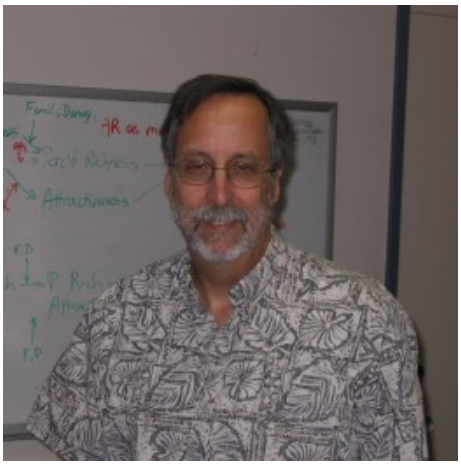
COVID Information Commons (CIC) Research Lightning Talk

Transcript of a Presentation by Branden Johnson (Decision Science Research Institute), November 13, 2020



Title: *Media Exposure, Objective Knowledge, Risk Perceptions, and Risk Management Preferences of Americans Regarding the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak*

Branden Johnson CIC Database Profile

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YouTube Recording with Slides

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Transcript

Slide 1

Yes, so first I'm acknowledging my co-PI Marcus Mayorga and we're doing a longitudinal panel study of Americans' views.

Slide 2

So, we took a longitudinal panel study - is where you're asking the same group of people questions at several times - and we used an online panel to recruit people. You can see we've done four waves so far. We started much earlier than most longitudinal studies - February 28th, which was the day that the CDC announced the first confirmed case of non-travel transmission and we're at this point expecting to go much longer than most if not all longitudinal studies just because we're doing this at much longer intervals, roughly two months apart rather than the more common month apart or sometimes weekly collection. Like the University of Albany study discussed last month by Sam Penta, we're also using the Protective Action Decision Model as a foundation because it includes people's perceptions of other actors such as government, not just their own perceptions. But we're building in some other factors,

including some that were used in my earlier longitudinal studies of Americans' reactions to Ebola and Zika, which of course on the mainland were much smaller and shorter outbreaks and were in a decline.

Slide 3

This is the model that we included in our original proposal. We didn't cover all the potential relationships because this figure was always already getting quite busy, but on the right you can see the threat, action, and stakeholder perceptions that are part of the PADM. With regard to personal protective behavior decisions, we also wanted to explore support for various government policies, like mask wearing mandates and the like. And then we have a number of upstream variables that you can see there and as we've been developing these ways we will occasionally switch in some other measures of other variables that we think will be interesting. But one of the unique aspects of this study is that most of our variables are asked every single way so that for example we're not just asking: Are you following the news about COVID-19? Which information sources such as newspapers or TV or social media are you using? But also: which outlets within those media sources are you using? So, we can have for these and the other items listed there, very fine-tuned assessments of whether and how things are changing over time.

Slide 4

Some preliminary findings: we found that the model very close to the one that you saw in the previous slide adequately fit wave one data on personal protective actions, but it did not fit policy support. Whenever we tried to put the policy support measures in, the model fell apart, and we're not sure yet because we haven't done the analysis, whether this is an outcome of measuring people. Before, in fact, there were many official policies except banning travel of foreign citizens and the like. We have done a multi-level modeling of waves one through three in terms of threat perceptions you know. How much do people think they are personally threatened? How much risk is there for the U.S.? For the globe? How much concern is there for local transmission? And we found, contrary to what the Ebola study found, is that there were no individual differences in trends so there were not factors making some people say have their perceptions of risk build up faster or slower than other people. But we did find a number of factors including dread and news following, which were also pertinent to Ebola and Zika pushing people to have higher risk perceptions and then one of the protective actions we had put in because of some anecdotes and news media stories was: avoid Asians as a protective action even though technically it definitely is not protective. And we found that if we measure people's anti-Chinese prejudice and their degree of tendency for conspiracist thinking and their notions of the efficacy of avoiding Asians and reducing risk, putting those in meant that the original direct relationship between avoid Asian intentions and conservative political ideology disappeared.

Slide 5

So finally, I'll just say that I've already received help from Peter Rose who presented in September on the UCSD big data project and getting some case data for each of the states and counties from which

we've recruited people for our study so that we will later be able to assess how much that indirect experience might be related to people's perceptions. And we're already talking with some people about trying to get help with content analysis of these media outlets that I show here so that we can then not only assess the impact of following these outlets, which we're able to do with Zika, but also whether the content of those outlets is perhaps helping shape the risk perceptions we're looking at. So, thank you.