



Poster presentations

(in alphabetical order)

1. Altay, Sacha - Institut Jean Nicod, Département d'études cognitives, ENS, EHESS, PSL University, CNRS, Paris France.

Sharing Fake News is Bad for Your Epistemic Reputation

Despite their cognitive salience and attractiveness, fake news is shared by only a small minority of internet users. We hypothesize that the reason why the majority of people and media sources avoid sharing fake news stories, is that they want to maintain a good epistemic reputation, in order to enjoy the social benefits associated with being seen as a good source of information. In two online experiments ($N = 5136$), participants will evaluate how reliable a source is, and how willing they are to seek information from a source, as a function of the news the source shared: three fake news stories, three real news stories, three fake news stories and a real news story, or three real news stories and a fake news story. Since the literature suggests trust is more easily lost than gained, we predict that the drop in trust when one fake news story is added to three real news stories will be larger than the gain in trust when one real news story is added to three fake news stories, even when the fake news story support the audience's political stance. We predict that sources sharing one fake news story will receive trust ratings similar to those of previously identified 'fake news sources' and 'hyper-partisan media' (Pennycook & Rand, 2019a), even for politically congruent news.

2. Bartusevicius, Henrikas - Aarhus University

Formidability and political violence

Research suggests that individual formidability influences attitudes toward coalitional aggression in modern human societies. So far, this research has focused on a limited set of outcomes, namely, support for inter-state war. I aimed to advance this research program by analyzing willingness (or intent) to participate and actual participation in political violence. Since modern warfare primarily occurs within, rather than between, states, I focused on domestic forms of political violence, such as violent protest or armed civil conflict. In addition, to address external and ecological validity concerns, I included three approximately nationally representative samples that have recent experience with political violence. Analyses of original survey data from Belarus (N = 387), South Africa (N = 2,170), Venezuela (N = 1,000), and Nicaragua (N = 1,574) suggest that formidability is not significantly associated with a range of attitudinal, intent, and behavioral measures of political violence. In addition, the analyses indicate that coalitional formidability (proxied by N of friends or male relatives) is similarly not significantly associated with political violence. Robust predictors of political violence were male sex, social dominance orientation, and status-related risk seeking. The latter two variables predicted political violence both among males and females.

3. Berriche, Manon- Sciences Po

Positive Attitude! Audience Engages More With Phatic Posts Than Health Misinformation on Facebook

Social media like Facebook are harshly criticized for increasing public hostility towards health policies by spreading misleading contents. Yet, little research has provided in-depth analysis of real-world data to measure finely the extent to which people engage with misinformation on social media by contrast with other publications. To tackle this question, we examined 500 posts, along with their 6.5 million interactions, from an emblematic case of health misinformation: the Facebook page Santé + Mag, which generates five times more interactions than the combination of the five best-established French media outlets. Our analyses showed that only a quarter of Santé + Magposts consisted of health misinformation, and that despite their emphasis on threat, they were negative predictors of engagement. Phatic posts, composed of short sentences such as "Sister, I love you", were the strongest predictor of engagement, followed by posts with a positive emotional valence. These results strengthen the idea that Facebook is first and foremost a social network used by people to foster their social relations, not to spread online misinformation. In the digital age, we thus encourage researchers working on disinformation to conduct finer-grained analysis of online contents and to adopt interdisciplinary approach to measure with more accuracy audience engagement on social media.

4. Bolden, Sarah - Syracuse University

Networked enclaving: A Reddit case study

While the term “echo chamber” is commonly used to describe networks whose participants converge around a partisan or otherwise homogeneous worldview, there is exigence to explore the distinct forms that this fragmentation can take. Specifically, this poster draws attention to hate groups’ practices of networked enclaving, which refers to participants’ strategic construction and enforcement of boundaries of group membership. What distinguishes networked enclaving from the broad umbrella of echo chambers is that it develops in response to real or imagined conditions of precarity. In other words, networked enclaving is intentional, motivated, and strategic. A model of networked enclaving therefore emphasizes users’ active engagement in enclaves, rather than their passive disengagement from public spheres. Though networked enclaving is a necessary strategy for marginalized groups whose material existence is threatened, this poster considers instances where hate groups participate in networked enclaving as a response to imagined precarity and/or the threat of censorship. By situating hate groups’ insularity as active and deliberate, it becomes possible to study users’ ongoing construction and maintenance of digital boundaries. That is to say, if enclaves are public networks that feel private or secluded, one can explore how users leverage platform features to engender or inhibit this sense of insularity. Taking three misogynist hate groups on Reddit as a case study, this poster offers a preliminary operationalization and measurement of networked enclaving. Through the application of textual, reception, and social network analysis, this poster’s findings demonstrate how a model of networked enclaving can nuance research on echo chambers, political hostility, and platform policy at both a theoretical and methodological level.

5. Bor, Alexander - Aarhus University

The Psychology of Online Political Hostility: A Comprehensive, Cross-National Test of the Mismatch Hypothesis

Why are online discussions about politics experienced as more hostile than offline discussions? A popular answer builds on the argument that human psychology is tailored for face-to-face interaction and, accordingly, people’s behavior changes for the worse in impersonal online discussions. We provide the first theoretical formalization and empirical test of this explanation: the mismatch hypothesis. We argue that mismatches between human psychology and novel features of online communication environments could (a) change people’s behavior, (b) bias their perceptions and (c) create adverse selection effects. We leverage five cross-national representative surveys and online behavioral experiments (total N=7510) to test the mismatch hypothesis but find little to no evidence. Rather, we find that online political hostility reflects the behavior of individuals predisposed to be hostile in all (including offline) contexts. Yet, because their behavior is more likely to be witnessed on public online platforms, these are perceived to induce more hostility.

6. Cole, Michael - University of Tartu and Jagiellonian University, Krakow

Soft Power: Cats, Branding and the Ukrainian Far Right

"At the 2019 BASEES Conference, the keynote speaker said there were three secrets to successfully interviewing gangsters. Firstly convince them your work is irrelevant, secondly ply them with alcohol, and third, have a cute dog. But further investigation demonstrates that academic researchers are not the only ones utilising their pets to appeal people they otherwise have little in common with. From Marine Le Pen to Geert Wilders via Matteo Salvini, many of the most prominent far-right and populist actors have taken advantage of the online popularity of cats to soften their own images and present themselves as more relatable to ordinary people. Based on my own experiences of researching the Ukrainian far-right, this article explores ways in which politicians seek to exploit the allure of cats to increase their own popularity on social media. The article contests that doing so appears to be an extremely effective method of making the polarizing and discriminatory politics of far-right and populist political actors seem more acceptable to mainstream audiences. The posting of seemingly harmless images of cats on social media seems to play an important part in increasingly sophisticated approaches to political branding used by far-right political actors to gain positive attention and convince people to support more extreme views.

7. Henrique Santos, Rui - FCSH-UNL

Keep Threats Great and Fear Successful: Does the U.S. maintains the same narrative facing different threats?

"Securitization theory depicts a three-step process in which a security question is articulated by a political actor through a speech act. Regardless of the subject matter being a real threat, it appeals to disproportionate attention, extraordinary measures and acceptance by an audience. This paper argues that the US uses this multifaceted apparatus complemented with a narrative based on the articulation of existential fear to respond to distinct State threats in the international system. Based on the narrative responding to the Soviet threat by the Truman Doctrine, I argue that the same approach is used and enhanced specifically in presidential speeches as response to threats that did not undermine US hegemony. The aim of this paper is two-fold. Firstly, advance methodological insights and broadening securitization theory, through coding presidential speeches of Harry Truman, George Bush and George W. Bush regarding respectively the cases of USSR (1945-1949), Iraq (1990) and Afghanistan (2001) in specific ante-bellum environment. For that I use content analysis to examine the constancy of binary and exclusivist fear-discursive elements while addressing different threats, though enabling the same narrative. Secondly, to confirm whether that the construction of those appeals is successful, coetaneous opinion polls are used to measure if these discursive acts persuade conflict-prone audiences in the short term. The article begin reviewing how threat-manipulation, existential fear and discourse are treated in the literature and how to use them coherently to provide further theoretical advances in securitization theory. The second section provides the study of the construction of the Soviet threat, then compare it with the Iraqi and Afghan cases, and the third part shows the acceptance of the audiences. The discussion concludes by suggesting that a successful securitization always

requires and promotes speech acts based in existential-fear features, and that those elements must be scrutinized in the public and political space through mediation aiming to acknowledge the threat proportionality in order to prevent military conflicts and insure a desecuritize environment.

8. Karg, Simon - Aarhus University

Followers Forever: Prior Commitment Predicts Post-Scandal Support of a Social Media Celebrity

When learning about moral wrongdoings of other people, we tend to forgive those that are close to us more easily. But does this also apply to public figures whom we do not know in person? In this paper, we present evidence towards this effect by investigating follower responses in relation to a highly publicized scandal on YouTube. Using a new word vectorization approach on a large dataset of YouTube followers (N = 36662) who commented both before and after the scandal, we find that the more often a person had publicly expressed their approval of the protagonist prior to the scandal, the stronger was their post-scandal support. Similarly, prior commitment also influenced shown emotions, and attempts to defend the transgressor. Thus, highly committed fans fail to update existing moral character evaluations even in light of an extreme transgression.

9. Lehaff, Josephine - Roskilde University

The practice and politics of hate-reading

"In recent years, counter-measures against political hostility have been introduced which seek to address the spread of online disinformation by various means out of concerns which have repeatedly been proven valid. However, the concurrent popularization of fake news claims illustrates that claims of disinformation may also be used and even weaponized to cement as well as further polarize political positions. This points to the necessity of broadening the scope of research into the role of news content in furthering political hostility, looking beyond the spread of disinformation to include the role played by non-falsifiable and even verified news content in the polarization of political positions. In order to better understand how news users react when faced with information and content at odds with their convictions or beliefs, I set out to study hate-reading. Hate-reading is a severely under-researched phenomenon characterized by consumption of media at odds with held convictions to arouse a strong emotional state characterized by animosity. The practice of hate-reading is an expression of skeptical news use, where the reader does not accept the frames offered by news institutions, but also does not restrict their news consumption to news adhering to their convictions. When hate-reading, news consumers undermine the news-media monopoly on delivering and interpreting news, asserting the validity of their own frames over those of a media institution. Hate-reading illustrates that political animosity is not only a result of what a person reads, but how they read it. In this first leg of my planned research into hate-reading, I conduct a literature review and propose a theoretical framework for future research based in theories of affective and cognitive interactions with texts.

10. Maertens, Rakoen - University of Cambridge

Long-Term Effectiveness of the Fake News Vaccine: Two Longitudinal Experiments

Inoculation theory is seen as a major theory on resistance against persuasion, but questions remain about its long-term effectiveness (Banas & Rains, 2010). In two longitudinal experiments using the fake news game 'Bad News', an online media literacy training based on inoculation theory, we investigate the decay function of the inoculation effect. In the Bad News Game, participants learn about six deception techniques: discrediting, impersonation, polarisation, appeal to emotion, conspiracy theories, and trolling. 150 (Exp 1) and 296 (Exp 2) participants participated in either the Bad News Game (inoculation group) or Tetris (control group), and rated the reliability of news items that were either deceptive or real. We found that participants rate fake news as significantly less reliable after a session of Bad News, but not after playing Tetris. This effect remained stable after a 4-week time interval, and was found to be independent of political affiliation. After a 9-week interval we found partial evidence for decay, but when a booster session was used, the effect remains stable for at least 14 weeks. With these two experiments, we successfully replicated the inoculation effect found in the study by Roozenbeek and van der Linden (2019), but now with a more rigorous experimental design that takes longevity into account. We discuss the implications of these findings for persuasion and inoculation theory research, media and information literacy training, and depolarisation. To conclude, we argue for active forms of inoculation as a more robust long-term strategy to mediate the potential damage and polarising effects of disinformation.

11. Mayorga, Alexandra - Princeton University

Hostility and Political Participation: Unpacking the Relationship with an Original Survey Experiment in the United Kingdom

How does group-targeted, political hostility affect Muslim immigrant political participation in Europe? In existing work on immigrant political behavior and hostility, there is a divide in what to expect. Scholars studying identity politics, for example, find that discrimination promotes empowerment in ways that positively affect political engagement (Leighley 1996; Jamal 2005; Barreto & Segura 2014; Oskooii 2018). Yet others worry that targeted groups might become further marginalized and disaffected. Sears et al. refer to this as the "black discrimination model" (Sears et al. 2003; Schildkraut 2005). In my own project, I argue that hostility does shape political participation, but that intra-group differences moderate its affect. Specifically, I consider the importance of partisanship and identification with the targeted. I test my argument using an original survey experiment (N=1000), implemented by YouGov UK, that allows me to unpack the causal mechanism. I find that exposure to hostility increases interest in voting among higher Muslim identifiers and non-partisans relative to the control condition. These findings draw attention to the effect of hostility in shaping political behavior when group membership is politicized. Furthermore, my work highlights that recognition of heterogeneity within minority groups is critical for future research.

12.Mazepus, Honorata - Leiden University

Framing conflict in the news videos: can frames influence the viewers?

Control over information is a great resource in times of conflict, because it can be used to paint a particular image of events and actors relevant to the conflict. The type of information that reaches individuals can in turn influence whom they consider as an ally and whom as an enemy, how threatening the situation is to them, and, ultimately, how they respond to the portrayed conflict. This project investigates media information in the context of conflict between Ukraine and Russia at the time of the annexation of Crimea. More specifically, we analyze what information is transmitted and how the information is framed in the news videos of several TV broadcasting stations (including RT, Al Jazeera, and CNN). In particular, we research to what extent general audiences are able to detect episodic and thematic frames, how the type of frame and its tone influences the perceived trustworthiness of news videos and to what extent it evokes emotions. In addition, we distinguish between episodic frames that contain and do not contain a personal story. We apply a two-staged approach. First, we use expert coders to assess a sample of relevant videos. Second, we use crowd workers to assess a larger sample of videos that will allow us to make inferences about the perceptions of news.

13.Neitsch, Jana - SDU (Mads Clausen Institute)

The prosodic characteristics of different types of hate speech in German

"Hate speech has become a growing issue in social media contexts all over the world (Guterres, 2019). However, given that hate speech is part of modern civilization, it is striking how little is known about the communicative and linguistic mechanisms that underlie the written and spoken forms of hate speech. It is against this background that the XPEROHS project (funded by the Velux Foundation) extensively analyses the production and the perception of written and spoken hate speech for Danish and German (Baumgarten et al. 2019; XPEROHS Project, 2019). In a pilot study on German, spoken hate-speech items (based on written stimuli taken from a large Danish-German corpus of ~3.5 million real instances (posts) of hate speech on Facebook and Twitter) were recorded by a phonetically trained native speaker of German. These stimuli reflected particular morpho-syntactic features that are characteristic of German hate speech with respect to 7 item groups (original, irony, rhetorical questions, Holocaust references, metaphors, imperatives and indirectness). The items addressed two target minority groups, i.e., foreigners and Muslims. The recordings were analysed with respect to their acoustic-prosodic properties in order to figure out how hate speech is phonetically realized. The overarching aim of this analysis was to check if specific, constant acoustic-prosodic patterns of hate speech crystallize in the speech signal. Results indicate a feature-specific variation in the production of hate speech. Regarding the phonetics in spoken hate speech, there is no evidence for hate speech being a separate communicative function that is conveyed by a particular bundle of prosodic characteristics. Instead, we found that the prosodic differences across all item groups were more pronounced when the items referred to Muslims rather than foreigners. Hence, the communicative functions involved in the hate speech items were conveyed more consistently in terms of greater phonetic effort in Muslim-oriented speech."

14.Osmundsen, Mathias - Aarhus University

Ignorant, disruptive or polarized? Psychological motivations behind “fake news” sharing

The apparent rise of fake news is a major concern in contemporary Western democracies. Accordingly, great efforts have been devoted to combating fake news. Yet, we know little about the psychological motivations behind spreading fake news stories on social media. Are citizens sharing fake news ignorant and lazy? Or are they fueled by sinister motives, seeking to disrupt the democratic political order or to attack partisan opponents in an increasingly polarized political culture? This paper makes the first attempt to test these competing hypotheses by relying on a novel dataset linking behavioral data to a survey carefully mapping psychological variables for over 2,300 American Twitter users. We find little to no support for the ignorance and disruption hypotheses, but firm evidence for the polarization hypothesis. Overall, motivations to share fake news may be less different from motivations to share other political news stories than commonly assumed.

15.Skytte, Rasmus - Aarhus University

Degrees of Disrespect: How Only Extreme(-ly Rare) Incivility Alienates the Base

Do partisans tolerate or punish uncivil rhetoric from their own politicians? While this question is crucial for understanding the rising elite incivility, prior research offers contradictory answers. The dual purpose of this article is to specify the conditions under which incivility makes partisans evaluate their politicians less favorably and to examine how (un-)common such conditions are. Suggesting that many divergent findings stem from treating incivility as a dichotomous variable, the article presents a theoretical model in which only relatively extreme degrees of incivility lower favorability among co-partisans. This model is tested using a new method for integrating survey experiments (N=9,839) with crowdsourced content analysis (N=24,000), which allows stimulus material to be mapped onto the distribution of incivility among members of Congress. The results show that real-life incivility is rarely extreme enough to alienate the partisan base. However, typical degrees of incivility lower favorability among everyone else, reinforcing polarization among citizens.

16.Stedtitz, Christine - University of Essex/Exeter

A post-truth public? Investigating the mechanisms of resistance to factual correction

Many recent electoral events have been characterised by false claims which, despite abundant fact-checking, were often widely believed. This led to much talk about 'post-truth' politics. An extensive literature confirms that political misperceptions are often highly resistant to correction. But how far does that tendency stretch? Is there any evidence of a 'post-truth' mindset? And how do post-truth surroundings affect the way people respond to expert information that challenges political beliefs? We conducted a representative survey experiment in Britain (N=2900) concerning common misperceptions – both liberal and conservative – about immigration. We follow the classic setup of misperception-correction

studies but add a twist: First, we identify false beliefs about immigration and provide expert information countering one of those false beliefs. Second, we approximate 'real world' conditions, where expert information is rarely the final word: We show respondents a comment from a blogger or a professor giving one of three reasons to 'take these statistics with a big pinch of salt'. Finally, we ask respondents to re-assess the false claims and answer questions explicitly testing for a post-truth mindset. Results show that fact-checks worked: The expert statement significantly reduced belief in the false fact. However, the post-truth comment worked, too: If the fact-checker did not have the final word – if respondents read a post-truth comment before they re-evaluated the facts – then they kept the false fact on the 'true' side of our scale. However, the post-truth comment did not entirely cancel out the effect of the correction: Even if it stopped our respondents from reaching 'don't know' they still moved closer to the midpoint of our scale. Finally, we find disconcertingly high levels of agreement with post-truth statements. Well over half of our sample – even those who skipped the post-truth comment – agreed that 'it is OK to disagree with the facts, if that's what you believe.'

17.Szebeni, Zea - University of Helsinki

(Fake) News Perception in Highly Polarized Societies

"The growing prevalence of disinformation online fuels the fear of many – that it may have the power to undermine democracy and drive political polarization. For this reason it is important to understand the psychological underpinnings of fake news acceptance. Hungary, since 2010, became an example for the growing phenomenon of populism, and political polarization, which apparent in news, as pro-government news sites often disseminate propaganda and fake news, recurrently resulting in parallel realities of pro and anti-government discourse in media. We propose that in such environment is not only fake news perception which is affected but how people perceive news in general. We tested the connection between the perception of pro- and anti-government fake and real news and non-political fake and real news and political orientation, political and scientific knowledge, interest in politics and personality traits and thinking style: conspiracy mentality, RWA, SDO, openness and need for closure. In a survey study (N= 279) in Hungary we found that political orientation predicted the belief in politically aligned fake and real news. General belief in conspiracy theories was predictive for the politically aligned fake news only, but not for the real news. The acceptance of non-political fake news was also predicted by conspiracy mentality, but not political orientation. Other personality traits, political knowledge and thinking style did not play a significant role in predicting the acceptance of fake or real news. Our results suggests that partisan motivated cognition is the most important factor in the perception of fake and real news, which strengthens the idea that in a polarized society it is not only fake news, but news in general is affected by politics. Furthermore the general belief in conspiracy theories also predicts the acceptance of fake news as real, if it alligns with one's political orientation.

18.Szewach, Paula - University of Essex

Does Misinformation Trigger Readers? The Indirect Consequences of Uncivil Language on Social Transmission.

Existing research shows that high-arousal emotions seem to operate as motivational triggers for political engagement and political participation. However, the role of emotion is underexplored when it comes to explaining why people share misinformation. The aim of this study is to test the mechanism through which online political misinformation generates higher levels of engagement and spreads faster than other kinds of online news. It explores whether the use of uncivil language, frequent in so-called fake news, increases the likelihood of engagement and social transmission of news through arousing readers regardless of its accuracy. To this end, the study conducts an innovative experiment relying on new generation sensors to measure levels of arousal through physiological responses to news articles. Doing so allows us to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon of emotional responses while also gauging physical parameters that constitute a key component of all emotions. Affective reactions are processed faster than conscious elaboration, making it difficult to capture them through self report. This novel approach overcomes this problem and taps into the levels of arousal generated by each article and combines it with self-reported measures of affective processing and political engagement.

19.Vasilichi, Alexandrina - University College London

Political Polarization and Depolarization across the UK Brexit Divide

Accounts of political belief formation claim that citizens' cognition is biased by their political identity. The 2016 UK EU referendum has created novel strong political identities, dividing British people in "Remainer" or "Leaver" camps. The current study employed an information search paradigm and found that individuals (N = 76) are biased against discordant sources and prefer to sample information more from neutral sources who are similarly accurate. This bias was not depolarized when highlighting subjects' superordinate identity (being British) and several social norms (at least 90% of the UK as a whole agree with). Individual differences in cognitive sophistication, Brexit identity and Brexit extremity did not influence biased information sampling. However, Leavers sample information from accurate sources more than Remainers. Thus, biased information sampling has the potential to be a mechanism through which polarization is maintained across the Brexit divide, manifesting more strongly for Remainers. Nonetheless, using neutral sources to communicate information in the UK Brexit context has the potential to attenuate the effect of polarization, facilitating learning and information sampling from accurate information sources to improve problem-solving.

20.Vik, Andrea - University of Amsterdam

Negative news - one audience? Investigating the cognitive-emotional roots of the gender differences in the negativity bias.

In the political domain there are persistent gender gaps in news consumption, political interest and knowledge. There is scarce and somewhat contradictory research which suggests that these political gender gaps can be the result of differences in the emotional processing of negative news. In this study, we replicate and extend previous findings, by investigating how the conceptual-emotional responses to negative news differ between men and women. To do this, an online experiment will be conducted, in which participants will be exposed to the stimuli material employed by Soroka & McAdams (2014). We expect that negative news elicits stronger cognitive-emotional responses (self-reported) and that this effect is moderated by gender and emotional stability. Finally, in order to account for the political gender gaps, we test if women attain less knowledge from negative news compared to men and if this is mediated by cognitive-emotional responses. The predictions and design are preregistered and the data will be collected in November 2019. If men and women consume news differently because of differences in the negativity bias, the current journalistic approach of "if it bleeds it leads" can potentially impair the media and news outlets' responsibility of informing all citizens.

21. Wiesman, Penina - Rutgers University

In Pursuit of Cross-Cutting Conversation on Facebook

"Cross-cutting talk is a key component for any functioning democracy. Yet such interactions are also more prone to fractious disagreement, particularly in an online social media environment where perceived and actual social distance provided by a screen emboldens us, allowing political passion to devolve into belligerence. Scholars and social media users both are keenly aware of this potential. The concern has long been that, in attempting to avoid such severely acrimonious encounters, many may be actively shunning valuable interactions with difference as well. However, this pattern of behavior may not be entirely accurate. In-depth interviews with 25 American adults show that, while people do seem to be actively avoiding situations they anticipate will devolve into a pointless "shouting match," they may not have given up on productive political conversations entirely. The interviews, designed to evaluate the behavior and motivations of people who engage in everyday political talk in non-political spaces on Facebook, suggest that the route through which people approach political conversation on social media is both highly autonomous and deeply personalized. Interviewees indicated that their participation in any political conversation on Facebook was guided by the likelihood that it would facilitate the achievement of specific conversational objectives. They also believed that the overwhelming presence of severe hostility posed a major obstacle to achieving these objectives, and therefore, avoidance of such misbehavior played a central role in this decision. An equally important result, however, was that interviewees had not given up on having these conversations. Instead, they were highly discriminating, preferring to engage in contexts whose specific features they felt were more likely to provide the productive political encounters they sought. In the end, many interviewees indicated that, given the right circumstances, they were willing to have the cross-cutting political conversations which democracy so greatly values.