

Pittsburg State University

## Pittsburg State University Digital Commons

---

Faculty Submissions

Communication

---

Winter 11-14-2023

### Analyzing the Prophylactic and Therapeutic Role of Inoculation to Facilitate Resistance to Conspiracy Theory Beliefs

Alicia Mason

*Pittsburg State University*, [amason@pittstate.edu](mailto:amason@pittstate.edu)

Josh Compton

*Dartmouth College*, [josh.compton@dartmouth.edu](mailto:josh.compton@dartmouth.edu)

Emerson Tice

*Pittsburg State University*, [entice@gus.pittstate.edu](mailto:entice@gus.pittstate.edu)

Brooklyn Peterson

*Pittsburg State University*, [blpeterson@gus.pittstate.edu](mailto:blpeterson@gus.pittstate.edu)

Isaac Lewis

*Pittsburg State University*, [ilewis@pittstate.edu](mailto:ilewis@pittstate.edu)

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/communication\\_faculty](https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/communication_faculty)



Part of the [Communication Technology and New Media Commons](#), [Mass Communication Commons](#), [Other Communication Commons](#), [Public Relations and Advertising Commons](#), [Social Influence and Political Communication Commons](#), and the [Social Psychology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

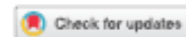
Mason, A.M., Compton, J., Tice, E., Peterson, B., Lewis, I., Glenn, T. & Combs, T. (2023). Analyzing the Prophylactic and Therapeutic Role of Inoculation to Facilitate Resistance to Conspiracy Theory Beliefs, *Communication Reports*, DOI: 10.1080/08934215.2023.2256803

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Communication at Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Submissions by an authorized administrator of Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@pittstate.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@pittstate.edu).

---

**Authors**

Alicia Mason, Josh Compton, Emerson Tice, Brooklyn Peterson, Isaac Lewis, Tanner Glenn, and Tricia Combs



# Analyzing the Prophylactic and Therapeutic Role of Inoculation to Facilitate Resistance to Conspiracy Theory Beliefs

Alicia M. Mason , Josh Compton , Emerson Tice, Brooklyn Peterson, Isaac Lewis, Tanner Glenn, & Tricia Combs

Conspiracy theories pose a variety of social and psychological consequences for individuals and society, and research suggests that around half of the U.S. population believes at least one. A two-phase inoculation experiment was conducted. Inoculated participants reported more negative general attitudes toward conspiracy theories and lower Phase II generic conspiracist beliefs, which are both indicators of harm-reduction and the beneficial healing impacts of therapeutic inoculation. The addition of therapeutic inoculation as a harm-reduction or healing technique in practitioners' stakeholder response toolkit is a valuable contribution to both theory and practice.

*Keywords:* conspiracy theory; generic conspiracist beliefs scale; inoculation theory; resistance to persuasion; therapeutic inoculation

---

Correspondence to: Alicia M. Mason, Department of Communication, 1701 S. Broadway, 215 Grubbs Hall, Pittsburg, Kansas 66762. E-mail: [amason@pittstate.edu](mailto:amason@pittstate.edu)

Alicia M. Mason serves as a Professor in the department of Communication and the director of Graduate Studies in Communication. Mason's academic interests in health, risk, and crisis communication spans corporate, public health, and environmental contexts. Her research explores public responses to crises, outbreaks, and disasters, applied organizational communication practices of advocacy and corporate social responsibility, and addresses matters of consumer protection, patient safety, and health policy in relation to domestic and international medical tourism.

Josh Compton is Professor of Speech at Dartmouth College. He has been studying inoculation as a way to confer resistance to influence for more than 20 years. Most of his work of late focuses on the theory itself—how it works, why it works, and whether it might work better. His applied work is mostly in mis- and disinformation, science communication, health communication, and sport. Josh has been named Distinguished Lecturer by Dartmouth College and has won the Outstanding Professor Award from the National Speakers Association and has twice won the L. E. Norton Award for Outstanding Scholarship.

Emerson Tice, Isaac Lewis, and Tanner Glenn were graduate students, and Brooklyn Peterson and Tricia Combs were undergraduate students serving as research assistants at Pittsburg State University at the time the study was conducted.