

Emerging Scholar Projects for 2021

“Correcting Vaccine-Related Misbeliefs Through Vicarious Self-Persuasion: Effects of Storytelling and Refutation”

Abstract:

Vaccination is of paramount importance in reducing the prevalence of many preventable contagious diseases. However, the growing misbeliefs about vaccines and the resulting vaccine hesitancy present a great challenge to public health. In response to this rising concern, the current project proposes to investigate the effects of narratives and vicarious self-persuasion in correcting vaccine-related misbeliefs and enhancing vaccine intentions. Narrative persuasion theories suggest several advantages of storytelling in facilitating attitude and behavior change. However, the power of narratives may be limited when they are employed as message correctives due to audiences’ tendency to discredit counter-attitudinal information. As selfpersuasion research suggests that eliciting self-generated arguments can effectively persuade individuals who previously hold opposing attitudes, offering a vicarious experience of selfpersuasion through storytelling may provide a possible remedy.

To examine the proposed impact of narratives and vicarious self-persuasion, the study plans to conduct two between-subjects online experiments. The first experiment explores the potential of narratives to generate vicarious self-persuasion and reduce vaccine misbeliefs; the second experiment replicates the findings by varying the misbeliefs addressed in the messages and examines preexisting vaccine attitude as a moderating variable. Grant funds will support data collection for these two online experiments.

The study contributes to existing research on narrative persuasion and misinformation correction in three ways. First, it advances a scientific understanding of the role played by narratives in correcting health misbeliefs, especially of those psychological mechanisms that enhance information processing and decision making. Second, integrating social psychological research on self-persuasion, it adds to the knowledge by documenting if and how narrative effects are conditioned by the vicarious experience of self-persuasion. Third, the study findings have direct applicability to the design of campaign narratives for delivering counter-attitudinal advocacies, particularly for combatting vaccine-related misbeliefs.

By Yan Huang, University of Houston



“A Change in Media Diet as a Result of Corporate Surveillance. A Comparison between the United States and Europe”

Abstract:

Synced advertising is one of the most recent developments in personalized communication and concerns personalizing messages based on people's current offline media behavior. While this strategy promises to enhance online communication efforts, it comes with a number of threats as it raises ethical questions and may lead to unintended side-effects for media users. In particular, data collection techniques used

for synced advertising purposes require further attention since they extend the so-called corporate surveillance to users' offline sphere. The proposed study aims at investigating to what extent data collection for synced advertising causes so-called chilling effects, i.e. a change in users' media diet.

While such effects have been concluded as a result of government surveillance of users' online behavior, effect of corporate surveillance on media users' behavior remains unknown. To explore the mechanisms behind such chilling effects, the proposed study builds on personalized communication theories and online self-presentation theories and focuses on sender- (data collection technique) as well as receiver-related (need for self-presentation) factors. Furthermore, considering differences in privacy regulations between the United States and Europe, it proposes exploratory research into this context-related factor (cross-national differences). A scenario-based experiment will be conducted simultaneously in the United States and Europe in which data collection mode for synced advertising will be manipulated and intention to change media diet (chilling effects) and well as receiver-related factors will be measured. Grant funds will pay for these online experiments.

The findings from the proposed research will carry implications for both communication professionals who will be informed about side-effects of data collection techniques used for personalized communication as well as for the regulators as chilling effects resulting from corporate surveillance can be seen a threat to identity and autonomy of media users.

By Joanna Strycharz, University of Amsterdam, and Claire Segijn, University of Minnesota



Grants were awarded to two Senior Scholar projects and two Emerging Scholar projects for 2021. Senior Scholar projects were each awarded \$5,000, while one Emerging Scholar project was awarded \$3,500 and the other was awarded \$3,375

The Senior Scholar Grants Program supports AEJMC researchers in a wide area of study and seeks to support senior (typically tenured) scholars engaged in extended research projects. The Emerging Scholar Grants Program is designed to develop and nurture AEJMC's most promising emerging scholars (most likely at the assistant professor level) by providing funding for research or teaching projects. Determining factors in the selection process for both programs are (1) innovative approach and contribution of the topic to theory development; (2) quality of the background research and methodology proposed; (3) value of the program to the applicant[s] and school[s]; and (4) proposed budget and use of funds.