MICHAEL GEERS

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Last updated April 2024

EDUCATION

Max Planck Institute for Human Development & HU Berlin Expected 2024
Dr. rer. nat. (Ph.D.) in Psychology
Dissertation: Using Psychological Science to Combat Online Misinformation and Microtargeting
Advisors: Stefan M. Herzog, Ralph Hertwig

University of Pennsylvania 2019
Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences

Trinity Business School, Trinity College Dublin 2018
M.Sc. in Marketing, with Distinction

Provadis School of International Management and Technology 2017
B.A. in Business Administration

VISITING POSITIONS

Network Science Institute, Northeastern University Aug–Sep 2022
Visiting Ph.D. Student
Host: Briony Swire-Thompson

RESEARCH INTERESTS

General Areas: Judgment and Decision Making, Consumer Behavior, Computational Social Science
Current Topics: Psychology of Technology, Evidence-Based Public Policy (Boosting)

PUBLICATIONS

Geers, M., Fischer, H., Lewandowsky, S., & Herzog, S.M. (in press). The political (a)symmetry of metacognitive insight into detecting misinformation. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General.*

Geers, M., Swire-Thompson, B., Lorenz-Spreen, P., Herzog, S.M., Kozyreva, A., & Hertwig, R. (2024). The Online Misinformation Engagement Framework. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 55*, 101739.

Geers, M. (2023). Linking lab and field research. *Nature Reviews Psychology, 2(8)*, 458.

Sultan, M., Tump, A.N., **Geers, M.**, Lorenz-Spreen, P., Herzog, S.M., & Kurvers, R.H.J.M. (2022). Time pressure reduces misinformation discrimination ability but does not alter response bias. *Scientific Reports, 12(1)*, 1-12.

Roozenbeek, J., Maertens, R., Herzog, S.M., **Geers, M.**, Kurvers, R.H.J.M., Sultan, M., & van der Linden, S. (2022). Susceptibility to misinformation is consistent across question framings and response modes and better explained by myside bias and partisanship than analytical thinking. *Judgment and Decision Making, 17(3)*, 547–573.

Lorenz-Spreen, P.*, **Geers, M.**, Pachur, T., Hertwig, R., Lewandowsky, S., & Herzog, S.M.* (2021). Boosting people's ability to detect microtargeted advertising. *Scientific Reports, 11(1)*, 1-9. *denotes equal contribution

PREPRINTS

Kozyreva, A., Lorenz-Spreen, P., Herzog, S.M., Ecker, U.K.H., Lewandowsky, S., Hertwig, R., Ayesha, A., Bak-Coleman, J., Barzilai, S., Basol M., Berinsky, A.J., Betsch, C., Cook, J., Fazio, L.K., **Geers, M.**, Guess, A.M., Huang, H., Larreguy, H., Maertens, R., Panizza, F., Pennycook, G., Rand, D., Rathje, S., Reifler, J., Schmid, P., Smith, M., Swire-Thomson, B., Szewach, P., van der Linden, S., & Wineburg, S. Toolbox of interventions against online misinformation. Accepted in principle at *Nature Human Behaviour*.

Straub, V.J., Burton, J.W., **Geers, M.**, & Lorenz-Spreen, P. Towards more ethical social media field experiments.

SELECTED RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Lorenz-Spreen, P., Arslan, R.C., Kozyreva, A., Swire-Thompson, B., **Geers, M.**, Herzog, S.M., & Hertwig, R. Real-time assessment of motives for sharing and producing content among highly active Twitter users. Finalizing manuscript to submit to *Nature Human Behaviour*.

Geers, M.*, Fischer, H.*, Lewandowsky, S., & Herzog, S.M. Confidence in detecting misinformation increases with political extremism, not conservatism. Data analysis. Target: *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. *denotes equal contribution

Geers, M., Lorenz-Spreen, P., Teich, P.**, Hertwig, R., Lewandowsky, S., & Herzog, S.M. Unveiling microtargeting: Consumer empowerment against online manipulation. Data collection. Target: *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. **denotes student mentee

Geers, M. & Lorenz-Spreen, P. What makes consumers click? The effect of ad labels and social cues in the Facebook news feed. Conceptualization. Target: *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Building a better toolkit (for fighting inaccurate health information): Large collaborative project to compare misinformation interventions. With M. Susmann, L. Fazio, D. Rand, S. Lewandowsky, and about 80 others.

HONORS AND GRANTS

Society for Personality and Social Psychology Graduate Travel Award ($500)	2023
Joachim Herz Add-On Fellowship for Interdisciplinary Business Administration (€12,500)	2022
Psychonomic Society Graduate Student Conference Award ($1,000)	2022
Volkswagen Foundation, "AI and the Future of Societies" (€1,440,000; team member)	2021–2025
SSRC/Summer Institutes in Computational Social Science Research Grant ($1,764)	2021
Max Planck Ph.D. Fellowship (IMPRS LIFE)	2020-2023
Trinity Business School Scholarship (€1,000)	2017

INVITED TALKS

WU Vienna, Department of Strategy and Innovation (Virtual)	2024
University of Bristol, TeDCog (Technology, Democracy, and Cognition) Group	2023
Northeastern University, Lazer Lab	2022
University of Cambridge, Cambridge Social Decision-Making Lab (Virtual)	2021

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Real-time assessment of motives for sharing and producing content among highly active Twitter users

- Conference of Experimental Psychologists (TeaP) 2023

The political (a)symmetry of metacognitive insight into detecting misinformation

- Society for Personality and Social Psychology 2023

- Psychonomic Society, Virtual (Poster) 2022
- International Society of Political Psychology, Virtual 2021
- Conference of Experimental Psychologists (TeaP), Virtual (Poster) 2021

Boosting people's ability to detect microtargeted advertising

- PERITIA International Conference: Trust in Expertise in a Changing Media Landscape, Virtual 2021
- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, Virtual (Poster) 2020
- Psychonomic Society, Virtual (Poster) 2020

CHAIRED SYMPOSIA

Misinformation Research - Quo Vadis? Conference of Experimental Psychologists (TeaP), Trier, Germany, 2023.

New Frontiers in Misinformation Research (Symposium Co-Chair: Rakoen Maertens). Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Atlanta, GA, 2023.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor

- Reading Group "Cognition in Online Environments", MPI for Human Development 2020–Present

Organizer

- Summer Institute on Bounded Rationality, MPI for Human Development 2022
- Colloquium (weekly seminar), MPI for Human Development 2020–2021

TEACHING INTERESTS

Judgment and Decision Making, Consumer Psychology of Technology, Advanced Topics in Behavioral Science, Influence and Persuasion in the Digital Age, Consumer Behavior Research Methods

STUDENT ADVISING

Bachelor Thesis Co-Supervision (with Stefan M. Herzog): Madlen Hoffstadt (Humboldt University, 2021), Eric Neumann (Free University of Berlin, 2020)

Research Assistants and Interns: Amanda Fink (Technical University Berlin, 2022), Paula Teich (University of Potsdam, 2021), Johanna Forbriger (University of Konstanz, 2021)

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

European Summer School on Computational and Mathematical Modeling of Cognition, ESCoP 2022
PhD Workshop on AI/ML Research and Democracy, University of Tübingen 2022
Nature Masterclass in Scientific Writing and Publishing, Nature 2021
Summer Institute in Computational Social Science, UCL School of Management 2021
Linking Twitter & Survey Data, GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences 2021
Summer Institute on Bounded Rationality, Max Planck Institute for Human Development 2019

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Reviewer, Summer Institute on Bounded Rationality, MPI for Human Development 2022–2023
Program Fellow Speaker, International Max Planck Research School on the Life Course 2021–2022

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Association for Consumer Research (ACR)
European Association for Decision Making (EADM)
European Marketing Academy (EMAC)
German Psychological Society (DGPs)
Psychonomic Society (PS)
Society for Consumer Psychology (SCP)
Society for Judgment and Decision Making (SJDM)
Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE PRIOR TO PHD

Intern	Center for Adaptive Rationality, MPI for Human Development (Stefan M. Herzog)	2019
R.A.	The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania (Barbara Mellers)	2018–2019
R.A.	Trinity Business School, Trinity College Dublin (Kristian Myrseth)	2017–2018

SKILLS

Computer Skills	R, Git, Qualtrics, formr, LaTeX
Languages	German (native), English (fluent)

REFERENCES

Stefan M. Herzog
Ph.D. Co-Advisor
Senior Research Scientist
Center for Adaptive Rationality
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APPENDIX: SELECTED RESEARCH ABSTRACTS

Geers, M., Fischer, H., Lewandowsky, S., & Herzog, S.M. (in press). The political (a)symmetry of metacognitive insight into detecting misinformation. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General.*

Political misinformation poses a major threat to democracies worldwide, often inciting intense disputes between opposing political groups. Despite its central role for informed electorates and political decision making, little is known about how aware people are of whether they are right or wrong when distinguishing accurate political information from falsehood. Here, we investigate people's metacognitive insight into their own ability to detect political misinformation. We use data from a unique longitudinal study spanning 12 waves over 6 months that surveyed a representative U.S. sample (N = 1,191) on the most widely circulating political (mis)information online. Harnessing signal detection theory methods to model metacognition, we found that people from both the political left and the political right were aware of how well they distinguished accurate political information from falsehood across all news. However, this metacognitive insight was considerably lower for Republicans and conservatives—than for Democrats and liberals—when the information in question challenged their ideological commitments. That is, given their level of knowledge, Republicans' and conservatives' confidence was less likely to reflect the correctness of their truth judgments for true and false political statements that were at odds with their political views. These results reveal the intricate and systematic ways in which political preferences are linked to the accuracy with which people assess their own truth discernment. More broadly, by identifying a specific political asymmetry—for discordant relative to concordant news—our findings highlight the role of metacognition in perpetuating and exacerbating ideological divides.

Geers, M., Swire-Thompson, B., Lorenz-Spreen, P., Herzog, S.M., Kozyreva, A., & Hertwig, R. (2024). The Online Misinformation Engagement Framework. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 55*, 101739.

Research on online misinformation has evolved rapidly, but organizing its results and identifying open research questions is difficult without a systematic approach. We present the Online Misinformation Engagement Framework, which classifies people's engagement with online misinformation into four stages: selecting information sources, choosing what information to consume or ignore, evaluating the accuracy of the information and/or the credibility of the source, and judging whether and how to react to the information (e.g., liking or sharing). We outline entry points for interventions at each stage and pinpoint the two early stages—source and information selection—as relatively neglected processes that should be addressed to further improve people's ability to contend with misinformation.

Lorenz-Spreen, P.*, **Geers, M.**, Pachur, T., Hertwig, R., Lewandowsky, S., & Herzog, S.M.* (2021). Boosting people's ability to detect microtargeted advertising. *Scientific Reports, 11(1)*, 1-9. *denotes equal contribution

Online platforms' data give advertisers the ability to "microtarget" recipients' personal vulnerabilities by tailoring different messages for the same thing, such as a product or political candidate. One possible response is to raise awareness for and resilience against such manipulative strategies through psychological inoculation. Two online experiments (total N = 828; female UK residents) demonstrated that a short, simple intervention prompting participants to reflect on an attribute of their own personality—by completing a short personality questionnaire—boosted their ability to accurately identify ads that were targeted at them by up to 26 percentage points. Accuracy increased even without personalized feedback, but merely providing a description of the targeted personality dimension did not improve accuracy. We argue that such a "boosting approach," which here aims to improve people's competence to detect manipulative strategies themselves, should be part of a policy mix aiming to increase platforms' transparency and user autonomy.

Kozyreva, A., Lorenz-Spreen, P., Herzog, S.M., Ecker, U.K.H., Lewandowsky, S., Hertwig, R., Ayesha, A., Bak-Coleman, J., Barzilai, S., Basol M., Berinsky, A.J., Betsch, C., Cook, J., Fazio, L.K., **Geers, M.**, Guess, A.M., Huang, H., Larreguy, H., Maertens, R., Panizza, F., Pennycook, G., Rand, D., Rathje, S., Reifler, J., Schmid, P., Smith, M., Swire-Thomson, B., Szewach, P., van der Linden, S., & Wineburg, S. Toolbox of interventions against online misinformation. Accepted in principle at *Nature Human Behaviour*.

The spread of misinformation through media and social networks threatens many aspects of society, including public health and the state of democracies. One approach to mitigating the impact of misinformation focuses on individual-level interventions, equipping the public and policy-makers with essential tools to curb the spread and influence of falsehoods. Here we introduce a toolbox of individual-focused interventions aimed at reducing harm from online misinformation. Comprising an up-to-date account of the interventions featured in 81 scientific papers from across the globe, the toolbox is a resource for scientists, policymakers, and the public. It provides both a conceptual overview of the breadth of interventions—including their target, scope, and examples—and a summary of the empirical evidence supporting the interventions—including the methods and experimental paradigms used to test them. The toolbox covers nine categories of interventions: accuracy prompts, debunking and rebuttals, friction, inoculation, lateral reading and verification strategies, media-literacy tips, social norms, source-credibility labels, and warning and fact-checking labels.