AESIS

NETWORK FOR
ADVANCING & EVALUATING THE SOCIETAL IMPACT OF SCIENCE

14, 15, 16 October 2020

Welcome to the fourth international **AESIS** *conference on*

Impact of Social Sciences and Humanities

Work Wellness Institute
L'institut de bien-être au travail

FEDERATION FOR THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES | FÉDÉRATION DES SCIENCES HUMAINES

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RESEARCH IMPACT CANADA | RÉSEAU IMPACT RECHERCHE CANADA

CIFAR

The Public Value of Social Science in the COVID-19 Era

@ArthurLupia

Assistant Director, National Science Foundation

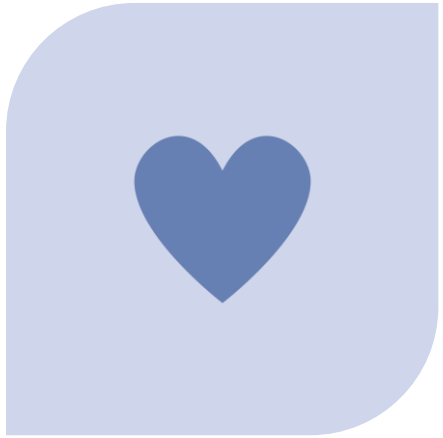
Today's Priorities

GRATITUDE

COMMUNITY

HEALTH

Today's Priorities



GRATITUDE

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What can we do to increase the *speed and strength* of America's response to COVID-19?

Three Examples

- West Bengal Message Experiment
- Societal Experts Action Network (SEAN)
- Build and Broaden

Messages on Covid-19 prevention in India increased symptoms reporting and adherence to preventive behaviors among 25 million recipients with similar effects on non-recipient members of their communities

Abhijit Banerjee
MIT & NBER

Marcella Alsan
HKS & NBER

Emily Breza
Harvard & NBER

Arun G. Chandrasekhar
Stanford & NBER

Abhijit Chowdhury
JCMLRI

Esther Duflo
MIT & NBER

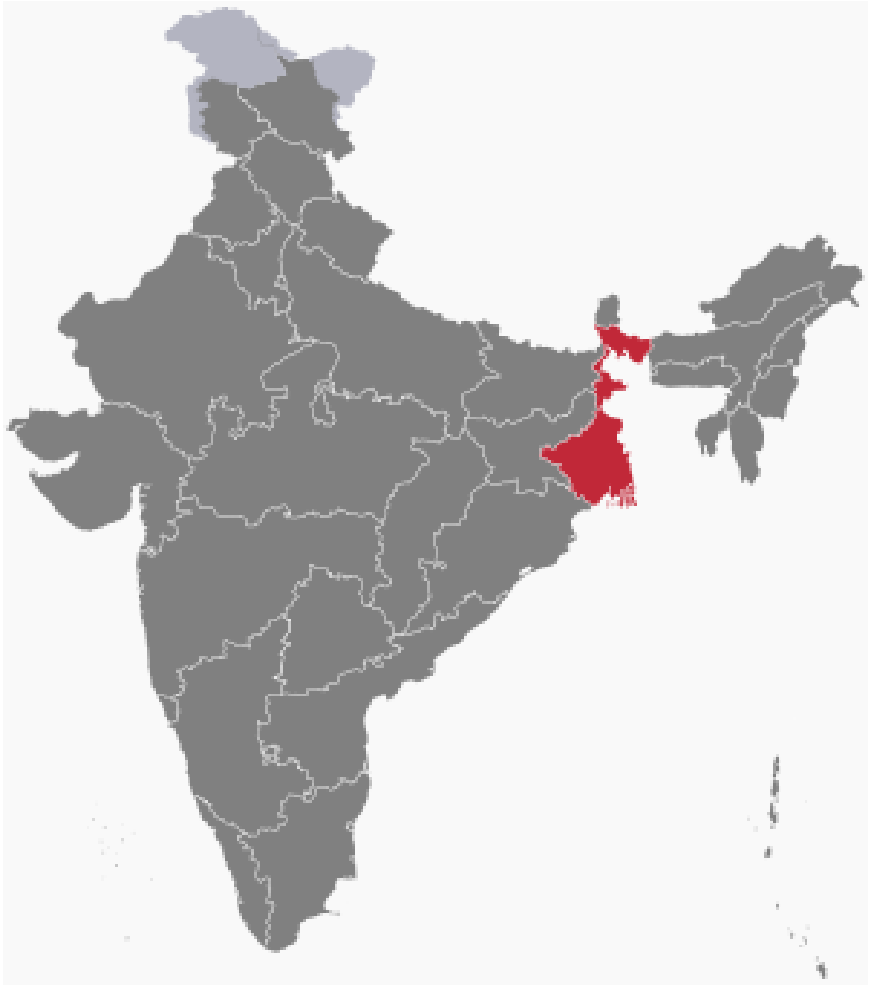
Paul Goldsmith-Pinkham
Yale

Ben Olken
MIT & NBER

July 2020

West Bengal Q2 2020

- Population bombarded with COVID related messages (est. 20/d)
  - Pop ~91M
  - Cell ~58M
- Suboptimal compliance
- *What attributes of a simple message would most improve compliance?*



Design

- W Bengal native/Nobelist Abijihit Banerjee appears in 1 of 8 2:30 videos.
- One randomly selected video embedded in text messages sent to 25M cell phones.
  - (PIN code stratified)
- Data from 677 local health workers & a random sample of 1883 council members selected.

“This is Abhijit Banerjee. I am stuck very far away but my heart is with you in West Bengal. I am sending you a set of suggestions and requests from the government of West Bengal and myself.

West Bengal, like the rest of the world, is fighting the spread of an unseen and unknown enemy. It won’t be won in a few days, it’s going to take some months at least. On the other hand, while it is very contagious, most people get better in a matter of days. We need to be careful, not petrified.

Please forward this message to others on the phone via WhatsApp or text about it. Do not physically meet others to share it, you may pass the virus or get sick yourself.

To prevent getting the virus avoid going to any crowded places—markets, hospitals, meetings, as far possible. Try to stay at least 2 meters from the nearest person when you are outside the house, even when you are doing allowed activities such as groceries, bank, work or even your next door neighbors.

…Also please do not spit. If you have to cough or sneeze don’t cough or sneeze into your hands. Use your elbow or your clothes or a handkerchief or a towel, but remember to boil them after use before hanging them to dry

By doing so you protect the community and especially the elderly and otherwise vulnerable people in your neighborhood.

If you or your family members have a cough and fever, it does not have to be corona. No one has the right to ostracize you for having the disease. If that happens let the local ASHA know. And if you or your family members have a cough and fever, just to be safe, please report it to the ASHA or on West Bengal government’s Shondhane app so that the government can track the spread of the disease and try to control it.

Be well, don’t lose hope, and please accept my greetings.”

Variations

- Control: link to government website [3M]

- Treatments:
  - Action
    - … avoid going to any crowded places…
    - … wash your hands frequently…

  - Motivation
    - “By doing so you protect the community and especially the elderly and otherwise vulnerable people in your neighborhood.”
    - [null]

  - Ostracism
    - “No one has the right to ostracize you for having the disease. If that happens let the local ASHA know.“
    - [null]

One 2.5 minute message …

- **doubled the reporting of health symptoms** to community health workers
  - (p = 0.001 for fever, p = 0.024 for respiratory symptoms)

- **decreased travel beyond one's village** in the last two days [C: 37%, T: 30%] (p = 0.026)

- **increased estimated hand- washing** when returning home [C: 67.5%, T: 75%] (p = 0.044)

- **spilled over to non-mentioned behaviors** – mask-wearing was never mentioned but increased 2% (p = 0.042)

- **results spilled over onto nonrecipients within the same community**, with effects similar to those for individuals who received the messages.

Societal Experts Action Network (SEAN)

Elizabeth Suhay, Joydeep Bhattacharya, Monica Feit, James Poterba
American University, Iowa State, NASEM, Federation of American Scientists, NBER

- Coordinated by the National Academies
- A network of leading social, behavioral and economic science institutions, SEAN takes urgent questions from decision-makers and responds with rapid, actionable guidance based on scientific evidence.
- SEAN directly helps state, local and community decision-makers navigate the many challenges and issues they're facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Build and Broaden

- Premise:
  - In the US, most historically underrepresented students are not at R1s.

- Action:
  - **B&B** incentivizes R1s & MSIs to locate research activities at MSIs and related institutions.
  - **B&B** builds pipelines at larger scales.

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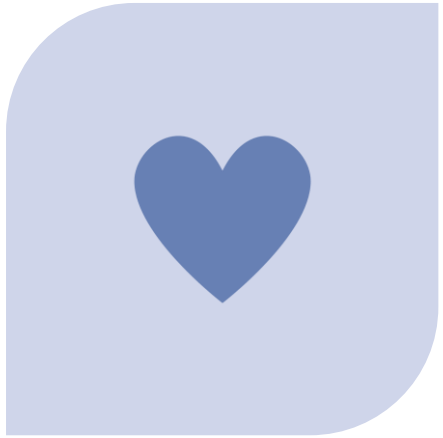

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