified with solidarity, sacrifice, and the collective commitment of each person according to the possibilities) for the victory of China. Another example of this notion can be seen in Figure 5. Interestingly, giving the virus a medical name was avoided; other metaphorical names such as “monster” and “devil” were sometimes used—especially in picture books. This naming convention may be due to the cultural way of communicating “indirectly” and avoiding the attachment of the pandemic’s origins to the Middle Kingdom.

From the perspective of audiovisual media, if music was present in the material, it played a significant role, i.e., it built emotions and the music changed as emotions changed. The materials were colorful and full of animated elements, especially in connection with images of moving people; this is characteristic of designing visual materials in high-context cultures. The objects, e.g., architecture, food, clothes, plants, the physical appearance of characters, and events (like the Chinese New Year), were adopted to the local cultural reality.

## Conclusion

The new coronavirus was transformed from a medical term into a public issue that concerned everyone’s lives, in which, feelings of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty were repeatedly articulated in words and images (de Kloet et al. 2021). The collected materials educating children on health and epidemiological issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic attempted to evoke the meaning of other content in an exciting manner, i.e., they emphasized Confucian values, referred to the Taoist vision of harmony between human and nature, and patriotic content or nationalist resentment. The collected materials have also used unique means of expression, i.e., metaphors, symbols, and specific local

audiovisual themes. The visual analysis of collected materials demonstrates their richness in that respect. This conforms to the general perception of Chinese culture as one of high context, which is more likely to use the illustrative possibilities the Internet provides to transmit a message. It is also worth considering that the Chinese language is ideographic, so communication through pictures might have a greater significance in how one perceives an image in one's mind and capture the essence of the message. Traditionally, graphics play a fundamental role in conveying information. Posters played an essential role in the PRC's propaganda machine in the first years after its proclamation in 1949. The posters acted as a universal language, thanks to which, the posters could convey their political and social content effectively. The posters were supposed to mobilize, inform, instruct, or calm people. The combination of visual messages and revolutionary music became a powerful political tool; in the same way, this hybrid tool was used in the great Maoist campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s to reinforce the message. It seems that the Communist Party used this well-known communication strategy during the current health crisis to legitimize its power and pursue patriotic education that is supposed to inspire pride in being a citizen of "Great China." The relationship between these aspects could be investigated in further research. The WHO reported that "China has rolled out perhaps the most ambitious, agile, and aggressive disease containment effort in history" (WHO-China 2020). While it is difficult to judge that the COVID-19 information strategy regarding children effectively worked, it has been an original part of this effort, well-adapted to the Chinese reality.

## References

- American Heritage Dictionary. 2005. *The American Heritage Science Dictionary*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Barros, I.M.C., Alcântara, T.S., Mesquita, A.R., Santos, A.C.O., Paixão, F.P., Lyra, D.P. 2014. The use of pictograms in the health care: A literature review, *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy* 10(5): 704–719.
- Becker, H.S. 1995. Visual sociology, documentary photography, and photojournalism: It's(almost) all a matter of context, *Visual Studies* 10(1): 5–14.
- Berger, J. 2019. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books.
- Carvajal-Miranda, C., Mañas-Viniegra, L., Liang, L. 2020. Online Discourse in the Context of COVID-19, the First Health Crisis in China after the Advent of Mobile Social Media: A Content Analysis of China's Weibo and Baidu, *Social Sciences* 9(10): 167.
- Chen, X. 2020. Spaces of care and resistance in China: public engagement during the COVID-19 outbreak, *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 61: 4–5.
- Delicado, A., Rowland, J. 2021. Visual representations of science in a pandemic: COVID-19 in images, *Frontiers in Communication* 6: 645725.
- Dewan, P. 2015. Words Versus Pictures: Leveraging the Research on Visual Communication. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 10(1): 1–10.
- Ekman, P. 1992. An argument for basic emotions, *Cognition & Emotion* 6(3): 169–200.
- Elia, I., Philippou, G. 2004. The Functions Of Pictures In Problem Solving. *Proceedings of the 28th Conference of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education* 2: 327–334.
- Elias, N. 2001. *Society of Individuals*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Eysenbach, G. 2020. How to Fight an Infodemic: The Four Pillars of Infodemic Management, *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 22(6): e21820.
- Fairbank, J.K. 1979. Self-Expression in China, in: R. Terill (ed.), *The China Difference*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Fan, Y. 2000. A classification of Chinese culture. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal* 7(2): 3–10.

- Fields, J., Copp, M., Kleinman, S. 2006. Symbolic Interactionism, Inequality, and Emotions, in: J.E. Stets, J.H. Turner (eds.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*. Boston: Springer.
- Forman, R., Atun, R., McKee, M., Mossialos, E. 2020. 12 Lessons learned from the management of the coronavirus pandemic, *Health Policy* 124(6): 577:580.
- Garoian, C.R., Gaudelius, Y.M. 2004. The Spectacle of Visual Culture, *Studies in Art Education* 45(4): 298–312.
- Hamaguchi, R., Nematollahi, S., Minter, D.J. 2020. Picture of a pandemic: visual aids in the COVID-19 crisis, *Journal of Public Health* 42(3): 483–485.
- Hall, E.T. 1977. *Beyond Culture*. Garden City: Anchor Pr. / Doubleday.
- Harper, D. 1988. Visual sociology: Expanding sociological vision, *American Sociologist* 19: 54–70.
- Hofstede, G. 2001. *Cultures' Consequences. Second Edition: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Hoof van, E. 2020. Lockdown is the world's biggest psychological experiment-and we will pay the price. *World Economic Forum*, 9.
- Hua, S. 2019. *Chinese Legal Culture and Constitutional Order*. London: Routledge.
- Kang, D.C. 2019. International Order in Historical East Asia: Tribute and Hierarchy Beyond Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism, *International Organization* 74(1): 1–29.
- Kloet de, J., Lin, J., Hu, J. 2021. The politics of emotion during COVID-19: Turning fear into pride in China's WeChat discourse, *China Information* 35(3): 366–392.
- Legge, J. 2017. *Confucius—The Analects*. Overland Park: Digireads.com Publishing.
- Liao, Q., Yuan, J., Dong, M., Yang, L., Fielding, R., Lam, W.W.T. 2020. Public Engagement and Government Responsiveness in the Communications About COVID-19 During the Early Epidemic Stage in China: Infodemiology Study on Social Media Data, *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 22(5): e18796.
- Liu, C. et al. 2020. What is the meaning of health literacy? A systematic review and qualitative synthesis, *Family Medicine and Community Health* 8: e000351.
- Luo, C. 2009. Daoism and Environmental Sustainability—A Completely Different Way of Thinking. Proceedings of International Workshop on Sustainable City Region, Bali, Feb. 23–24 2009, pp. 164–171.
- Lynch, Owen M. 1990. *Divine Passions: The Social Construction of Emotion in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mangan, J.W. 1981. Learning through pictures: a study of cultural and cognitive aspects of visual images. Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts.
- Mbanda, N., Dada, S., Bastable, K., Ingalili, G.-B., Ralf, W.S. 2021. A scoping review of the use of visual aids in health education materials for persons with low-literacy levels, *Patient Education and Counseling* 104(5): 998–1017.
- Mierzejewski, D., Kowalski, B. 2019. *China's Selective Identities*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. 1995. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Murata, S. 2011. Learning in the Confucian Tradition, in: J. Casewit (ed), *Education in the Light of Tradition: Studies in Comparative Religion*. World Wisdom Inc., pp. 83–92.
- Murgia, A., Ortu, M., Tourani, P., Adams, B., Demeyer, S. 2018. An exploratory qualitative and quantitative analysis of emotions in issue report comments of open source systems, *Empirical Software Engineering* 23(1): 521–564.
- Pang, C. 2008. Self-censorship and the Rise of Cyber Collectives: An Anthropological Study of a Chinese Online Community, *Intercultural Communication Studies* VXII: 3.
- Parrott, W.G. (Ed.). 2001. *Emotions in Social Psychology: Essential Readings*. Hove: Psychology Press.
- Peterson, G. 2006. Cultural Theory and Emotions, in: J. Stets, J. Turner (eds.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*. New York: Springer, pp. 114–134.
- Probyn, E. 2005. *Blush: Faces of Sham*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Reisigl, M. 2017. The Discourse-Historical Approach, in: J. Flowerdew, J.E. Richardson (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 44–59.
- Sartori, S. 2005. *Homo Videns. Television and Post-thinking* [in Polish]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Scheff, T.J. 1990. *Microsociology. Discourse, Emotion, and Social Structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Solé-Farràs, J. 2008. Harmony in Contemporary New Confucianism and in Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, *China Media Research* 4: 14–24.

- Świątkiewicz-Mośny, M., Prokop-Dorner, A., Ślusarczyk, M., Ożegalska-Łukasik, N., Piłat-Kobla, A., Zając, M., Bała, M. 2022. When Peppa Pig and Confucius meet, joining forces on the battlefield of health literacy—an analysis of COVID-19 educational materials for children and adolescents from China, the USA, and Europe, *PLOS ONE* 17(12): e0278554.
- Triandis, H. 2019. *Individualism And Collectivism*. New York: Routledge.
- Walton, G. 2001. China's Golden Shield: Corporations and the Development of Surveillance Technology in the People's Republic of China, *Rights & Democracy*.
- WHO-China Joint Mission. 2020. *Report on Coronavirus Disease 2020 (COVID-19)*.
- Wodak, R. 2001. The discourse-historical approach, in: M. Meyer, R. Wodak (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 63–95.
- Würtz, E. 2005. Intercultural Communication on Web sites: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Web sites from High-Context Cultures and Low-Context Cultures, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11: 274–299.
- Yang, G. 2003. The Co-evolution of the Internet and Civil Society in China, *Asian Survey* 43(3): 405–422.
- Yang, Y., Chen, X. 2021, Globalism or Nationalism? The Paradox of Chinese Official Discourse in the Context of the COVID-19 Outbreak, *Journal of Chinese Politics Science* 26: 89–113.
- Yassine, M., Hajj, H. 2010. A Framework for Emotion Mining from Text in Online Social Networks, 2010 IEEE International Conference on Data Mining Workshops, pp. 1136–1142.

*Biographical Note:* Natalia Ożegalska-Łukasik is a sociologist, PhD candidate, and research assistant at the Institute of Intercultural Studies, Jagiellonian University in Krakow (Poland). Her research interests focus on contemporary China's social issues, sociology of health, and family studies.

ORCID iD: [0000-0002-4239-4429](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4239-4429)

E-mail: [natalia.ozegalska@uj.edu.pl](mailto:natalia.ozegalska@uj.edu.pl)

## Appendix

### List of source materials

ID	TYPE	CREATOR	LINK	RUNNING TIME
01	Brochure	National Health Commission	<a href="http://en.nhc.gov.cn/2021-04/12/c_83454.htm">http://en.nhc.gov.cn/2021-04/12/c_83454.htm</a>	—
02	News	Ministry of Education	<a href="http://en.moe.gov.cn/news/press_releases/202003/t20200309_429190.html">http://en.moe.gov.cn/news/press_releases/202003/t20200309_429190.html</a>	—
03	Brochure	National Health Commission	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/8c8842eb532e46598c1db4baebb92baf.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/8c8842eb532e46598c1db4baebb92baf.shtml</a>	—
04	Brochure	National Health Commission	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/e3720f8105c048b785b13183f73060d4.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/e3720f8105c048b785b13183f73060d4.shtml</a>	—
05	Audio	National Health Commission	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/adceec755136e4161ae46066745e3ad6f.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/adceec755136e4161ae46066745e3ad6f.shtml</a>	04:18
06	Brochure	National Health Commission	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/ce2ba4489d094471aa4fae7cc2959840.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/ce2ba4489d094471aa4fae7cc2959840.shtml</a>	—
07	Brochure	National Health Commission	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/b9bdbc666d764f80ad65bf4b70c7a874.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/b9bdbc666d764f80ad65bf4b70c7a874.shtml</a>	—
08	Brochure	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/e16096025fd14925b4aa66780070db4a.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/e16096025fd14925b4aa66780070db4a.shtml</a>	—
09	Brochure	China Health Education Center	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/9bd8fa2df276423881d1c6d76bb6fe90.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/9bd8fa2df276423881d1c6d76bb6fe90.shtml</a>	—

ID	TYPE	CREATOR	LINK	RUNNING TIME
10	Video	General Administration of Sport of China	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/a1a945a6cf3b4cf1a48b15e1044de4d0.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202003/a1a945a6cf3b4cf1a48b15e1044de4d0.shtml</a>	01:20
11	Video	Beijing Children's Hospital	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/0dbea427ae804263ac5b462223ee4b36.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/0dbea427ae804263ac5b462223ee4b36.shtml</a>	02:28
12	Video	Beijing Children's Hospital	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/e9407f4adec8437d85e39adec59ca9d3.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/e9407f4adec8437d85e39adec59ca9d3.shtml</a>	03:11
13	Brochure	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/a09602613f614398ac8d637208d5c03b.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/a09602613f614398ac8d637208d5c03b.shtml</a>	—
14	Video	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/e139257b19b64e269e4657c6745baad3.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/e139257b19b64e269e4657c6745baad3.shtml</a>	01:48
15	Brochure	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/ed2f4786ae04429f91b6f566dc81927d.shtml">http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/kpzs/202002/ed2f4786ae04429f91b6f566dc81927d.shtml</a>	—
16	Brochure	Ministry of Education	<a href="http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xw/s7600/202004/t20200414_443274.html">http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xw/s7600/202004/t20200414_443274.html</a>	—
17	Brochure	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://www.chinacdc.cn/en/COVID19/202002/P020200306359053117187.pdf">http://www.chinacdc.cn/en/COVID19/202002/P020200306359053117187.pdf</a>	—
18	Picture Book	Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology	<a href="https://www.sohu.com/a/370599827_760592">https://www.sohu.com/a/370599827_760592</a>	—
19	Picture Book	Shandong People's Publishing House	<a href="https://www.meipian.cn/2olwd34g">https://www.meipian.cn/2olwd34g</a>	—
20	Brochure	Ministry of Education	<a href="http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xw/xw_zt/moe_357/jyzt_2020n/2020_zt03/zydt/zydt_jyb/202003/t20200312_430163.html">http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xw/xw_zt/moe_357/jyzt_2020n/2020_zt03/zydt/zydt_jyb/202003/t20200312_430163.html</a>	—
21	Brochure	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://bj.bendibao.com/news/202025/268886.shtm">http://bj.bendibao.com/news/202025/268886.shtm</a>	—
22	Brochure	UNICEF China	<a href="https://aa9276f9-f487-45a2-a3e7-8f4a61a0745d.usrfiles.com/ugd/aa9276_0ec4d8cbe2ca4b24914b43bf1c7d6731.pdf">https://aa9276f9-f487-45a2-a3e7-8f4a61a0745d.usrfiles.com/ugd/aa9276_0ec4d8cbe2ca4b24914b43bf1c7d6731.pdf</a>	—
23	Poster	UNICEF China	<a href="https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/6-things-you-need-to-know-when-going-back-to-school">https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/6-things-you-need-to-know-when-going-back-to-school</a>	—
24	Poster	UNICEF China	<a href="https://www.unicef.cn/en/children-tips-to-keep-healthy-in-kindergarten">https://www.unicef.cn/en/children-tips-to-keep-healthy-in-kindergarten</a>	—
25	Poster	UNICEF China	<a href="https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/younger-children-going-back-to-school">https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/younger-children-going-back-to-school</a>	—

ID	TYPE	CREATOR	LINK	RUNNING TIME
26	Brochure	UNICEF China	<a href="https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/everything-you-need-know-about-washing-your-hands-protect-against-coronavirus-covid-19">https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/everything-you-need-know-about-washing-your-hands-protect-against-coronavirus-covid-19</a>	—
27	Brochure	UNICEF China	<a href="https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/how-to-keep-your-home-healthy-and-safe">https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/how-to-keep-your-home-healthy-and-safe</a>	—
28	Picture Book	Qingdao Laoshan Experimental Kindergarten	<a href="https://www.sohu.com/a/370143090_120151622">https://www.sohu.com/a/370143090_120151622</a>	—
29	Picture Book	Xuzhou Preschool Teachers College	<a href="http://www.xhby.net/xz/yw/202002/t20200203_6492310.shtml">http://www.xhby.net/xz/yw/202002/t20200203_6492310.shtml</a>	—
30	Video	UNICEF China	<a href="https://www.unicef.cn/videos/tips-students-going-back-school">https://www.unicef.cn/videos/tips-students-going-back-school</a>	01:15
31	Video	UNICEF China	<a href="https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/block-misinformation">https://www.unicef.cn/what-we-do/unicef-emergencies/covid-19/block-misinformation</a>	01:57
32	Video	China News Network	<a href="https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUzZmAxNzY4MA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_261.dtitle">https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUzZmAxNzY4MA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_261.dtitle</a>	01:34
33	Video	Chinese Coronavirus Short Video Series	<a href="https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDU1MjUxODI1Mg==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_208.dcreenshot">https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDU1MjUxODI1Mg==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_208.dcreenshot</a>	02:05
34	Video	Laiwu Second Experimental Primary School	<a href="https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUyODQ0MjkyNA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_131.dtitle">https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUyODQ0MjkyNA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_131.dtitle</a>	04:23
35	Video	Beijing Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine	<a href="https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDU00Tk5NjE5Mg==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_270.dtitle">https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDU00Tk5NjE5Mg==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_270.dtitle</a>	01:52
36	Video	Health Commission of Sichuan Province	<a href="https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDU0MTQ1OTI0MA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_144.dtitle">https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDU0MTQ1OTI0MA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_144.dtitle</a>	01:42
37	Video	China Health Education Centet	<a href="https://ips.ifeng.com/video19.ifeng.com/video09/2020/02/08/p26406465-102-008-185337.mp4?reqtpe=tsl">https://ips.ifeng.com/video19.ifeng.com/video09/2020/02/08/p26406465-102-008-185337.mp4?reqtpe=tsl</a>	01:04
38	Picture Book	Life Tree Books	<a href="https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=100">https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=100</a>	—
39	Picture Book	Life Tree Books	<a href="https://www.lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=89">https://www.lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=89</a>	—
40	Picture Book	Life Tree Books	<a href="https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=47">https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=47</a>	—
41	Picture Book	Life Tree Books	<a href="https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=74">https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=74</a>	—
42	Picture Book	Life Tree Books	<a href="https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=48">https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=48</a>	—
43	Picture Book	Life Tree Books	<a href="https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=39">https://lifetreebooks.org.cn/pc/index/read.html?id=39</a>	—
44	Video	Xumeng Town Central Primary School	<a href="https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDU1OTU1NjE2OA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_203.dtitle">https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDU1OTU1NjE2OA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_203.dtitle</a>	23:24
45	Video	Xiangshan Elementary School	<a href="https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUzMDczOTgyOA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_199.dtitle">https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUzMDczOTgyOA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_199.dtitle</a>	08:48
46	Brochure	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="https://www.chinacdc.cn/jkzt/crb/zl/szkb_11803/jszl_11815/202003/t20200309_214241.html">https://www.chinacdc.cn/jkzt/crb/zl/szkb_11803/jszl_11815/202003/t20200309_214241.html</a>	—



<b>ID</b>	<b>TYPE</b>	<b>CREATOR</b>	<b>LINK</b>	<b>RUNNING TIME</b>
47	Video	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUyMTQwMDU2OA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_249.dtitle">https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUyMTQwMDU2OA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_249.dtitle</a>	01:48
48	Video	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUyOTA0MDU0MA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_376.dtitle">https://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUyOTA0MDU0MA==.html?spm=a2h0c.8166622.PhoneSokuUgc_376.dtitle</a>	01:23
49	Picture Book	People's Daily Online	<a href="https://www.meipian.cn/2olwe62e">https://www.meipian.cn/2olwe62e</a>	—