The Effect of News and Perceptions of Others on COVID–19 Precautionary Actions

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Predictors of Precautionary Action

- Lessons from SARS, N1H1, and H5N1
  - Fear and perceived threat to oneself
  - Exposure to media
  - Perception of media effects on others

(Jiang et al., 2009; Liu & Lo, 2014; Wise et al., 2020; Wong & Sam, 2011)
Current Study

Research Questions:

• Does *news exposure* affect perceived threat to oneself and beliefs about others’ perception of threat?

• How does perceived threat to oneself vs. beliefs about others’ perception of threat impact *COVID-19 precautionary actions*?

• Are there differences between *socially desirable* and *undesirable behaviors*?
Method

• **Sample** \(N = 375\)
  - Qualtrics Panel, matched to US population on key demographics

• **Measures**
  - News exposure
  - Perceived COVID-19 threat to oneself
  - Beliefs about others’ perception of COVID-19 threat/risk
  - Engagement in 12 COVID-19 precautionary behaviors
  - Demographics (sex, age, race/ethnicity, income, education, political leaning)

*Not in the presentation today, but we can address in Q&A
  - Trust in government, medical establishment, and media
  - COVID-19 complacency*
Precautionary Behaviors

Physical distancing

Hygiene behaviors

Stockpiling

Weapon acquisition

Facial mask wear
DON'T BE A COVIDIOT
General Findings

Predictors of engagement in precautionary behaviors:

Age:
- ▲ CDC-recommended behaviors
- ▼ Socially undesirable behaviors
- ▲ White/Caucasian – stockpiling
- ▲ Conservative – weapon acquisition
- ▼ Women – facial mask wear
Nancy Pelosi Masters the Art of the Color-Coordinated Face Mask

BY LIAM HESS
May 33, 2020
News Exposure

Perceived Threat to Oneself

Beliefs about Others’ Perception of Threat

Stockpiling

Weapon acquisition

Facial mask wear

Physical distancing

Hygiene behaviors

PROCESS macro Model 4 (Hayes, 2017)
Facial mask wear
Hygiene behaviors
Physical distancing
News Exposure
Perceived Threat to Oneself
Beliefs about Others’ Perception of Threat

PROCESS macro Model 4 (Hayes, 2017)
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Conclusions

• Media affect both compliance with recommendations and engaging in socially undesirable behaviors through distinct mechanisms:
  Threat to self → protective health behaviors
  Threat on others → seeking protection from others
Thank you!

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