

學術對談

## 敵意媒體效應： 一位理論創建者的回顧與展望

對談人：馬克·萊珀、魏然

統稿：魏然

翻譯：潘霽



馬克·萊珀教授  
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「『天真現實主義』認為，個人從根本上相信自己對世界的認知是準確的、如實的。除去那些事關『品味』的領域(比如食品、電影或音樂鑒賞等)，我們將自己對世界的感知視為標尺來衡量他人感知和認識的客觀與準確程度。天真現實主義在政治領域之外也啟發著我們，我們常常會看到平行現象的存在。引用 George Carlin 的話說：『你是否覺得路上每個比你慢的都是傻瓜，比你快的都是狂躁症？』若如此，無論你自己實際行進的速度快慢，我們每個人都認為自己的速度在當下的交通和道路情況中是最佳的選擇。」

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## **The Hostile Media Effects: A Founding Scholar Looks Back and Looks Forward**

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### **Abstract**

Social psychologist Dr. Mark Lepper is the Albert Ray Lang Professor of Psychology at Stanford University. The seminal study he co-authored with his Stanford colleagues—“The hostile media phenomenon: Biased perception and perceptions of media bias in coverage of the Beirut Massacre” (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985)—paved the way for a steady stream of subsequent media research in hostile media effects. Trained at Yale University in the tradition of Hovland’s persuasion work and mentored by presidential campaign consultant Robert Ableson, Dr. Lepper’s lifelong research focuses on motivation (intrinsic vs. extrinsic) and cognitive processes. His empirical research on attributional biases and inferential errors led to the theorization of hostile media effects (HME) phenomena. With a total of 328 cites in SSCI journal articles, HME has grown into a mainstream media effects theory. On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the seminal 1985 study, Richard Perloff (2015) of Cleveland

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State University wrote a Milestone Essay in *Mass Communication & Society*, which returned HME to the spotlight. Riding on this momentum, the original researcher Mark Lepper looked back in this interview, to trace the theory's deep intellectual roots, to speculate on its application in non-Western cultures such as China, as well as on future directions for research.

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## 馬克·萊珀教授簡介

社會心理學家馬克·萊珀博士(Dr. Mark Lepper)是斯坦福大學心理學專業的阿里貝爾特·雷郎教授(Prof. Albert Ray Lang)。他與斯坦福的同事們一同撰寫的論文《敵意媒體現象解析：知覺偏誤和對貝魯特大屠殺報導偏向的認知》(Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985)影響深遠，為後續一系列敵意媒體效應的研究開闢了道路。萊珀博士在耶魯大學接受學術訓練，深受霍夫蘭勸服研究傳統的熏陶並盡得總統選舉顧問羅伯特阿伯森的悉心指導。萊珀博士的研究主要聚焦於考察內在和外在的行為動機及各種認知過程。他關於歸因偏差和推理謬誤方面的實證研究直接催生了敵意媒體效應方面的理論化成果。敵意媒體效應理論一文至今被SSCI期刊引用了328次，已成長為傳播學媒介效果研究領域的主流理論。在1985年那篇經典論文發表30週年之際，克利夫蘭州立大學的理查德·佩羅夫博士(Richard Perloff, 2015)在《大眾傳播與社會》期刊發表了一篇里程碑回顧文章，將敵意媒體效應理論放回了學術界的「聚光燈」下，引起了學者們的關注。藉此機會，做為敵意媒體效果理論的「初創者」之一，萊珀接受訪談，他回顧了該理論的深層學術淵源，討論了理論在非西方文化(譬如中國環境)中的適用性，以及相關研究未來的走向。

ML：Mark Lepper

RW：魏然

**RW:** 您和同事在1985年發表的那篇敵意媒體效果理論的先驅之作，主要背景是1982年被電視媒體廣為報導的發生在以色列和巴解組織之間的黎巴嫩戰爭。佩羅夫博士(2015)認為1985年那項研究的主要動因是為了弄清「一般規律之外的例外情況」，而那篇論文似乎又與您學生Vallone的博士學位論文相關。您和您的同事們當時主要是出於什麼考慮開展那個研究的？發表於1985年那篇論文與您本人之前的研究有什麼樣的關聯呢？

**ML:** 有幾個因素使我們對敵意媒體效果產生興趣。首先是出於理論上的考量。Lee Ross博士、我本人和Charlie Lord等人在1979年所做

的一項研究發現，讀者本身對於研究結果的認同度會影響讀者如何看待該研究結果。當研究與讀者本人的觀點契合時，讀者傾向於認為研究是有價值的，且對於科學的發展有重要意義；但是當研究發現與讀者本人的觀點不同時，讀者會認為研究設計粗糙，錯誤百出。類似這樣的「同化偏見」在其他研究中也不鮮見。例如，早在1960年代，關於肯尼迪和尼克松之間總統選戰辯論的研究就發現了比較強的「同化偏見」：兩邊陣營的選民們都認為自己中意的候選人已然贏得了辯論。自此，類似的結果多次得到交叉驗證。儘管實際上關於誰贏得辯論總是意見不一，但兩邊的判斷無論如何不可能都是準確的。

隨後，我們共同的好友以及我的導師耶魯大學的鮑勃·安德森問了我們一個尤其有啟發性的問題：「若爾等所見不謬，那麼人們總該認為彼此矛盾或者模糊不清的信息更接近自己的看法和判斷。如果真的這樣，為何政客總認為媒體於對手陣營有利呢？」當然，這可以被認為是政客們慣用的策略，讓選民都以為自己沒有得到媒體的公正對待，或助其在選戰中博取選民的同情分。然而，Lee和我本人（和Bob Vallone一樣）都與真的候選人以及總統選戰有過直接的接觸。我們回顧了各自的第一手經驗後，認為這不僅僅是一個策略問題，而確實構成了對於爭議證據「同化偏見」效果的重要例外情況。問題的關鍵在於受眾對「原始」證據（或經歷）和對「媒介報導」之間反應方式的不同。已然抱有明顯立場傾向者多會將媒介的報導與他們心目中「客觀公正」報導的標準進行對比。

到1980年里根與卡特競選前，我們已準備測試我們的這些假設了。我們調查卡特和里根各自的支持者以及尚未決定的選民如何評估三家美國主要電視網對競選的報導。結果十分明晰。當時的專家認為辯論是里根稍佔上風，差不多三分之二的受訪者認為媒體對於辯論的報導大體公正客觀。但在剩下三分之一卻認為報導不夠客觀公正的受訪者中，對媒體如何不客觀的評價卻恰好針鋒相對。里根支持者中96%的受訪者認為媒體報導不利於里根。對面陣營中，83%的卡特支持者也認為報導對卡特不利。

實際上，後來一些不曾發表的對美國選戰的研究發現，我們可以從有偏向的「同化」現象中推導出「敵意媒體效果」這條看上去是例外的推論。我們關於總統辯論的研究發現選戰對立陣營的支持者們都會認為他們支持的候選人已經獲勝了；而且他們也認定辯論之後理應是公正中立的媒介報導卻常常不利於他們中意的候選人，這兩個效果彼此相關。選民越是認定自己支持的候選人已經實際贏得了辯論，他們也就越是強烈地感受到媒介報導不利於自己陣營。如此，若到時候媒介報導未能與你對辯論結果的判斷合拍，則媒介一定是帶了敵意的偏見。從帶有偏向的選民看來，媒介對我方陣營表現優異者和對方陣營明顯落後的候選人一視同仁，這本身就構成了偏見。

**RW:** 如此說來，關鍵問題就是媒介的信息或媒介化，那為什麼呢？

**ML:** 若我親眼所見一個場景，我自然認為我知道它是何意義，有何後果。然後我聽到他人的評論和看法似乎並不和本人看法合拍。就好像我看電視播出的總統辯論，然後對自己說：「看，我支持的候選人贏了吧，我感到太棒了！」然後，我聽到五至六位來自不同意識形態陣營的評論員開始評頭論足。如果他們竟然說「兩位候選人表現半斤八兩」甚至「對方的表現更勝一籌」，我就面臨著兩難處境。他們為何沒有得出我自己得出的結論呢？我支持的候選人贏了，順理成章。他們把優劣如此分明的兩者等同起來：追求平等地表現對立陣營已經成了我們社會的問題。當然，我們都會聲稱「那樣是表現公正的方法」。

**RW:** 回顧以往，您如何看待1985年的那項研究以及隨後的一系列敵意媒體效果研究？這些對於您在歸因偏差和推論謬誤方面的研究來說重要性在哪裡？敵意媒體效果理論對於公共輿論研究領域的貢獻何在？例如，佩羅夫(2015)就指出敵意媒體效果理論啟發了政治傳播領域、大眾傳播領域、公共輿論以及社會心理學方面的研究，證明了這個概念的豐富內涵(頁703)。佩羅夫用「啟發性」和「概念創新」這樣的詞匯來形容敵意媒體效果假設(頁705)。同時，這一現象也與考察受眾如何將個人豐富的意義系統引入解釋媒介體驗的研究密切相關。

**ML:** 我們很榮幸讀到佩羅夫博士在《大眾傳播與社會》期刊上談論敵意媒體效果的論文，尤其是關於我們所做研究的評論。這就好像長壽或金婚值得慶祝，我們覺得很幸運，因為我們很久前寫的論文目前還能引起大家持續不斷的注意，其中有些想法經過歲月洗禮，依然沒有過時。對於我們來說，計劃和實施那些研究的情形就好像就發生在昨天。

自然，敵意媒體效果理論是學術界關於引發人們衝突誤解的推論偏見進行研究的組成部分。我們在1970年代剛開始我們的研究時，Hal Kelley (1967, 1973) 的歸因理論才剛剛誕生，學者們還著迷於考察我們如何對人或場景進行歸因。當時，Lee Ross 和我都屬於年輕一代的心理學者。我們開始認為人們在歸因和推論中時常出現的系統誤差至少和分析人們如何得出正確的推論一樣有趣（那些謬誤的推論可能帶來意義深遠的各種後果）。

**RW:** 您認為產生這種認知推論偏差的根本原因何在？是自我防衛心理？擔心被挑戰？還是僅僅出於本能的反應？

**ML:** 我需要補充一下，以往的研究發現當人們越是真心關心某事，敵意媒體效果越強。換而言之，那些真正帶有強烈黨派立場的人或那些比較自我中心的人，敵意媒體效果最強。故此，我認為這種效應的強弱與我們感到自我認知和自我價值多大程度上受到挑戰有很大關係。在那個意義上我們可以說這種效應是自我防衛性質的，而有些時候我們只是不那麼容易相信別人。美國很多人至今仍然相信我們在伊拉克發現了大規模殺傷性武器。目前伊拉克或許真有些這樣的武器，但顯然我們什麼都沒有找到。

**RW:** 回到前面那個更大的問題：即受眾如何將自己豐富的意義帶到對媒介報道的解釋中。您是如何看這個問題的？

**ML:** 考慮到不少人都以此來批評推論謬誤方面的研究，我需要說明這些研究的目的從來就不是要證明人們是「愚蠢」或「非理性」的。實際上我們認為許多社會或心理過程，有時候能夠導致謬誤，但在不同的場景中也常常能帶出正確的答案。假設愛因斯坦的研究生做了個實驗發現光速並非每秒186,000英里，而是每小時3英里。我們認為愛因斯坦不必重新檢查這位學生的實驗就可以合理的推論出這個結論是不對的。

但這些推論過程推至極限也可能讓我甚至是愛因斯坦都無法從最好的新研究中學到東西。若我把所有與我原來假設和立場不一致的研究結果都視為謬誤，卻樂於接受所有與我原有想法一致的研究，我就無法從新的證據和經驗中學到任何新的東西了。可以這樣看，我們總是表現得好像我們日常的政治和社會觀點都基於廣泛客觀的證據，不容撼動。

最後，針對您最後的問題，我的朋友和合作者Lee Ross總喜歡說社會心理學家和其他社會科學家一個世紀以來一直強調受眾如何將自己豐富的意義體系帶到對媒介信息的解釋中去。我們可以認為沒有兩個人會用同樣的方式看(聽)到完全一樣的信息傳播。但人們並不以為然，常覺得這樣的看法和相關的實證發現既平庸又無趣。五十年後，文學家們用同樣的說法來描述人們對古典文學的反應。這樣的視角常被叫做「解構主義」。這個視角幾十年來已成為文學領域最讓人激動和最為影響深遠的思潮。這讓我們覺得很有必要促進跨學科交流。或許，我們國家在全國經濟顧問委員會之外，還需要一個全國心理學(社會科學)顧問委員會，哈哈。

**RW:** 那麼，人們做出這樣的反應是有意的還是純心理反應？

**ML:** 兩者兼而有之。有時候人們會有意濃墨重筆地說某些話，因為他們相信那樣做最為有利。政客們可能會有意將自己刻畫為媒介偏見的受害者。那樣是有利的，能吸引更多投票的做法。但我們也確實不怎麼能理解為什麼其他人的世界觀與自己天差地別。

**RW:** 自從1985年那篇論文發表後，敵意媒體效果理論不僅吸引了大量研究者而且也漸漸成了媒介效果研究領域中的主流。Perloff博士發表在《大眾傳播與社會》期刊中的評論文章回顧了這個理論的成長和演進過程。您是否同意Perloff博士文中指出敵意媒體效果理論的貢獻和它所面臨的挑戰？

**ML:** Perloff博士的評論文章考慮周全，完美地總結了敵意媒體效果理論的現狀。在坦率細緻地討論了概念術語之後，他指出敵意媒體效果理論的研究在不同的實際場景中都發現了相對穩定的中等強度的媒介效果。

然後，他建構了新的效果模型來把那些考察敵意媒體效果中介變量的研究成果包含在內。他指出那些類似黨派立場，事件關注度和極化效果等因素在現實政治場景中常常難以區分。實際上，Perloff博士指出敵意媒體效果在不同的現實研究場景中可能背後的機制都不一樣。

我的看法與目前傳播輿論研究的區別主要在於，我和Lee都認為受眾既有信息的多寡十分重要。在我們與Vallone合作的最初研究中，我們發現受眾既有的知識（無論是自我報告的知識程度或客觀測試的結果）十分重要。那些有最多知識的人無論歸於哪個陣營，對媒體偏見的感知都最為強烈。這樣的發現顯示出敵意媒體效果背後可能是受眾能把自己所見與其他應該被包括但實際未被包含在內的信息和解釋進行對比。我們其他沒發表的論文也發現既有信息對敵意媒體效果的調節作用。

最後，Perloff博士在社交媒體和政黨信源愈來愈多的環境中分析了敵意媒體效果理論的未來發展。我發現我們對於敵意媒體效果的定義並未被大家共用，尤其是我們當初將此效果視為相對的而非絕對。故此，我們預測說敵對陣營總會認為媒體報導不利於各自支持的候選人。

如此，我們認為敵意偏見不僅受到敵意媒體效果影響，而且也受到了對立面（候選人）的真實表現和實際長處的影響。我們有一篇未曾發表的論文考察了受眾如何看待1988年老布殊和民主黨候選人Dukakis的總統選戰辯論。這次辯論中，即便是Dukakis的支持者都認定老布殊佔了上風。但在事後評估媒體對此次辯論的報導時，所有Dukakis的支持者（而非僅僅60%的老布殊支持者們）皆認為媒體報導偏向老布殊，呈現了相對的敵意媒體效果。

**RW:** 按照Feldman (2014)的看法，敵意媒體效果實則並非接觸媒體帶來的直接效果，而是對媒體描繪的反應。敵意媒體效果理論與其他主流的媒體效果理論，如第三人效果(Davison, 1983)和預設影響的影響理論(Gunther & Storey, 2003)等也有關聯。例如Wei、Chia和Lo (2011)關於選民民意調查效果的研究將敵意媒體效果理論與第三人效果理論整合起來。他們認為第三人效果與敵意媒

體效果會彼此增強並產生聚合效應，影響人們對媒體報導效果的評估，而且這些評估對行為意向也有影響。您如何看待類似這樣的理論路徑？您如何看待敵意媒體效果理論與第三人效果理論或者預設影響的影響理論之間的異同？

**ML:** 事實上Feldman博士所言甚是。對我來說，當不同陣營的受眾接觸到媒體上對雙方平衡公正的報導後，產生的認知偏差即形成敵意媒體效果。很明顯，我們所說並非受眾接觸到本來就偏向對方的媒體內容後產生的效果。

我們試圖清楚地通過論文的副標題「感知偏向與對媒體偏向的認知」傳遞我們的意思。但我們並沒有認真考慮到主標題「敵意媒體現象」可能誤導讀者。儘管我們原來標題的意義好像也還算清楚，但或許我們應該改個更明確的標題比如「敵意媒體悖論」之類。隨著後來者越來越多用「效果」代替我們原標題中的「現象」一詞，又無形中增大了誤解的可能性。

如您所說，第三人效果以及預設影響的影響效果與敵意媒體效果之間的關聯至關重要。當初我們寫敵意媒體效果那篇論文時並不知道這些研究的存在，我們甚至都沒有引用它們。但在Vallone的那篇論文中，我們已經增加了與第三人效果相關的研究問題。我們讓支持阿拉伯人和支持以色列人的受訪來估計「有多少中立的觀眾會因為收看了相關的新聞報導對以色列持有更負面的態度」。我們發現原本就支持以色列的受訪會認為多數中立觀眾看了媒體報導以後對以色列的態度會變得更加負面，儘管他們自己似乎並不會受新聞報導的影響。相反，支持阿拉伯人的受訪會認為多數中立受眾看了電視新聞後對阿拉伯的態度會變得負面。我們現在意識到這樣的認知偏差會加劇敵意媒體效果。當人們相信看上去不利自己陣營的媒體報導可能讓更多中立者反對自己，他們自然更有可能產生憤怒情緒，並將這種情緒付諸行動。

**RW:** 在1985年您們發表論文時，報紙和大眾媒介還是主流。三十年之後，互聯網絡尤其是社交媒體的崛起深刻地改變了媒介環境。人們了解國際新聞的渠道和來源極大的多樣化，受眾群體也呈現出碎片化趨向。用Perloff的話說可能影響敵意媒體效果理論的因素

和趨勢包括：(1) 社交媒體的擴散；(2) 黨派媒體的興起；(3) 政治傳播和心理學方面研究的新思潮。在新的環境中，您認為敵意媒體效果多大程度上仍舊有效？新媒體環境中，您是否會對敵意媒體效果理論作新的表述或者乾脆提出全新的理論來解釋受眾對媒介內容的認知偏見？為什麼？

ML: 我們研究發表後的三十年間，媒介環境顯然發生了巨大的變化。但我本人過去二十多年一直對新技術並不敏感，我不太適合評論新媒體帶來的諸多變化。但我個人以為那些新媒體帶來的變化可能更多改變了敵意媒體效果的常見程度和適用這些效果的場景，這些效果背後牽涉的心理機制並不會受太大影響。

一方面，Perloff博士針對這些媒體技術變化可能帶來什麼影響的細緻分析給我留下了深刻的印象。我個人對這些媒體技術進步的體驗讓我覺得技術進步加劇了美國政治中原本泛濫的兩極化現象和不信任情況。大量明顯帶有黨派立場的新聞來源幾乎能夠就任何問題的任何立場提供證據和支持材料。

本次總統選舉中關於媒介報導偏向性（從將傳統主流媒體貼上「昨日黃花」的標籤到具體對某次採訪和報導存在偏向的批評）的討論隨處可見。此外，大多數在線的新聞報導，即便是看上去無關政治的體育報導、教育新聞、電影影評等，現在都可以讓受眾評頭論足，大家都可以提出不同的看法和立場。

這些傳播環境方面的變化減少了不同立場的支持者收看對同一重大政治話題完全一樣媒體報導的機會：敵意媒體效果看上去也就不如原來那麼明顯了。但與此同時，新媒體環境中美國的選民幾乎對任何問題都產生了無法調和的分歧和對立。這樣的情況為人們感知到媒體偏向提供了土壤。

RW: 學者們研究了影響敵意媒體效果的調節變量（比如已有態度）、中介變量和整合分析方面的優勢。您覺得為了保持理論本身的生命力，敵意媒體效果理論未來應往何處去？該理論在哪些具體領域可能更有機會繼續發展，為什麼？

ML: 我覺得Lee Ross和他同僚們最近就哲學家和心理學家們所說「天真現實主義」所做的研究非常有趣，或可成為推動敵意媒體效果

理論發展的契機。「天真現實主義」認為，個人從根本上相信自己對世界的認知是準確的、如實的。除去那些事關「品味」的領域(比如食品、電影或音樂鑒賞等)，我們將自己對世界的感知視為標尺來衡量他人感知和認識的客觀與準確程度。

若我認為我自己對事物的感知是準確的，而他人竟與我所見不同，那麼我就會問：他們為何不能如我般客觀地看待世界？解決這個問題有幾個方法：或他們沒有接觸到所有相關的信息和證據。若如此，我就有動力去教育並幫助他人了解事情的本來面目。但是若他人在接觸到相關信息後仍舊與我看法相左，則對方定然是被私利、個人小算盤或虛假的意識形態蒙蔽了判斷，對事實視而不見(或者我就可以推斷他人是為了個人算計有意隱瞞自己的真實感受和認知了)。

敵意媒體效果與其他相關理論一樣自然是從上述預設出發的。如此分析顯示人們一開始可能會認為他人比較容易被有力的證據勸服並改變觀點，但實際上並非如此。分析也假設人們傾向於高估個人與對立陣營之間的差異程度，使人在預測他者行為方面過度自信。同時，這種效應也會讓人們相信自己較他人更不容易發生態度轉變，更不受信息偏誤的影響(第三人效果)。科學家在實驗室中已經研究了不少這樣的情況，但這些現象都沒有被拿到現實的傳播和輿論環境中加以考察。

最後，天真現實主義在政治領域之外也啟發著我們，我們常常會看到平行現象的存在。引用George Carlin的話說：「你是否覺得路上每個比你慢的都是傻瓜，比你快的都是狂躁症？」若如此，無論你自己實際行進的速度快慢，我們每個人都認為自己的速度在當下的交通和道路情況中是最佳的選擇。

**RW:** 輿論研究和傳播研究，無論歷史傳統還是就其本質看，都是跨學科的。社會心理學可以通過哪些途徑影響並指引上述這些領域的發展？能否請您提供一些具體的實例或研究案例來加以解釋？

**ML:** 歷史上看，社會心理學對傳播和輿論研究最為明顯的影響在於為勸服、社會行為和選舉投票等方面的研究提供了理論框架。傳統上看，社會心理學家一般從事實驗研究較多。他們在實驗室中進

行研究，強調隨機分組和實驗控制，但樣本量較小，且不具代表性。而傳播和輿論學者常在真實的場景中應用測試這些理論。霍夫蘭對於勸服的大量研究，凱里關於歸因理論的考察，Cacioppo和Petty (1987) 關於兩種信息處理路徑的研究，以及Kahneman和Tversky關於展望理論的研究，都曾被其他領域廣泛應用。

如此，Kahneman和Tversky (1984) 通過實驗在不同的研究場景中發現，對實際上內容一樣的信息做不同的言語表述(或框架)，就會對於受眾的行為取向產生迥異的效果。例如，人們在購買彩票時更願意選擇有50%機會或贏取200美金(或分文不得)，也不願選擇100%的機率能獲得100美金的回報。同樣，比起100%的概率失去100美金，人們多會選擇50%的概率輸掉200美金(或分文不失)。他們的分析對於其他社會科學有重大意義。最終，兩位研究者都因此獲得了經濟學的諾貝爾。

再例如，醫生可能需要評估癌症患者的兩種療程選擇：若實施手術，則患者有10%概率一週內死亡，但獲得5年的壽命的存活率的機率增加20%。使用藥物則患者不可能在一週內喪生，但獲得五年存活率的概率減少了20%。當這樣的信息被表述為「存活率」時，多數人都會選擇手術。但同樣的情況被表述為「死亡率」時，多數人卻會轉而選擇藥物治療。類似情況，大多接近退休年齡的人會願意推遲三年退休，如果他們被告知65歲時退休比標準退休年齡68歲早了三年，因此社保養老金會被扣減。如果同樣的情況被表述為如果在標準退休年齡65歲之後額外工作3年，養老金會得到額外獎勵，則選擇多工作三年的人就會減少。考慮到獎勵和扣減的絕對值相同，兩種選擇其實邏輯上相同，但心理上造成的效果卻有顯著差異。

這些將具體的社會心理學理論從實驗室帶回到現實環境的研究常常能夠揭示出理論存在的侷限性，並刺激研究者們對理論發揮作用的充分和必要條件作更為仔細的界定。通過考察更大更具代表性的樣本，現實場景中的研究(比如敵意媒體效果理論的考察)能夠彌補實驗室研究外在效度不高以及結果不夠穩定等缺陷。

同時，其他學科也可以反補心理學。李普曼在1922年首次提

出的刻板印象(stereotype)一詞，成了社會心理學最重要的概念之一。類似情況，通過實驗研究決策過程的社會心理學家Irving Janis，對肯尼迪總統決定入侵古巴豬羅灣之後造成的外交局面無比震驚，他因此開始了對現實環境中決策過程的研究並著書分析了「群體思維」現象(1972)。這些例子顯示，通常在實驗室環境中考察個體的社會心理學家們也開始關注群體動力。

**RW:** 敵意媒體效果理論發源於美國。美國社會中言論自由和對爭議問題的輿論多元性被認為是政治和社會話語的規範。但在美國之外，比如有些官方媒體主導公共討論的專制主義社會中，敵意媒體效果理論是否仍然適用呢？根據您對文化影響的專業判斷，您覺得在中國環境中敵意媒體效果研究應該如何展開？另外，在中國的政治文化環境中，公共輿論常常並非受到理性商議的驅動，而是更多受基於道德價值判斷的公眾情感影響(Lin, 2012)。相比理性商議，公眾情感更為多變，擴散、消失和轉向都更為迅速。這樣的情感反應在網絡空間尤為常見。敵意媒體效果理論在這樣的輿論環境中如何發揮作用？您如何看待文化因素對敵意媒體效果的影響？

**ML:** 多有趣的一組問題！我真希望我能夠更加深思熟慮以後做出回答。從表面看來，那些完全消滅了異見分子(尤其是基於不同信仰體系和對問題不同解釋的異見)的高度專制主義社會中，敵意媒體效果產生的重要條件無法得到滿足。哪怕那些異見分子雖然存在，但在公共場合被成功壓制的環境中，敵意媒體效果被表現出來的可能性也大大減少。隨著網絡和社交媒體日益普及，人們能夠越來越輕易的接觸到針鋒相對的不同意見，上面描述的兩種情況發生的可能性也在不斷降低。

從目前美國文化心理學視角看，其他更為根本的文化差異可能也會發揮作用。文化心理學研究涉及美國這樣的個人主義文化與中國這樣的集體主義文化之間的差異。從這個角度看，探討天真現實主義及其後果(例如敵意媒體效果)是否在美國比在中國更為明顯就顯得十分有趣。或許我們西方人對個人自主權利的強調會讓我們相信，如果我的觀點是正確的，那麼所有不同意我的人都是錯的。

關於文化差異的另一種想法認為，西方式的思維更具線性和分析性特點，而東方思維則更為整體和辯證法，更多接受矛盾和複雜性。我自己對如此一概而論的說法有些懷疑。但在像中國這樣的東方文化中，人們或許會把彼此矛盾的觀點調和起來而非形成極化效果。

不管哪個角度看，比較敵意媒體效果理論在不同文化中的差異都十分有趣，但我已光榮退休，這些題目留待後來者繼續探討吧。

最後Lin (2012)關於中國人用基於道德的公眾情感代替理性商議的表述，我所知甚少。可我知道如今美國公眾也越來越多使用基於道德的說法和個例來代替理性討論。類似「奧巴馬總統不在美國出生，總統是個穆斯林，他並不熱愛美國人民」之類的說法更多是基於情感而非客觀證據。但也許這些情感比起Lin所說稍縱即逝的情感可能更為持久。

**RW:** 我們該如何克服這些感知偏見？如何消除系統的認知偏差？我們常常研究問題而非解決問題。比如說，「感同身受」是心理學中的一個重要概念。類似這樣的過程是否能幫助我們更好的理解「他人」？

**ML:** 我認為「感同身受」的投射能力對於我們理解他者確實有所幫助。印第安人就有這樣的俗語：「在你批評他人之前，請先穿著他們的軟皮鞋走一英里。」若你能如此，則感同身受就會產生正面效果。但在極端情況下，你可能無法設身處地考慮別人的感受，感同身受不會產生正面效果。「感同身受」非常重要，其他學者考察了如何讓人在事前就作出承諾，如何反思自己的預期並保持開放的心態。在法律案件的審判中，我們試圖讓人保持開放心態，但這並不容易。

**RW:** 媒體需要做些什麼以便在不同人群間製造更多的共識呢？

**ML:** 看一下主流媒體早期對總統選舉辯論的報導。無論候選人去哪個城市，每個電視網絡都會僱用自己的通訊員在當地進行報導，例如記者會站在鏡頭前說「這裡是克利夫蘭的Sander Vanocur……」。然而，隨著時間的變化，電視網絡給每個候選人都指派了一名記

者或一支報導團隊，而那些記者和團隊全程跟隨候選人全國拉票。哪種報導方式更為「公正」呢？若我是電視網絡的製片人，我決定「分配20分鐘給每個候選人」。我並不打算自己站出來總結每個候選人每天說了什麼做了什麼，我僅給每個候選人的發言人分配20分鐘，我個人不做評價。我認為讓特定記者或團隊盯著候選人的報導方式會讓那個記者看上去像是候選人的支持者。即便記者不支持他報導的候選人，他也會更理解那個自己跟隨的候選人。

另一方面，媒介本來就要報導矛盾和衝突。以槍支管制的討論為例，若媒體都說：「大家的共識在哪裡？你和你的對立面的共同點在哪裡？」推動人們去尋求大家都能接受的方案。雖然這可能不會特別有趣，但我們從此能強調人和人之間其實非常貼近。

**RW:** 現在的媒介環境已與理論初創時大不相同了，敵意媒體效果也可能發生了重要的變化。**Perloff (2015)** 提出今天的媒體仍然會讓受眾揣測報導對他人的影響。這種揣測牽涉到關於媒體效果的認知基模和對媒體影響的推測等。您對未來研究敵意媒體效果理論的學者們有什麼建議？

**ML:** 在需要進一步探索的許多問題中，其中一種說法時我們可能需要反轉敵意媒體效果理論的提問方向。為了能夠讓更多人在接觸到與自己看法不一致的信息或觀點時能夠更寬容開放，我們應該如何克服敵意媒體效果？組織信息和觀點的方式能否更有利於人們做客觀的信息處理？當受眾實際觀看或聆聽新聞事件的報導時，是否有策略和技巧讓人們對信息作出更為公正無私的判斷？當我們接收到與自己的觀念和想法不一致的證據時，是否有方法能激發系統有序的討論和意見交換，幫助人們擺脫自我防衛心理後再作反應。

我們文化中有不少社會場景都需要人們追求客觀公正的判斷。為此，人們已發展出不少減少信息處理偏差的技術。美國法院開庭前，法官給陪審團的說明就是為了幫助他們避免常見的認知陷阱，比如在得到所有證據前就輕易妄下結論。其他國家會使用其他程序避免在法律審判中產生偏見：在羅馬天主教會裡會請人扮演「魔鬼代言人」角色，有意提出同主流相悖的看法或不受多

數人歡迎的意見，以求引發對不同立場徹底的討論和商議；在美國幾大電視網絡發展的早期，聯邦通訊委員會要求電視網絡給不同的候選人一樣長度的報導時間（隨後人們對什麼是同等時間也提出了不同看法）。我們常常有意隨機排列各候選人在選票上出現的順序，我們還開發出精緻的遊戲規則以保證政治辯論過程對於所有的參與者都是公平的。

總體看來，科學方法本身也可視為在尋找新的實證證據過程中，最能減少偏見的技術。將這些方法策略和實驗室中關於減少認知偏差的相關研究成果整合成系統的理論框架，可能對傳播學、輿論學和心理學等領域的研究都有重大意義。當然，即便我們有追求正確答案的動機，得到了這些方法、策略和實踐機制的幫助，認知誤差仍不可避免。但作為科學家，我們大家都有責任和義務盡最大可能逼近真實。

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Academic Dialogue with **Mark Lepper**

## **Hostile Media Effects: A Founding Scholar Looks Back and Looks Forward**

ML: Mark LEPPER

RW: Ran WEI

**RW:** The background behind the 1985 pioneer HME study was the televised 1982 Lebanon War between Israel and its Arab foes—the PLO. Perloff (2015) characterized the motivation of the study as “the exception to the rule.” How did the study relate to previous research you’ve done?

**ML:** There were several factors that led to our interest in perceptions of hostile media biases. The first was theoretical. Some earlier research that Lee Ross and I had undertaken with Charlie Lord (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979) had found evidence that people viewed conflicting research studies quite differently, depending on whether they personally agreed with the results of those studies or not. Research results that agreed with one’s personal beliefs were seen as valuable and probative contributions to science; whereas research results that disagreed with one’s personal beliefs were seen as poorly designed and riddled with errors. Such “assimilation biases” had also appeared in other research programs. For example, previous studies of U.S. presidential debates dating back to the 1960 election, between then-candidates John Kennedy and Richard Nixon, had shown strong assimilative biases: Voters supporting each of the candidates seemed simultaneously to believe strongly that their own preferred candidate had clearly won those debates—a result that has been replicated many times since. Although there is almost always some disagreement about who won any particular exchange, it seemed clear that both sides’ perceptions could not be correct at the same time.

Some time later our mutual good friend and my late mentor—Bob Abelson at Yale—asked us a typically penetrating and

provocative question: “If you guys are right and people tend to see mixed or conflicting results as supportive of their own initial beliefs and biases, why is it that politicians never believe that the media are on their side?” Of course, this seeming phenomenon could be partially due to politicians believing (probably correctly) that it will help their campaigns when voters believe that they have been mistreated by the supposedly neutral national media. Nonetheless, when Lee and I, who (like Bob Abelson) had both had some personal experience with actual political candidates and campaigns, reviewed our own experiences, we were convinced that this was indeed an important “exception to the rule” of biased assimilation of mixed or ambiguous evidence. The key difference, we speculated, was between responses to “raw” evidence or experience and responses to “mediated” accounts of that evidence or experience, and the likelihood that partisans, in the latter case, would be able to compare their own expectations of what “fair and balanced” coverage should have looked like with the actual media coverage that they had just seen.

By the time of the 1980 U.S. presidential election between candidates Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, we were ready to give our expectations a test. We asked potential voters who had said they supported Reagan, supported Carter, or were undecided what they thought of the media coverage by the three then-major U.S. television networks. The results were clear. Pundits at the time suggested that the debate had been a narrow win by Reagan, and nearly 2/3 of our partisans thought that the media coverage of the debate had seemed generally fair and unbiased. However, of the remaining 1/3, who reported that the coverage of the debate had indeed been biased, the views of our two partisan groups were diametrically opposed. Among Reagan supporters who claimed bias, 96% felt the coverage was biased against Reagan; Among Carter supporters who claimed bias, by contrast, 83% felt the media were biased against Carter.

In fact, later unpublished research on other U.S. elections, showed that we could “derive” this seeming exception to the rule from the biased assimilation phenomenon itself. In all of our debate studies, partisans on opposing sides each thought that their preferred candidate had won, and that allegedly neutral or unbiased media coverage after the debate was actually biased against their preferred

candidate. And, these two effects were correlated. The more strongly a particular participant believed that his or her candidate had won the debate, the more strongly that participant also believed that the media were biased against that candidate. Thus, if subsequent media coverage of the event failed to portray the results of the debate as you saw it, the media must be biased and hostile in its assessment. It is as if the media commentators were giving equal credence and weight to the obviously inferior performance and arguments of the other candidate as they did to the stronger, clearer, and more probative performance on your own candidate.

**RW:** Then, the key issue here is mediated message or mediation, how come?

**ML:** If I simply observe a situation first hand, I think I know what it means, I think I know what its effects will be. And then I hear someone comment in a way that implies they didn't see it that way at all. In a media situation, it's like when I watch a televised debate and say to myself, "Gee, my guy won, isn't that great? I feel good." Then I listen to the commentators afterwards—typically these days it might be 5 or 6 people who represent different points on the political spectrum from conservative to liberal. If they say "It was close" or, worse, "I think the other guy won," then I'm faced with a dilemma. What could possibly explain their failure to see what I just saw? "My candidate won, handily. They're equating things that aren't equal." That's a problem with our society in trying to represent both sides equally. Of course, we say, "That's the way to be fair."

**RW:** With hindsight, how do you feel about the 1985 study and the ensuing HME research? How important was this study to your research on attributional biases and inferential errors? What are the contributions that you think HME makes to public opinion research? For example, Perloff (2015) states that "The hostile media effect has spawned studies in political communication, mass communication, public opinion, and social psychology, attesting to the conceptual richness of the concept (p. 703). Perloff used such words as "provocative" and "theoretically novel" to describe the hostile media effect hypothesis (p. 705). Also, the phenomenon connects with scholarship on how

**audiences bring their own rich meanings to the mediated experience. What are your thoughts on this?**

**ML:** We are honored by Dr. Perloff's very kind coverage of our research in his milestone essay concerning the HME literature in *MC&S*. Like the celebration of a long life or a long-lasting marriage, continued attention to a paper written that long ago makes us feel fortunate that the ideas are still current after such a period, even though it also seems like "only yesterday" that we were planning and running those studies.

Of course, the hostile media studies were but part of a larger research narrative about possible biases and errors in inference that may contribute to human misunderstanding and conflict. When we started our studies in the 1970's, Hal Kelley's (1967, 1973) attribution theory was new, and researchers were interested in examining how we make causal attributions about people and the situations they are in. Lee Ross and I were among a group of then-younger psychologists who began to think that the fact that people's attributions and inferences might sometimes be systematically biased—and that these inaccurate inferences might have important consequences—was at least as interesting as studies of how people might more typically arrive at more accurate inferences.

**RW: What would you say are the root causes of this sort of bias: being defensive, fear of being challenged, or simply instinctive?**

**ML:** I should add, evidence shows these effects occur more powerfully when people really care about the events, with people who really are partisans or ego-involved. So I think it does have to do with the fact that our beliefs and our perceptions of ourselves and self-worth are challenged that we recruit this mechanism. We could say, in that sense, it's defensive, and more; sometimes we're just incredulous. A lot of people in America still believe the U.S. found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Now, there may have been some at one time, but our troops certainly didn't find any.

**RW: Back to the earlier broad question about how audiences bring their own rich meanings to the mediated experience. What are your thoughts?**

**ML:** I should note—since this has become such a common critique of any research on alleged inferential errors—that the intent of these sorts of studies was never to show that people are “stupid” or “irrational.” Instead, we believe that many of the same mental and social processes that can sometimes lead to errors will also lead, in other situations, to correct answers. Suppose that Albert Einstein had had a graduate student who claimed to have just performed an experiment proving that the speed of light was not roughly 186,000 miles per second, but rather about 3 miles per hour. We think that it would be prudent and sensible for Einstein to infer—without even examining the details of the student’s experiment—that the study was deeply flawed.

Taken to an extreme, however, a long string of these sorts of inferences might make me, or even Einstein, unable to learn, even from good new research. If I dismissed, as flawed, all of the studies that produced results that did not fit my initial hypotheses or preconceptions but I accepted all of the studies that produced results that did fit my initial beliefs, I would be incapable of learning from new evidence or experiences. One way of thinking about these two situations is that we often act as if our everyday social and political opinions were based on the same sorts of extensive and objective evidence as physicists’ prior calculations of the speed of light.

Finally, in response to your last question, my friend and co-author, Lee Ross, is fond of saying that social psychologists and other social scientists have for nearly a century emphasized the many critical ways in which audiences bring their own rich meanings to the interpretation of communications and media presentations, such that one might claim that no two people will “see” or “hear” a particular communication in precisely the same way. But society at large shrugged, seeming to find this social science insight, and the relevant empirical findings behind it, as banal and boring. Fifty years later, literary scholars made precisely the same basic point about people’s responses to classical literature. This perspective, commonly dubbed “deconstructionism,” became perhaps the most exciting and influential movement to hit literary studies in many decades—which does make us wish that there were more communication of insights across different fields. Perhaps our country needs a National Council of Psychological (or Social Scientific) Advisors along the lines of our existing and influential National Council of Economic Advisors.

**RW:** Do people have such responses deliberately, or is it simply psychological?

**ML:** I think it's probably both. I think sometimes people may deliberately say something more strongly and more outlandishly because they believe there's a strategic gain by doing that. Politicians probably do, in general, try to portray themselves as being victims of media bias. It's good for business, good for getting the votes. Above and beyond that, it's the natural tendency of our not understanding why others can view the world so differently.

**RW:** Since the 1985 study, HME has not only gained traction, but has also become a rising stream in media effects research. Its evolution and growth were reviewed in a critique by Richard Perloff, which was published in *Mass Communication & Society*. How do you agree with him on his assessment of the contributions of HME to the communications field and the challenges it faces?

**ML:** Dr. Perloff's thoughtful and thorough review does an excellent job of summing up the current state of HME research and scholarship. Following an articulate and nuanced discussion of terms, he shows that the HME has proved a relatively robust, moderate-sized effect across a variety of real-world issues and settings.

He then presents a more formal model of the effect while examining the considerable research that has been done trying to identify various proposed moderators, and particularly mediators, of this effect. Here, as he notes, it is extremely difficult to separate different factors, like partisanship, issue involvement, polarization, and the like that are usually highly correlated in the real world of politics. Indeed, Dr. Perloff uses a particularly apt phrase, describing these sorts of problems as "devilishly difficult," and notes that there may be more than one mechanism underlying hostile media effects in different contexts in the real world.

My main difference with current communication and public opinion analyses here lies in the role that Lee and I believe the differing amounts of relevant information that audience members may have will play. In our initial study with Bob Vallone, for example, we found that measures of prior knowledge—both self-rated and as assessed by performance on a relevant factual quiz—did show that perceptions of media bias were greatest among those

partisans on both sides who had the most prior information. This might suggest that one possible process underlying the HME involves the audience member being capable of contrasting what he or she has just seen with other information and interpretations that could have been included, but were not. We also found this same moderating effect of prior information in other unpublished studies examining the perceptions of campus partisans of local debates.

Finally, in reading Dr. Perloff's interesting analysis of the possible future of the HME as our information environment moves increasingly into the world of social media and deliberately partisan news sources, I discovered that what we had meant by the hostile media phenomenon was not universally shared. In particular, we had initially thought of the effect in relative, rather than absolute, terms. Thus, we were predicting simply that opposing partisan groups would perceive more hostile media biases against their own candidates.

Thus, we would expect perceptions of hostile bias to be influenced not only by the HME, but also by the actual strength (were we able to measure it fairly) of the opposing positions or performances. In one of our unpublished studies of U.S. presidential debates, for instance, we studied perceptions of the first debate between 1988 candidates George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis. In this case virtually everyone, including most Dukakis supporters, agreed that Bush had won the day. Still, in evaluating the ensuing media coverage of the debate, every single Dukakis supporter, as opposed to "only" 60% of Bush supporters saw the media as biased against Dukakis—a significant relative, but certainly not an absolute, HME effect.

**RW:** According to Feldman (2014), the concept of "hostile media effect" is not a direct effect of media exposure but a response to media portrayals. Incidentally, HME is related to other major perceived effects of media content, such as third-person effect (Davison, 1983) and the Influence of Presumed Influence (Gunther & Storey, 2003). A few studies, for example, Wei, Chia and Lo (2011) have tried to incorporate HME and TPE in the study of the effects of election polls. They reasoned that the third-person perception and hostile media perceptions may enhance each other and consequently produce a joint effect on people's perceptions

**of media effects. More importantly, these perceptions may have implications for behavioral intentions. What are your thoughts on this sort of theorization? How would you elaborate on the connection and differences between HME and TPE or IPI?**

**ML:** Dr. Feldman is also right on target. To me, the HME is the result that occurs when holders of opposing partisan views are exposed to a particular presentation or communication that purports or attempts to present a fair or balanced review of a controversial issue, by pointing to the strengths and the weaknesses of the evidence and arguments on both sides of that issue. Clearly it is not some consequence or effect of being exposed to media reports that are objectively or intentionally hostile to one's own views.

Although we sought to indicate clearly what we had intended in the clause that followed the colon in our original study title—that we were examining “Biased Perception and Perceptions of Media Bias. . . .”—we only briefly considered that the first half of our title “The Hostile Media Phenomenon” might have been misleading to readers. Perhaps we should have thought of a slightly different name, like “the hostile media paradox,” although it doesn't seem like there was that much confusion about the meaning of our initial title. As our original term “phenomena” came to be gradually replaced in the literature by “effect” (as in our current discussion), the amount of confusion may have increased a bit.

The obvious relevance of both the TPE and the IPI to the hostile media effect is also important, as you suggest. At the time we were conducting and writing up the original study, we were not aware of these studies and, hence, did not even reference them. However, in the original Vallone et al. paper, we had included one question seemingly related to the TPE. Specifically, we asked our pro-Arab and pro-Israeli partisans to estimate the “percentage of neutral viewers who would become more negative to Israel after viewing the news coverage.” Pro-Israeli viewers believed that a majority of neutrals viewing the coverage would become more negative towards the Israeli cause, though they themselves had not been so influenced. Pro-Arab viewers thought instead that a majority of neutral viewers would become more negative toward the Arab cause. As you suggest, we do now see these phenomena as particularly likely to accentuate or exacerbate the basic hostile media effect. When people believe

that a seemingly hostile media account is likely to turn others further against them and their views, they should be especially likely to take umbrage and to seek to turn those feelings into action.

**RW:** The original 1985 study was conducted in an environment in which the press and mass media dominated. Thirty years later, the rise of online media and particularly that of social media have transformed the media landscape. The channels and sources of news about international affairs have been diversified, and audiences more fragmented. In the words of Perloff, the developments that bear on HME are: (1) diffusion of social media; (2) growth of partisan media; and (3) new streams of research in political communication and psychology. Under these new circumstances, to what extent would you say the HME still applies? Or will the new media environment cause you to re-frame HME in a different way or to propose a totally different theory of biased perception of media content? If so, why?

**ML:** The media environment we live in has certainly changed enormously in the 30 years since our study was published. Unfortunately, I have been on the wrong side of the technology generation gap for at least two decades and am probably not the best person to comment on these changes. Nonetheless, my suspicion is that these sorts of changes may be less likely to change the nature of the underlying effect than to change the prevalence of such effects and the nature of the settings in which such they may be observed.

On the one hand, I was certainly impressed by the thoughtful and extended analysis of the many potentially competing effects of these changes in communication technology that Dr. Perloff identified. My own personal experience of these changes, however, makes me feel that they have contributed substantially to the general atmosphere of polarization and distrust that so widespread in American politics today. The availability of so many explicitly partisan news outlets and news feeds seems to offer social support and apparent “facts” and arguments for almost position on any issue.

Discussions of biases in reporting seem ubiquitous in this current election—from the disparaging labeling of traditional major news outlets by conservatives as “lamestream media” to quite specific critiques of biased interviews or stories on one program or newstream by another of its competitors. In addition, most news

articles online, even those concerning seemingly innocent topics like sports, education, and movies now come with easy access for audience members to critique and disagree with what has been said (and then with each other).

These changes in our communications environment suggest that there may be fewer specific cases, possibly excluding major political debates, when opposing groups will have both viewed precisely the same events and media coverage of them that would permit clean demonstrations of HME. On the other hand, I think that these changes have help to create an environment of polarization in which the American electorate is deeply, bitterly, and nearly evenly divided on almost every issue. These conditions, in turn, would seem to provide a perfect setting for the continuing growth of perceptions of media bias.

**RW:** Scholars have examined moderators (which stipulate that the effect is a function of prior attitude), mediators, and the meta-analytic strength of the effect of the phenomenon. In your opinion, what are the new directions for HME to keep the momentum? In which specific areas do you think the theory may have the opportunity to expand and grow, and why?

**ML:** One particular area of opportunity that I find especially interesting comes from recent attempts by Lee Ross and his colleagues to understand the hostile media effect, along with a large number of other related phenomena, as derivations of what philosophers and psychologists have called people's "naïve realism"—that is, each individual's fundamental belief that he or she perceives the world accurately and precisely "as it really is." With the exception of areas that we generally agree to be a matter of taste, such as preferences in foods or music, we treat our own perceptions as the gold standard against which we assess the intelligence and the objectivity of others' perceptions and beliefs.

Thus, if I believe that I see events as they really are and you claim to see events differently, then I have a problem: Why don't you see the world objectively, as I do? This problem can be completely resolved in only a limited number of ways. Possibly you simply have not been exposed to the relevant information or evidence. In this case, I should be motivated to try to expose and educate you to the truth of the matter. But if, even after you have been exposed to the

relevant information, you still see the world in a different, and hence incorrect, manner, it must be because you have been “blinded” to the truth by your selfish interests, personal goals, or mistaken ideologies. (Or, of course, I could decide that you are lying about your perceptions for some personal or strategic reason.)

The HME, of course, follows from these premises, as do a number of other related phenomena. This analysis suggests that people may be likely at first to assume that others can be persuaded more easily by good evidence than they actually will prove to be. It also suggests that people will be likely to overestimate the differences between themselves and opposing partisans, making it more difficult to find common ground, and that people will be more generally overconfident in their predictions about how others will behave. It might also lead people to believe that they will be less persuaded than others (TPE) and that they are less susceptible than others to the sorts of biases in information that psychologists and others have documented. Many of these consequences have been studied and documented by psychologists in the laboratory, but many of these phenomena have not yet been investigated in the context of real-world communications and public opinion.

Finally, the naïve realism analysis also suggests, provocatively, that we may often see parallel phenomena, entirely outside the realm of politics. To quote American humorist George Carlin: “Ever notice that everyone going slower than you is an idiot and that everyone going faster than you is a maniac?” If this quip seems to ring true, no matter what speed you are actually going, it may be because each of us tends to see the speed at which we are traveling as the most judicious speed at which to travel under existing traffic and road conditions.

**RW:** Public opinion research, as well as communication research, is interdisciplinary by nature and by historical tradition. What are the avenues in which social psychology can inform and guide these fields? Can you give some specific examples or studies to explain them?

**ML:** Historically, the most prominent ways in which social psychology has influenced public opinion and communication research has been the generation of theoretical frameworks that are applicable to

questions of persuasion, social action, and voting. Traditionally, social psychologists have focused more on random assignment and control, beginning most of their research with relatively small (and frequently unrepresentative) samples studied in the laboratory. These theories then are frequently applied and tested in real-world contexts of special interest to communication and public opinion scholars. Hovland's extensive framework for the study of persuasion, Kelley's attribution theory, Cacioppo and Petty's (1987) dual-process elaboration likelihood model, and Kahneman and Tversky's work on prospect theory are all examples of theories that have been widely applied in other fields.

Thus, Kahneman and Tversky (1984) showed under numerous circumstances in the laboratory that the specific "framing" and wording of objectively identical alternatives could have very large effects on people's preferences—that people, for instance, would strongly prefer a certain \$100 over a lottery in which they would have a 50% chance of winning either \$200 or \$0, yet would avoid like the plague a certain loss of \$100 if they could instead have a 50% chance of losing either \$0 or \$200. The implications of their analysis had major effects on other social sciences, eventually leading to a Nobel Prize in Economics.

For example, practicing doctors asked to evaluate two new alternative treatments for a rare form of cancer (e.g., surgery with a 10% risk of death within a week but a 20% better 5-year survival rate than a drug treatment with 0% chance of death within a week but a 20% lower survival rate at 5 years), overwhelmingly chose surgery when these figures were presented in the form of patient "survival rates," but showed the opposite preference when the exact same figures were instead presented in the form of "mortality rates." Likewise, people nearing retirement said they would retire 3 years later if the choice had been presented to them as having to take a penalty in their social security payments for retiring early at age 65 instead of the standard retirement age of 68 than if the same choice had been presented to them as having the opportunity to earn an extra bonus in payments by working for 3 years beyond the standard retirement age of 65. Since the amount of the penalty and the bonus were the same absolute value, the two choices were logically, but obviously not psychologically, identical.

These attempts to apply specific psychological theories from the laboratory to real-world problems, in turn, frequently reveal limitations in those theories and provoke a more nuanced account of the necessary and sufficient conditions for the predictions of these theories to apply. By using larger and more representative samples, these real-world studies can also address some of the more obvious shortcomings of the laboratory experiment regarding the generalizability and the robustness of the findings, as was the case with the HME.

At the same time, interdisciplinary influence can also flow in the opposite direction, from the real world to the realm of theories in psychology. It was, after all, the famed journalist, Walter Lippman who in 1922 coined the term “stereotype”—a concept that has since become indispensable to social psychologists. In the same vein, social psychologist Irving Janis, who had been studying decision-making in the laboratory for some time, was so shocked at the foreign policy debacle following John Kennedy’s disastrous decision to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs that he instituted a new line of research on good versus bad decisions in the real world. The result was his still famous book on “groupthink” (Janis, 1972). In these cases, social psychologists who often study individuals in the laboratory are frequently led to pay more attention to group dynamics.

**RW: HME is primarily applied in the U.S., where free speech and pluralistic public opinion on controversial issues are considered the norms of politics and social discourse. Outside the U.S., say, in authoritarian societies with official media dominating the public discussions on issues, how would HME be applicable? With your expertise on the influence of culture, what are your thoughts on a HME study in China, for example? Related to this, within China’s political culture, public opinion is often driven less by rational deliberation, but more by morality-based public passion (Lin, 2012) that diffuses, digresses and dissolves rapidly. This form of emotional involvement is growing even more commonplace in China’s cyberspace. How would HME be applicable in such an opinion environment? Can you share your views on the role of culture-specific factors that may affect the applicability of HME?**

**ML:** What an interesting set of questions! I only wish that I had a more thoughtful response to them. At a superficial level, highly authoritarian societies that succeed completely in eliminating dissent (and especially dissent based on alternative belief systems or interpretations of events) may eliminate a central requirement for hostile media effects to occur. Indeed, even a society in which dissent is still present, but is effectively suppressed in public, may also limit the likelihood of hostile media effects being expressed. Presumably, such conditions will become less common as exposure to competing views through the Internet and social media becomes increasingly pervasive.

From the point of view of current American cultural psychology, however, there may be reasons for us to consider, if not to expect, other, more fundamental cultural differences to make a difference. One current movement in cultural psychology, for example, has concerned the possible differences between highly individualistic cultures like the U.S. and more collectivistic cultures like China. From this perspective, it might be interesting to ask whether naïve realism, and all of its consequences such as the HME, might be less strong in China than in the U.S. Perhaps our Western emphasis on each individual's right to make up his or her own mind is particularly conducive to the belief that if my views are correct, others who disagree with me must be wrong.

A second current line of thinking about cultural differences involves the argument that Western thinking is more linear and analytic and Eastern thinking more holistic and dialectic, more accepting of seeming contradictions and complexities. I am myself a bit nervous about generalizations this encompassing, but from this point of view the presentation of an opposing point of view in an Eastern culture like China could even produce an actual moderation, rather than a polarization, of opposing viewpoints.

In either of these cases, I would find the results of a clear comparison of HME studies performed in these different cultures extremely interesting. However, being happily retired at this point, I'll have to leave these questions for someone else to explore.

Finally, regarding Lin's (2012) claims about morality-based public passions substituting for rational deliberation, I have to admit my ignorance of the details of this argument. I would say, however,

that American politics today seems to me increasingly dominated by morality-based arguments and examples, rather than rational discourse. Claims that current President Obama was not born in the U.S., that he is a practicing Muslim, and that he “doesn’t love America” strike me as based not on evidence, but on passions. But perhaps these passions, with their links to larger ideologies would be considered more long-term and less fluid than those that Lin discusses.

**RW:** How might we overcome these effects? How to eliminate systemic bias? We tend to study problems instead of fixing problems. For example, empathy is an important concept in psychology. Would something like that be helpful to understand “the other side”?

**ML:** I think that concept would be a good candidate. There’s an old saying that dates back to early Native Americans: *Before you criticize somebody, you should walk a mile in their moccasins*. If you can do that, then empathy can have very positive effects. The potential difficulty that sometimes occurs—when empathy doesn’t seem to have a positive effect—is in cases where you may not be able to put yourself in the other person’s shoes. You might say, “I couldn’t possibly do that! I would never!” Then we’re saying even more. We’re saying not only was “that person” influenced by certain things, we’re saying that we couldn’t possibly be in that situation. Empathy is very important here. Others have tried to study things like getting people to write down or commit themselves in advance, to consider what’s they’re expecting, and to have them keep an open mind through the process. In court cases and such, we try to get people to keep open minds, but it’s very hard.

**RW:** Then, what can the media consider doing to allow more common ground to be built?

**ML:** One small observation: Look at the coverage of presidential campaigns by mainstream media in the early televised debates. Each network would have its affiliate in whatever city the candidate was in, such as “This is Sander Vanocur in Cleveland. . . .” And they switched over time to a system where they assigned a person or team to each individual candidate. Those people travel with the candidate all over the country, the same person reporting. What would truly be the most

“fair” thing to do? Suppose I’m a network news producer and I say “Let’s devote 20 minutes to each candidate,” and instead of *my* trying to summarize what they said and did today, I simply turn it over to Candidate 1’s spokesperson, and then Candidate 2’s spokesperson. I’m not going to give any personal opinion, and simply give each equal time. I think the system of having someone affiliated with each candidate makes it seem, psychologically, like that person is an advocate for that candidate. Even if a reporter didn’t agree with the candidate he or she is covering, that reporter might start to come around, to understand the candidate a little bit better. That’s one anecdote.

On the other hand, it’s natural for the media to go after disagreements. Look at the gun control debate. Imagine if the media said “What are the things that people agree on? Where can you find common ground with your opponent?” Forcing someone to come up with a socially acceptable answer. We might then emphasize how close people really are, although it may not be very interesting as news.

**RW:** Hostile media biases may change—or continue—in an era vastly different than the mass-communication age in which the concept was pioneered. Perloff (2015) suggests that contemporary media will continue to invite audiences to focus outward on effects on others, a focus that encourages the invocation of media effects schemas, persuasive press inferences, and presumed media influence. What advice will you give to scholars interested in future HME research?

**ML:** Among the many issues that remain to be examined, one approach might be to turn the HME on its head. Thus, how might we overcome this effect, in hopes of identifying or encouraging open-mindedness in people’s responses to information or arguments that seem to challenge their existing beliefs. Are there ways of organizing information or organizing arguments that might promote more objective processing? Are there strategies that might be used to encourage more disinterested reactions by audiences watching or listening to events in real time? Are there methods for provoking systematic discussions and exchanges of reactions by different groups that might help us to respond in less defensive ways to evidence that

may conflict with our current beliefs and preconceptions.

In many situations, where our cultures particularly seek objectivity, techniques have evolved to try to limit biases in information processing. At trials in the U.S., the instructions that judges give to jurors are designed to help them avoid common pitfalls, such as reaching conclusions before all of the evidence has been presented. Other countries use other procedures to try to arrive at the truth in legal matters. In the Roman Catholic Church, and elsewhere, people may be assigned to play “the devil’s advocate,” to present opposing arguments or unpopular positions in order to provoke a thorough discussion of competing positions. In the early days of major network new coverage, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission required the networks to provide “equal time” to all major candidates (although it soon became controversial precisely what “equal time” entailed). We routinely randomize the order in which different candidates names are presented on ballots, and we have developed elaborate rules to try to make political debates “fair” to all participants.

Most generally, the scientific method itself can be seen as one attempt to minimize biases in the search for new empirical evidence. Putting these sorts of evolved practices, together with existing research in the laboratory on strategies for decreasing or eliminating various sorts of biases, into a systematic framework might prove of interest to scholars in communication, public opinion, and psychology alike. Of course, despite these practices and institutions and our deep desire to get at the “right” answer, mistakes still occur. Nonetheless, it should be our collective challenge and obligation, at least as scientists, to get as close to the truth as we can.

### Selected Works by Mark Lepper

Please refer to the end of the Chinese version of the dialogue for Mark Lepper’s selected works.