學術對談
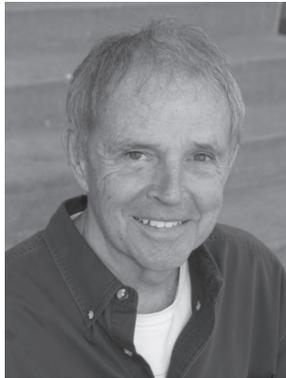
感知與媒介效果：從個人主觀真實看媒介在民主社會中的角色

對談人：艾爾伯特‧剛瑟（Albert C. Gunther）、假芝雲
統　稿：假芝雲
翻　譯：屠采擷、蔣亞隆、假芝雲

艾爾伯特‧剛瑟
（Albert C. Gunther）

「我們身處在一個主觀的世界，客觀現實也許存在，但我更有興趣知道不同的人為甚麼對同一個現實世界有不同看法，還有這些不同看法是怎麼產生的。彷彿我們每個人都有一副眼鏡，每副鏡片下反映的世界都不相同。但重要的是，我們從鏡片下看出去的世界是如此真實，不是我們可以輕易想像或被別人說服的；我們的視角可能被某些外在環境扭曲，但是我們的思考和行為都是對這個鏡片下的世界所做出的反應。」

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Dialogue

Perceptions and Media Effects: From Individuals' Subjective Reality to Media's Role in Democracy

Discussants: Albert C. GUNTHER, Stella C. CHIA
Editor: Stella C. CHIA
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Abstract

Albert C. Gunther is one of the pioneer communication scholars who closely study people's perceptions of media influence (i.e., third-person perception and influence of presumed media influence) and media bias (i.e., hostile media perceptions). His work has received over a dozen top-paper awards at major international meetings such as those of International Communication Association and Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. In this interview, Gunther first argues that subjective perceptions of reality are often more consequential than objective reality. He then shares his research which links media communication and people's perception of reality. He points out that people's attitudes and behavior are often affected by their perceptions of media influence or perceptions of media bias. He also observes that people's perceptions of media influence and media bias may affect the role that media play in a society. Finally, Gunther indicates that there is still a lot of room for researchers to make contributions to the areas of perceived media influence and perceived media bias. He encourages researchers to further explore theoretical explanation for perceptions of media influence/media bias, provide clearer definitions for

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"media audience" when measuring presumed media influence, and invent delicate methods and measures to capture possible behavioral outcomes that might be brought by perceptions of media influence and media bias.

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艾爾伯特‧剛瑟教授簡介

　　艾爾伯特‧剛瑟（Albert C. Gunther）自 1980 年代於斯坦福大學獲得博士學位後，就於威斯康辛州立大學麥城分校教授新聞寫作並從事傳播研究長達 30 年。他的研究領域包括大眾傳播媒介、信息處理、以及民意；其研究特別着重檢驗媒介受眾如何處理及感知與科學科技等議題相關之信息報導，包括受眾如何感知信息對自己及他人之影響（第三人效果），以及受眾如何評定媒介信息是否偏頗（敵意媒介效果）。他也研究受眾對民意的感知，以及對民意的感知如何影響受眾的態度及行為等（預設影響之影響）。剛瑟教授的研究曾多次在大型國際學術會議中獲得頂尖論文獎；2006 年更因在之前兩年發表傳播領域中最佳論文而獲國際傳播學會頒發傑出論文獎。

AG: 艾爾伯特‧剛瑟
SC: 假芝雲

SC：　您的研究主要集中在檢驗人對媒介效果的感知（第三人效果和預設媒介影響之影響），而非媒介信息真正造成的效果。您也研究人對媒介偏見立場的感知（敵意媒介效果），但也不是媒介實際所持的偏見立場。您一開始為何會對人的感知層面發生興趣？您認為這個領域有哪些可能的發展方向？

AG:　我們身處在一個主觀的世界，客觀現實也許存在，但我更有興趣知道不同的人為甚麼對同一個現實世界有不同看法，還有這些不同看法是怎麼產生的。彷彿我們每個人都有一副眼鏡，每副鏡片下反映的世界都不相同。

　　　但重要的是，我們從鏡片下看出去的世界是如此真實，不是我們可以輕易想像或被別人說服的；我們的視角可能被某些外在環境扭曲，但我們的思考和行為都是對這個鏡片下的世界所做出的反應。黑澤明（Akira Kurosawa）那部出名的電影《羅生門》（Rashomon）就是個活生生的例子——電影中的四個人，用四種不同的角度看同一件事，做出截然不同的結論，也因此採取不同的

行動。這說明在實際生活裏，客觀現實的影響遠不及主觀現實。

我認為這些看法上的偏差是很好玩又有意思的。學界稱這樣的研究為「性感的」研究，因為這樣的研究閱讀起來很有趣，也常是大家茶餘飯後的話題。但這樣的偏差會產生嚴重的甚至有時是不良的結果——像是讓衝突白熱化、使人產生負面態度或不良行為等——所以我認為，了解哪些因素會導致感知偏差是很重要的。著名的社會心理學家丹尼爾・康納曼 (Daniel Kahneman) 和阿摩司・特沃斯基 (Amos Tversky) 都是研究記錄這些感知偏差的先鋒，但我相信還有更多東西需要我們的了解。某種程度上，我們希望，了解這些偏差可減少這些偏差帶來的問題。

SC: **「預設媒介影響」並不必然和媒介使用 (media exposure) 相關。人們經常依據他們對媒介內容的理解，以及他們對其他人的印象，來推斷媒介對別人的影響。也就是說，受眾感知媒介影響他人，其實是一種心理認知的結果。在這樣的情況下，我們還能將「預設媒介影響」看作一個傳播現象或是一種媒介效果嗎？關於「預設媒介影響」的研究還能幫助我們釐清傳播在整個社會中的角色嗎？**

AG 是的，我認為「預設媒介影響」很大程度上是一種媒介效果。艾利休・凱茨 (Elihu Katz) 說過一句有名的話，認為別人受到媒介影響，就是一種媒介效果。我不確定他原文的用字遣詞，但我有將其記下來，我認為他說的很對。某種程度上，這取決於你如何定義媒介效果。我認為你的問題很有意思，的確有時人們根本沒有確切看到媒介信息的內容，就認為媒介會影響其他人。有個大家都知道的情節，有人對寫書的作者說：「你寫的書很糟糕，造成人們錯誤的印象」，而作者回應說：「你真的看過我的書嗎？」這人則回答：「沒有，但我想我知道書中的內容。」這就像有些人其實沒有看過色情片，卻也認定色情片有不良影響。這些都是你提到的情況，即使人們沒有使用過某些媒介，預設媒介影響還是會發生。

這讓我想到另一個有趣的問題。我們經常將媒介使用作為自變項，最前端上游的變項，問的第一個問題經常是關於媒介使用，認為個人的媒介使用與預設他人受媒介影響這兩者相關，但

其實值得商榷。我之前沒想太多，現在你提出這個問題，我開始思考這個問題。這是個好問題。

SC: 哦，真的嗎？事實是我有時找不到「自我媒介使用」和「預設媒介對他人影響」之間的關係，讓我有點挫折。

AG: 是的，所以你剛提的問題可能就是你找不到相關的原因，對吧？

SC: 您認為有其它解釋或是其它檢測方法嗎？

AG: 這其實可以成為一個好的研究主題——研究是否在某些情況下，即使人們沒有使用媒介，仍感知到媒介對人產生影響。

SC: 這就回到我先前的問題。剛才您引用了凱茨的話說「認為別人被媒介影響，就是一種媒介效果。」但我在想，當預設媒介影響其實是來自人的刻板印象，然後導致某種後果像是對媒介審查制度的支持等，傳播在這過程中是甚麼角色呢？當所有的一切都在人的大腦中發生，人的大腦中存在着刻板印象，預設媒介影響也發生在腦中，然後發生對媒介審查制度的支持，也還是在腦中。整個過程裏，「傳播」這件事沒有發生，我們還可以說這是傳播研究嗎？

AG: 我想這取決於你如何定義傳播，就像我們在回答很多其他的問題一樣。的確，如果所謂的傳播是接收來自大眾媒介的訊息，這過程中並沒有甚麼部份稱得上是大眾媒介的效果。這就回到一個基本的問題，還有你剛問的第一個問題，這是個主觀的世界，真正真實的，其實就是你腦中想的東西而已。

　　但如你剛提到的，傳統的傳播研究多半與實際的大眾媒介信息有關。這些信息沿着某種媒介管道傳播，到達那些在收聽、收看或者閱讀媒介的受眾，然後我們研究這些信息對他們產生的結果，也就是所謂的媒介效果。的確，如你所指出的，當我們在研究人的感知時，根本不需要人們先去感知到有個確切的信息在發生，一切都只要用想的就好。人們只要知道有某個傳播信息存在，整個感知的過程就發生了。我們對事物的定義常影響我們如何描述我們的研究。我仍舊認為我們研究的是傳播問題，因為這些研究關乎我們周遭的傳播環境，雖然這個環境非常主觀。從技術上講，這其中沒有實際的傳播過程，尤其如果你又嚴格地將「傳

播」定義為信息從一個人到另外一個人的過程，那我們的研究其實只是感知上的傳播，而非真正的傳播。「預設媒介影響」其實是一種感知的傳播，而非真正的傳播。除非我們有測量媒介使用，並檢測媒介使用和感知影響之間的關係，那就算真正的傳播，但除了媒介使用這部分算真正的傳播，其他部份仍都還是主觀的。

SC: 接下來我想請教您有關第三人效果的問題。我相信您一定也看到了，近年來有非常多與第三人效果有關的研究，我也相信您一定沒能將其全都讀完，因為實在是太多了。有的探討導致第三人效果的原因，有的分析第三人效果的後果，有的研究其中介變項或調節變項等，結果相當豐富。身為率先以實證方式檢測第三人效果的傳播學者之一，您認為這個研究領域是否已接近飽和？還有研究者可做出貢獻的空間嗎？

AG: 我認為有，在幾個方面。第一，我們對第三人效果或者預設影響在理論層面的理解是否真的已經充分？這就是一個好問題。我不確定我們對於這些理論層面的解釋已經有充分的了解，即使只是對於第三人效果的第一部分，也就是所謂的預設影響這部份，我都不確定我們已有充分的理解。我首先想到的是負面影響的推論（negative influence corollary）以及樂觀偏見（optimistic bias），就是人常常覺得其他人比自己更容易受媒介影響，因為覺得其他人比自己更脆弱，更抵抗不了媒介的影響，或是覺得別人都沒有自己聰明，樂觀偏見就是一個很好的解釋。但是，這個理論其實只說明第三人效果，解釋為甚麼人在感知媒介影響時，會出現對自我和對他人之間的差異。

但如果我們只思考對他人影響的感知，而不考慮對自己影響的感知，是甚麼讓人感知到，他人會被媒介影響？也許答案還是一樣，你會說，只要他人愈常收視媒介，媒介的內容愈負面，愈不利，或愈有害，他人就愈容易被媒介影響，這可以用樂觀偏見來解釋，但你也可以用歸因理論，或是其他別的理論來解釋，這部份還有待釐清。這是我想說的第一個方向。

第二，我在本地（香港）演講時有人問我，第三人效果會不會其實只是人們被問到媒介影響時的制式答案，即使他們並不是真

的這麼感知的，這個問題其實是建議我們該找出第三人效果的反證。我認為在做研究時，問自己這樣的問題是很有用的。在思考所有的理論時，問自己：「這樣的說法是真的嗎？」會大有幫助，總是問問自己，我們測量的東西真的是我們想知道的效果嗎，或者我們所測量的，和我們真正想測量的，其實根本就是兩件事。

湯瑪斯・孔恩（Thomas Kuhn）在他 1962 年的著作《科學革命的結構》（*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*）中其實就有提及這個想法。按照他的解釋，隨着時代傳承，像你這樣的年輕人會有新的想法，而這些新的想法是像我這樣上年紀的人從未想到過的。這些新的想法會改變甚至顛覆整個研究範式。因此，用不同的方式思考，遲早每種科學真理都會被其他真理所替代，我相信是有這樣的可能性。

第三，只有為數不多的研究者真的關注「誰是受眾」的問題。我認為，預設影響的研究，還有很大的空間去探究某些特定受眾對媒介影響的感知，以及人如何感知媒介對某些特定受眾的影響。記得麥克勞德、伊夫蘭德和納桑森等人（McLeod, Eveland, & Nathanson, 1997）在 1997 年對饒舌音樂的研究嗎？他們發現，人感知饒舌音樂對受眾的影響，取決於受眾群體的身份。還有我和斯多里的研究（Gunther & Storey, 2003），我們研究的對象其實並非是尼泊爾衛生教育電台節目的目標受眾，但這些非目標受眾對衛教電台節目如何影響目標受眾的感知卻是十分有意思的。這些例子都説明，在預設影響的研究中，受眾應被更清晰地定義，這在理論層面十分有趣，對這個研究領域來説也很重要，需要更多的檢測。

第四是（關於）第三人效果或預設影響的結果。我認為還有很多結果尚未被探究，預設影響可能帶來很多結果，我們應該要多找出一些結果，並解釋為何會出現那些結果。

SC： 這方面的研究會有理論貢獻嗎？我的意思是，我們當然可以在不同的情境下，找出預設媒介影響或第三人感知的不同結果。比如說，檢驗第三人效果和支持媒介審查間的關係（Gunther, 1995），或是比較學者接受媒體訪問的頻率以及學者對預設媒介影響的感

知（Tal-Or, Cohen, Tsfati, & Gunther, 2010）等，另外也可以檢驗像是投票，或是與健康有關的行為等。但是，在不同的情境下找出不同的行為結果真能有所貢獻嗎？真正的目的應是尋求預設媒介影響和結果的連結吧？在不同的情境下檢測不同的行為重要嗎？

AG: 我認為還是重要，我有兩個回應，第一個是概念上的。你的概念為何，你想測量的結果變項為何，是行為層面的變項嗎？這些都是值得繼續探索的重要問題。例如，當你談及政府對言論自由、政治活動或是其他事情的限制，你可以詢問人們對這些限制的支持度，這是態度層面的，但這有助於我們思考可用甚麼方法測量研究人類的行為。

比如說，我們也許可以不問民眾是否支持政府限制抗議活動或相關報導，改問民眾是否願意捐款，甚至在問卷的結尾讓他們有機會用點擊鼠標或是其他方式，表達他們想要捐錢，接收更多相關資訊或是想跟他人討論相關議題的意願。

當人們必須做出動作，就算只是一次鼠標的點擊，或說「對，我希望有人告知我有關捐款的信息」，這就算是行為了。這樣的設計是有點難度，需要一些技巧。如果有無限的資源，你的測量方法會更精進。比如，你可以追蹤孩童是否開始抽煙或飲酒，或是他們發生性行為的時間，或是他們有沒有參與政治抗議活動，有沒有簽署請願書。這些都能變成你可測量的實際行為。這些都是概念上的，關乎你選擇測量甚麼變項，以及如何測量的問題。

另一個則是，到底是何種理論預測了你的行為結果？我認為這是另一個問題。比如說，是否社會影響讓人採取某些行為，我們可以往這個方向思考。尤其社會影響（social influence）是一個很大的社會心理學理論，有很多不同的形式，可以再進一步仔細地討論。另外像是家父長作風理論（paternalism theory）也可以部分解釋為何人會支持媒介審查或是其他相關限制。總之，我認為這個方向還有很多可以做的。

還有一些其他可能的結果，你我之前也討論過。比如我們曾

談到，除了用順從解釋預設媒介影響可能帶來的結果之外，也許還有其他解釋，比如像反抗？或者義務？就是覺得自己應做點甚麼以符合別人的期望？這些不同的結果可以被分門別類。簡而言之，是的，在結果這部份，我認為我們還有很多可以研究的空間。

SC：那真是個好消息。接下來，我想問的是，您的很多研究，尤其是與敵意媒介效果有關的研究，都集中在了解社會中那些立場鮮明的特殊利益團體 (interest groups) 或政黨人士 (partisans)。這些人在社會中只佔很小的比例。您如何解釋您研究發現的概括性和重要性？

AG: 好的，不過首先我得說，我的觀點可能帶有偏見。是的，我的大部分研究和特殊利益團體有關。我有幾個看法，第一，這些特殊利益團體愈來愈多，1990 年 Krosnick (Krosnick, 1990) 稱這些群體為「議題公眾」。這些「議題公眾」在社會中聲音很大，和他們的總人數不成比例，因為他們對某些問題非常關心，聚集到一起並相互強化彼此的看法，所以他們的發言經常能獲得大量關注。他們的人數也許不多，但是聲音很大，好像叫聲很大的小狗一樣，如果你沒有看見它確實只是隻小狗，你可能還真會被這隻狗嚇到。

　　第二，有了互聯網之後，「議題公眾」的人數可不再少了。現在要讓一大群人關注參與某個議題是不難的。只要人們對任何議題有興趣，他們可以上網查閱相關信息，不久後他們就會成為某個團體的成員，也許參與了一個電子郵件群 (email list)，或者是多個電子郵件群。有次我想研究與槍支控管有關的議題，我打電話給那些有電子郵件群的控槍團體，我發現他們有數以十萬計的成員，所以不能再說他們只是小小的「議題公眾」了。還有去年我們找了一個叫做「探索機構」(Discovery Institute) 的團體參與我們的研究。這個團體的名字很好聽，其實是個基督教的傳道機構。這些人不滿美國憲法規定校園不可涉及宗教，他們反對達爾文 (Darwin)，致力於說服各級學校不教進化論而改教其他論點。當我給他們打電話，說服他們參加我們的研究時，我被這個團體的人數震驚了。當我請他們參加我們的問卷調查時，我們得到了大量的回應。所以我的第二個看法是，這些團體現在其實非常大，

人數相當多。

與此相關的，也就是我的第三個觀點，任何個人現在都可輕易地在網路上加入某個團體，而不需要親身前往該團體；這樣的方便度可驅使很多人加入一些立場鮮明的利益團體，尤其有些人一開頭也許只是對某些議題稍感興趣或關心，一旦他們加入了某些團體，他們的態度被強化，可能就會變得更極端、更對立。這是我的第三個看法。

還有一點，現在美國人十分關心社會中的意見對立或團體對立。例如在華府，大家都覺得國會在某種程度上比過去更加對立。政客意見南轅北轍，相互爭吵，以致於甚麼都做不了。這是利益團體或者我們說的「議題公眾」很重要的另外一個原因：他們讓公眾，至少是公眾裏的許多人，變得彼此對立，這讓民主過程更加艱峻。也就是說，這些利益團體或許不大，但是他們的主張南轅北轍，溝通交流的過程又使他們彼此更加分歧，造成了民主的潛在問題。

我舉個例子。威斯康辛州在政治上是一個非常有趣的地方，因為這個州有時是民主黨的，有時是共和黨的。你也許聽說了，過去這幾年，州長惹出了很多衝突，因為他想裁撤工會的一些權利，他讓州裏的勞工必須提撥更多薪資以支付健康保險。所以自他上任以來，出現了好幾次大規模的抗議活動。現在大家都說威斯康辛州和以前已經完全不同，是個意見兩極，相互對立的州。人們要麼支持州長，要麼反對他。我們學校政治系的教授，凱瑟琳・克瑞姆華許 (Katherine J. Cramer-Walsh)，就花了數年時間，分別在州長上任前後，四處採訪這方面的議題，她對州長所引發的幾個議題，以及這些議題如何讓州民意見極化，形成正反兩營對立有相當全面的了解。現在很多人都擔心這個州是否已經真的分裂，以及是否會長久的分裂下去。我想我要說的是：這些利益團體對社會很重要，因為他們在社會對立和極化的過程中，扮演了舉足輕重的角色。

SC: 聽您的意思好像是說，那些立場鮮明的團體其實是對民主有害，因為他們分裂社會，所以我們要研究他們。但事實上，在民主體

**制中，我們的確需要有多元的聲音。您對這些團體的存在究竟是
持正面的還是負面的看法呢？**

AG: 我想這是過與不及的問題——適中是最好的。的確在民主社會
中，我們希望人們能關注、思考，並參與像是環保、醫療、或社
會等議題。如果都沒人關心，就不會出現健康的公共辯論，人們
不想參與，民主就不能良好運作。所以如果不及，的確不好。但
另一方面，如果太過，人們意見南轅北轍，無法成事。因為他們
看不到對方的觀點，無法達成妥協。我的很多研究都是在談所謂
的「目的性推理」（motivated reasoning）。背後的想法其實就是，一
旦人們形成強烈的意見或態度，就很難溝通或達成共識或妥協，
但這些畢竟是民主的一部分，所以真的是過與不及都不好。

**SC: 媒介報導公眾議題是希望公眾關心與參與，但根據敵意媒介效果
的研究，公眾一旦關心與參與，有了鮮明的立場，就有可能會覺
得媒體是偏頗的。而認為媒體不公的看法，可能更進一步造成社
會中的對立。所以您覺得，新聞媒體和傳播在社會中的角色究竟
為何？**

AG: 我不認為敵意媒介效果是一個壞事。我認為人們在對某個議題強
烈關注時，就自然會用批判的態度去審視媒體，這不一定會造成
甚麼問題。也許敵意媒介效果只是讓人們覺得：「哦，我需要做更
多來讓公眾了解我們陣營的主張。」這樣的結果其實是好的。我的
意思是，我認為一個立場鮮明的人，自然而然就是會用敵意的態
度去看媒體，就像幾乎每位競選成功的政治人物都會說「哦，媒
體都在批評我。」對於那些對某些議題有強烈看法的人，這幾乎是
不可避免的。

　　而媒體在這個情況下扮演的角色其實是雞生蛋、蛋生雞的問
題。是的，媒介的實際角色應是告知人們社會中發生的事件，並
讓他們參與這些事件，就好像有關佔領中環運動的報導，就讓很
多人，包括上百萬在香港以外的人，知道了香港的民主問題。我
認為媒體的主要工作就是傳播，而傳播就是要將信息帶給受眾。
知道受眾喜歡衝突，所以媒體就會在報導中強調衝突的元素，好
讓更多人對報導感興趣。我認為這在某種程度上是好事，因為在

衝突和討論中，人們可以聽見不同的聲音。會有衝突就是因為彼此主張不同，所以在衝突中傾聽兩造說法很重要，而媒體報導就是將兩造說法都呈現出來的管道，所以我不覺得這是壞事。

但是，當人們的意見變得太分化對立時，聽不見另一方的意見，或者根本不想去思考另一方的主張有甚麼正確之處，只堅守自己的立場，這就變成問題了。有很多例子，比如墮胎問題。這在美國是個複雜的議題，討論了四、五十年，因為正反陣營壁壘分明，沒法找到雙方都能接受的妥協。槍支管制問題也差不多，這在美國是個很大的議題。關於槍支的可怕事件每天都在發生——某個孩子在廚房裏發現槍支，然後不小心殺死了他的母親——但是近一半的美國人口仍然認為人們有權持槍，而另一半的人認為美國有如此多的槍支，卻沒有管制實在太離譜。這些人的立場壁壘分明，無法妥協。政客們根本不想涉及這些話題，因為他們知道無論採取甚麼立場，都會得罪另一半人。從這些例子可以看出，所謂的「議題公眾」的確可能造成社會失能，現在已經有很多美國人開始關注並討論公眾在議題上對立極端的情況，他們認為人們常只看能支持自己觀點的信息而已，雖然我認為這只是一個過程。但我們的確看到媒體開始傾向迎合特定立場的受眾，這不符合我們傳統上對媒介在民主制度中的功能的期望。

SC: 但是根據敵意媒介效果，受眾，尤其是黨派立場鮮明的受眾，多傾向認為媒介報導不中立，有偏頗，因此也可能造成他們對媒介的不信任，那我們還能期待媒介在社會中扮演甚麼角色呢？

AG: 我不知道這是否是你問題的答案。我年輕的時候，傳統的大眾傳播模式就是早晨出現在你家門前的報紙，晚上出現在你電視裏的新聞。人們從這兩個主要的信息來源得到新聞，內容大致相同。有時候他們雖還聽廣播，但主要還是報紙和電視。每個電視頻道和每份報紙都自稱：「我們竭盡全力為您提供不偏不倚、客觀公正的新聞內容。如果有人說我們不公正，我們會很惱恨，而且覺得不公道，因為我們真的很努力地在報導事實。」我認為那個時候的人大概都接受這個觀點，即使他們對於某些新聞報導並不認同，尤其是與他們非常關心的議題相關的報導。

　　而另一種情況是,新聞媒體並不致力於公平或全面客觀的事實,而是呈現與他們本身政治利益有關的報導。這樣的情況現在開始出現在美國,但其實在歐洲早已行之有年,所以常會聽到大家說政黨報紙（partisan press）。比如在義大利,人們會說你無法從任何一家報紙看到新聞的全貌,你必須讀這家報紙以了解綠黨的觀點,再讀另外一家報紙來了解其他人的觀點。所以你必須甚麼都看,做很多信息搜索的工作以了解事實。

　　而還有一種情況,就是在那些媒體被嚴格控管的國家,人們可能會說,好的,我能從大眾媒介獲得一些信息,但我也知道有的信息我無法從大眾媒介獲得,必須找別的信息來源,比如通過和鄰居聊天,週六早上去市場聽小道消息,或者和外地人聊天,從國外獲得信息;他們可能對被管制的信息更加關注,因為知道那可能才是事實。但不管是在哪種情況,這些社會的共通點是,有一群人,他們很努力地利用不同方法不同管道求取信息,而非理所當然地認定收到的信息一定正確,也許這些人是較善於理解信息的那類人。這些說來話長,我要說的是,人們對新聞媒體的報導有些懷疑其實是好事,即使是在早期的美國新聞模式也是一樣,我們不希望人們連咀嚼都沒有,就將收到的信息直接吞下去。

　　在美國,政黨媒體最好的例子就是福克斯（FOX）新聞台,現在很多共和黨人都趨向收看他們的新聞。每個人都說福克斯新聞台這幾年很明顯地變得愈來愈傾向於保守派。另外有些頻道則愈來愈偏向自由派。所以歐巴馬最近稱福克斯電視台為「共和黨的公關臂膀」之類的。讓人擔心的是,如果所有的共和黨人都收看福克斯新聞台,所有的民主黨人都收看 MSNBC 或者其他的頻道,大家收到的新聞可能截然不同⋯⋯啊⋯⋯我也不是很確定,也許人們會交互轉換頻道看看吧,但數據又不是這樣說的。這些都是前所未見的新現象,都同時一起發生了,這就是敵意媒介效果有趣之處,現在的情況不一定只是不同立場的人看同一個公正客觀的新聞,有不同的結論。現在新聞媒體本身有時也有偏向的立場,這有甚麼影響呢?所以最近我的一些實驗就和有立場的偏頗新聞報導相關。

SC: 那麼，從您自己的領域，比如預設媒介影響或者敵意媒介效果説起，您認為這些研究工作最終可以發展出自己的理論嗎？我問這個問題是因為傳播研究常被心理學和社會學者視為實用研究。我們在學習媒介效果的時候，也經常使用心理學和社會學領域中的理論。例如您研究中常提到一些經典的社會心理學理論，像是社會判斷理論（social judgment theory）、樂觀偏見（optimistic bias）以及歸因理論（attribution theory）。在您看來，傳播研究可能發展出自己的理論嗎？比如第三人效果、預設媒介影響或者敵意媒介效果的研究，有沒有潛力發展出一套傳播理論呢？

AG: 嗯，我從前就聽人討論過這個問題。當我還是研究生時，就有人説，誰來發明傳播學的理論？我對這個問題有兩點看法，但沒有答案。第一，所謂的種族歧視、性別歧視，就是説人帶着對某個種族或某個性別的刻板印象來看待或區分別人。我認為我們今天會問有沒有「傳播學科的理論」這個問題，其實是因為學科歧視作祟。我們總覺得某些理論是屬於某些學科——比如社會心理學。的確我的大多數研究是使用社會心理學的理論，有時候也用別的學科的理論。但真的，這些學科界別其實是人造出來的。我們説我們在傳播學科，某些人説他們在心理學科，但事實是許多在心理學、政治學、歷史學及社會學的人其實都在研究傳播。學科界別只是人們發明出來以便設立大學、組織管理，以讓大學順利運作。而且人總喜歡用一些看來時髦又浩瀚的類別來將東西分門別類。所以我覺得，我們根本不必對使用其它學門理論這樣的情況感到意外，像樂觀偏見是社會心理學理論或是心理學理論，還有很多你和我做的研究，其實都來自心理學領域。從某種方式上説，有自己領域的理論根本不重要，因為領域這個概念只是人造的。

　　好，那如果把我這個觀點先放一邊，我能想到甚麼理論，可能成為傳播學領域的理論呢？你覺得受眾範圍假設（reach hypothesis）能否被視為一種理論？我只是在想，有甚麼我做的研究可以解釋敵意媒介效果，甚至預設媒介影響。比如説，有個信息的受眾很廣，而且人們也都知道該信息的受眾很廣，這就可能會影響人們

對此信息的看法。所以我做了一個研究實驗。在這個實驗中我發現，如果信息的受眾愈廣，該信息就愈容易挑動那些對信息議題在乎的人的敏感神經，這些人會愈容易覺得媒介報導偏袒他們的對敵陣營。我認為這個理論只與大眾媒介和大眾傳播相關。我不知道這是否算是合理的理論，但是我在心理學或者其他領域都沒看見過這個理論；在我開始構思這個理論的時候，我也沒有發現任何關於這個想法的文獻。

SC: 您認為互聯網有為感知媒介影響和敵意媒介效果的研究帶來新方向或是新挑戰嗎？

AG: 說有也有，說沒有也沒有。先說沒有，當我在讀研究所的時候，我的導師史提夫・查菲（Steve Chaffee）就說，每一次有新科技降臨，人人都為之瘋狂，說它一定能改變世界。但從來就沒看過甚麼科技真的改變了世界。所以我認為人們可能高估誇大了互聯網的重要性。每次新科技出現，大家都會高估其重要性或影響力。

但是，沒有的部份說完之後，我要說，我愛這個互聯網的新時代，我也確實看見了一些有意思的特性，尤其是互動性，這是很令人興奮的，它改變了很多東西。所以我必須再重新思考那些我在研究所學到的每一個理論構想，再重新思考我過去到現在的每個理論想法。

舉例而言，在 1990 年代後期，我發表了幾篇論文，是關於說服性新聞推理（persuasive press inference）的想法，意即當人們覺得新聞媒體報導的立場會影響其他民眾時，人們就會從新聞報導的內容去感知民意的分佈。我們做了實驗，操縱了新聞報導的立場，發現受試者對民意的感知，的確取決於他們所閱讀的新聞報導的立場（Gunther, 1998）。而十年之後，韓國的學者做實驗，想看看受眾在線上新聞媒體發表的評論，是否會改變我這個關於說服性新聞推理的主張。當然，如果你在一篇報導下呈現多個與報導立場相左的論點，我相信那是會改變人們對民意的感知的。

你我兩天前還在討論這個，所以你對此一定不陌生。這就是新科技發展改變說服性新聞推理的例子。新科技的發展把公眾反饋的迴路加在大眾媒介的內容裏，因而改變了大眾媒介呈現信息

的方式，這在理論層面上很有趣。就像我那天問的問題一樣，人們對民意的感知因此改變，究竟是由於人們認為那些反饋評論會影響民意，還是人們認為那些評論其實就代表民意？

另外，互聯網增加了互動性，並改變了人群（crowd）這個概念。現在我們很容易就覺得自己和他人相關。記得有名的線上租片公司 Netflix 願意拿出 100 萬美金招募專人幫他們改進運算對顧客做影片推薦的方式，也就是說，在我租選了 10 個 Netflix 的影片之後，Netflix 可就那些資料做運算，然後告訴我：基於您的選擇，您也許也會喜歡一些其他的電影，因為那些和您有相似電影喜好的人，也喜歡這些電影。這樣一來，我對電影的選擇很可能就被大量的、不知名的、被稱作是「和我相似」的其他人改變了。這是一個有趣的新發展，而且到處都可見。這些例子都顯示，新媒介科技帶來了新的研究方向。

SC: 接下來的問題可能比較廣泛。首先，您對於想要用實驗法或是準實驗法的研究者有甚麼建議？

AG: 我的第一個建議是：我認為實驗法最大的問題往往是操縱。而這個問題的背後關鍵是，要對你的自變項有很清晰的認識。所以要多想想自己對於自變項，也就是操縱變項的理解是否清楚，我認為這是很有助益的。

首先，當你在做實驗時，你會給受試者看某個傳播信息以做為實驗操縱或是控制情境，問問你自己，這個傳播信息是不是只是他們平常接收到的千千萬萬個信息之外的又一個？我曾聽過某個知名的學者說，實驗的問題就在於，你讓受試者看一段視頻，或是有暴力內容的電影，或是與健康相關的資訊，但是受試者在過去一年裏可能已看過上萬條類似的內容。你的操縱僅僅是第一萬零一個，比起受試者每天接收到像海一樣多的刺激，你加給他們的只是一小湯匙，這樣的刺激能造成差異嗎？因此我常說，我們需要確認我們的操縱非常不同，而且要強，要能帶來明顯的情緒反應或其他我們期待的結果，這點是非常重要的。

其次，實驗設計中最大的問題之一在於自變項常常伴隨着混淆變項。你好不容易找到了操縱某個變項的方法，但是可能一不

小心把其他變項也同時操縱了，這有時很難避免。舉個我自己的例子，我設計了一個實驗（Gunther & Schmitt, 2004）想檢測「受眾範圍」。自變項就是有廣大受眾的報紙新聞或是受眾範圍極小的學生作業，但兩者的信息內容相同。整個設計就是要讓受試者對信息讀者數量的多寡有不同的感知，結果非常成功。但之後，甚至在我做完整個實驗之前，我就在想，等等，我雖然操縱了信息受眾範圍，但我也同時不自覺地操縱了信息來源。報紙新聞出自記者，學生作業出自學生。這是一個非常明顯的混淆變項。別人可以說我的實驗結果其實不是受眾範圍造成的，而是信息來源造成的。當信息來源是記者而不是學生時，人們更容易覺得媒體站在敵對陣營那一方。所以我就設計了第二個實驗以求將這二個變項分開。這第二個實驗（Gunther & Liebhart, 2006），證實了受眾範圍的假設，但也同時發現學生或記者的信息源也有顯著的影響，這兩個變項的影響是獨立的。這個例子說明了如何思考排除混淆變項。

對於實驗設計當然還有很多要考慮的。我的第三個建議是：在構思實驗時，先做一個前測或是預測實驗（pilot test），有少數受試者即可，先檢測你的操縱是否真會有成效。你可以先從 20 個受試者開始著手。這 20 個人不一定要從你真正想研究的母體中選出，能的話當然是最好。這我試過好幾次了，在做大規模的實驗之前先做一個小規模的實驗，看看結果是否大致如預期。有好幾次我因為這些前測或預實驗的結果而修改了我的實驗設計。

SC: 我們在做前測或是預測實驗的時候，有時看不到顯著的影響，不知道那是因為實驗操縱的失敗，或是樣本量過小。在甚麼情況下，我們需要修改實驗設計，在甚麼情況下可以說操縱和設計都沒有問題，結果不顯著只是樣本量過小，可以直接進行大規模實驗？

AG: 我不知道。你聽說過鄉間巡迴飛行表演嗎？在早期 1920、1930 年代的美國或是其他地方，有些年輕人學了飛機駕駛，就在鄉村飛行，把飛機停在某個小鎮的玉米地或是泥路上，讓民眾有機會搭乘飛機，那時每個人都想坐飛機，一美元就讓你搭乘 15 分鐘，看

看窗外的景色。這些鄉間巡迴飛機師們其實也是在鬼混，他們的飛行有名就是因為他們全靠個人經驗和判斷，不太用儀器。想知道自己的位置時就直接看看窗外，雖然他們也有地圖，但很少拿來查。我覺得這也是我做研究的方法——一切靠感覺和經驗。先做個前測看看整體的趨勢，與我們期待的方向是否一致。

SC: 所以您也不一定會得到顯著的效果？

AG: 是啊。對於樣本數太小的預測實驗或是前測，我不會做顯著性檢驗。因為你說得對，很可能是檢驗效力的問題。但是一般來說你都可以辨別得出是不是有一個清晰的趨勢。

SC: 那是因為您經驗豐富。您現在是在給沒有經驗的年輕人建議啊！

AG: 好好好，我知道。我認為就算你沒有經驗，你也可以看得出是否有個趨勢……有一種統計檢驗，是圖基提出的檢驗方法（Tukey Test）（Tukey, 1959）你可以去查查。一般公認這個檢驗對小樣本有用，它對顯著性的要求在於組間需要有很大的差異。這個檢驗很有趣，因為它都用莖葉圖來說明結果。我在課上有教學生，以這個方式去理解實驗設計是很有趣的。我的預測實驗一般會有20個受試者，我會使用莖葉圖看排佈，但即使是用這些方法，我也不用顯著性檢驗來決定是否要繼續開展大規模實驗，因為這僅僅是一個讓我有系統地檢視差異和結果的方法罷了。我認為，如果你找了20個受試者來做一個實驗，你完全看不到任何組間差異，很明顯的你應該做些修改，而不該想就這樣往下做吧！這是我的建議。

SC: 最後一個問題。年輕的學者常有個共通的問題，他們知道自己對甚麼傳播現象感興趣，尤其現在新媒體流行，帶來許多有趣的新現象。在找出自己感興趣的現象後，要怎麼從中發展好的研究題目？您拿了那麼多頂尖論文獎，能不能跟我們分享一下您的經驗？首先，您是如何找到研究題目的？第二，當您有了題目後，如何確定這是個值得做的題目？我相信您想過的題目一定多過於您發表的題目，很多題目也可能只是靈光一閃，並沒有真正落實。您如何做選擇？

AG: 我已忘記我有多少個好題目了。有時我想到一個題目，覺得非做

不可，但我也不知道那是不是個好題目。我的看法是：要知道森林裏有甚麼，就要在森林裏來回晃盪，熟悉森林。要了解甚麼是好的研究題目，就要讀其他人的研究，學習其他人的研究，然後漸漸認知到其他人在問問題找答案時，提出的研究問題是甚麼。用一個傳播學以外的例子。當費絲定嘉（Festinger）在思考認知失調理論（cognitive dissonance theory）時，也就是當人的兩個想法互相衝突時，他們會做甚麼以解決衝突，他做了個很著名的實驗回答這個問題。他要受試者寫一篇與自身觀點相矛盾的短文，並告知他們寫完後會得到 1 塊或是 20 塊美金，看看金額大小會怎樣影響受試者的做法。這個操縱清楚地將認知失調操作化。所以我的答案是，先對研究有個概括的認識，然後就會更加了解別人是如何想到好的研究問題以及好的檢驗方法。

第二點，在我讀研究所的時候，我對兩方面的問題感興趣。我當過記者，所以我對新聞可信度的問題有興趣，想知道為甚麼人們有時候不相信新聞。如果你讀我的研究論文，你就會發現這 20 年來我都在思考這個問題。當然，我不是每分每秒無時無刻在想這個問題，我也花時間和我的孩子玩鬧，出去約會，在湖中泛舟。但在這以外的時間，我花許多時間思考這個問題，好幾次我甚至在半夜醒來，思考這個問題。當你思考越多，問題就會愈清晰。

舉個例子，我做的第一個與第三人效果有關的研究，是我還在斯坦福（Stanford University）唸書的時候（Cohen, Mutz, Price & Gunther, 1988）。當讀到戴維森（Davison）關於對他人感知影響的論文時，我就開始設計一個研究，我問自己，我們常常說的「他人」是指誰？當然，第一次讀到他的論文時，我並沒有想到這個問題，他在文章中也沒怎麼談論這個問題。但當你開始設計自己的研究時，這問題就來了，這部份我會放在第三點來談。總之我的第二點建議就是多花時間思考你的研究題目。

第三點就是要真的將研究想法設計出來。當你開始設計一個研究，當你開始想怎麼做的時候，你就會開始想到一些問題，而這些問題有時候會變成很重要的研究課題。我們設計那個第三人

效果的研究 (Cohen et al., 1988) 時，我們要受試者回答對自己的影響以及對他人的影響。但當我們想到其他人的時候，我們對自己說：嘿，等等，所謂的其他人是指班上其他人？大學裏其他人？加州其他人？還是廣義上其他人？我們想到了「社會距離」(social distance)，社會距離推論 (social distance corollary) 的主張就這樣出來了，就是因為我們在想要怎樣去問這個「他人」的問題，讓我們整個想法更加清晰，也讓我們找到有趣的研究主題，研究是不是人和他人的社會距離愈大，感知到的第三人效果也愈大。

事實上，有個理論說到人們是如何感覺，如何思考那些和我們有社會距離的其他人。我忘記是誰提出這理論了，但我記得是位女性，她發表的研究提出了一些心理學的證據，説明人們傾向用一種非常廣泛籠統的方式去思考他人，將他人籠統地看成是一群人，而非一個個獨特的個體。當我們對每個人的獨特性思考得越少，我們就會愈發覺得，他人就是一群脆弱、易被説服、無法抗拒外來影響的人。總之，我的意思是，多花點時間思考，不要期待甚麼都能想得透徹，但只要你開始思考，愈來愈多想法就會慢慢浮現。

另外還有個例子，在我完成幾個與第三人效果有關的實驗之後，我開始問自己，等等，這個效果是真的嗎？還是我問卷中的問題導致了這個結果？還是因為我問卷問題的順序導致這個結果？有沒有可能因為我們總先問受試者對自己影響的感知，然後再問對他人影響的感知，所以導致受試者對他人影響的感知大過對自己影響的感知？其中有好幾年我都沒有想到這個問題。但當我想到後，我就簡單地設計一個問卷來檢測，結果證明問題的順序並不影響第三人效果的出現，我認為這研究做了很好的貢獻。

SC: 您提到的這四點都是關於您如何找到好的研究題目。要是我有一個題目，我要如何知道這個題目夠不夠好，值不值得進一步去探索？

AG: 這我也有答案，但我不確定是不是有很大的幫助。大多數時候當我有了題目，一開始我都覺得這是很小的題目，有時我甚至會覺

得，這題目太小了，小到不值得關注。但當我多思考幾次之後，我就開始看到這個小題目的重要性。就像當我在思考第三人效果時，我開始想，為甚麼不直接問對他人影響的感知呢？起先我認為，答案不是很明顯嗎，而且這是個小問題吧，但隨着我想下去，我就做出了 2003 年的研究（Gunther & Storey, 2003），討論預設影響的影響。所以我要說的是，你沒法知道你的想法好不好，你的任何想法都值得你去追尋，看是否能將其擴展為更大的題目。

　　當然有時想到後來，你會決定放棄，就像約會一樣，要怎麼知道你遇上了一個好人，一個你喜歡的人？唯一的辦法就是堅持，多花點時間思考你的題目，吃飯時想着它，看電影時想着它，外出散步時也想着它，那這個題目就可能會越變越好、越變越有趣，然後你就會發現，對呀對呀，這確實是個值得繼續探究的好題目。當然有的時候，你也可能會決定放棄那個題目，就像經歷了一次糟糕的約會一樣。

艾爾伯特・剛瑟教授著作選

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Academic Dialogue with **Albert C. GUNTHER**

Perceptions and Media Effects: From Individuals' Subjective Reality to Media's Role in Democracy

AG: Albert C. GUNTHER
SC: Stella C. CHIA

SC: **Your research focuses on people's "perceptions" of media effects (i.e., third-person perception and influence of presumed media influence) rather than actual media effects, or people's "perceptions" of media bias (i.e., hostile media perceptions) rather than actual media bias. What makes you interested in studying people's perceptions and what are possible directions for this line of research?**

AG: It's a subjective world. I suppose there's an objective reality out there somewhere, but what interests me most is how the same reality can be seen so differently by different people. It's as if we all wear our own pair of glasses, each of us with a different prescription.

But, importantly, what we see through those glasses is so real to us that we cannot easily imagine, or cannot be easily persuaded, that our view might be a distortion of some external circumstance. And more importantly still, we are likely to think things and do things in response to what we see through those glasses. Akira Kurosawa's famous movie Rashomon is a vivid example—showing how four people see the same events in four very different ways, and the different (calamitous) actions they take as a result. So for many practical purposes, the objective reality is inconsequential compared to the subjective one.

I think these biases are inherently fascinating and sometimes amusing. Academics call these types of findings "sexy", because they make interesting reading and good cocktail party conversation. But they can have serious, sometimes dysfunctional consequences— promoting conflict, negative attitudes or other bad behaviors—so I think it is important to understand the causes of these perceptual biases. The famous social psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky were notable pioneers in documenting many of these biases.

But I believe there is much more to understand. In some way we may hope that understanding them can help to reduce them when they are problematic.

SC: **Presumed media influence is not necessarily related to media exposure. People often infer media influence on others based on their understandings of media content and their impressions about others. Perceptions of media influence on others seem to be the result of a psychological (cognitive) process. Could we still say that "presumed media influence" is a communication phenomenon or a type of media effect? How does research of presumed media influence help clarify the role of communication in society as a whole?**

AG: So I would say, yes, it's very much a media effect. And there is a famous quote from Elihu Katz, who says, eh, "thinking people are affected by media is itself a media effect". I am not sure that's the exactly words. But I have written them down somewhere. And I think it's true. You know it depends a little on how you define the media effect. But (the) interesting part of your question is people think media influence other people, even they haven't actually seen the media message itself, like sometimes. There is a famous scenario where people are saying we should…: Your book is a very bad thing, creating mis-impressions, and author of the book says "Have you even read the book?" The answer is sometimes "no, but I think I know what's in it." You know, or people think pornography has a bad influence, even though they haven't seen this pornography themselves. So that's like a kind of presumed media influence even when there is no exposure. You asked about exposure, right.

It raises another interesting thing, because we often use the exposure as the independent variable, the most up-string variable. The first question is often about exposure and there is a presumed relationship between exposure and thinking other people are influenced. But…I didn't think it so much until your question. It's a good question.

SC: **Oh really? Yes, I am frustrated because sometimes I couldn't find the correlations between self-exposure and presumed media influence.**

AG: Right, but that could be a reason, right?

SC: You think there is another way to do this or…?

AG: Well, It's a good research question. Whether there are times people perceive influence even though they do not have an exposure themselves.

SC: That still goes back to... (my question). I know just now you quoted Katz, who says "thinking other people are influenced is a type of media effect". But I keep on thinking like if I see a piece of research, say, starts from a stereotype, and then presume media influence, and probably leads to some consequences. I always wonder where communication comes in. It's all in your brain. Stereotype in your brain, presumed media in your brain. Then probably, the presumed media influence will lead to, say, attitudes toward censorship. It's all in your brain. And no communication… (is there), nothing. Can we still say it is communication research?

AG: Well, I think the answer to that question is, like to a lot of questions, it sort of depends on how you define it. Because you are right…there is not a…I mean…you can call it a, mass media effect, for example, if that's the source of the "alleged" communication. It's kind of getting to your fundamental question and the first question that it is a subjective world then. What's real except what is going on inside your head.

But another part of what you are saying is the traditional research questions have to do with actual mass media message which travels along a channel and reaches an audience of actual people who listen to it, watch it, or read it. And then we study the media effects questions: What happens as a result. And here you are pointing out quite rightly… there is not…it is not necessary the perception of an actual message. It is just thinking…knowing there is a message is all that's necessary, really, for this process. You know, part of what you are pointing out is that how we define things is often how research gets described. I would say this is a communication issue just because it involves the environment of communication around us, even though it's very subjective. And technically speaking, there may not be any actual communication involved if you want strictly to define communication as a message passing from one person to another. You know,

it's a perceived communication, not a real communication. The presumed influences idea is really a perceived communication, not an actual communication that we are talking about. If we are going to measure exposure, and see the relationship between exposure and perceived influence. Then, I would say, yes, there is an actual communication. Involve in that process, its exposure part. But all the rest is subjective right?

SC: **Question three is about third-person effect. I believe that you have seen a lot of third-person effect research and I also believe that you don't have time to read all of them because there is really too much. These studies examine the causes of third-person effect, the consequences, the mediators or moderators. Results appear fruitful. As one of the pioneer communication scholars who studied third-person effect empirically, do you think there is still room for further research to make contributions?**

AG: I do. So in several ways. One is… Is our theoretical understanding of third-person effect or presumed influence complete? That is a good question. I don't know if we completely understand the theoretical explanations even for the first part, the presumed influence. I wonder about that. My first idea about that was the negative influence corollary and optimistic bias idea that other people are more influenced than me because other people are more likely to be vulnerable to influence, or more susceptible, or not so smart as I am. And that optimistic bias is a good explanation for that. But that theory really only applies to the third-person effect, right? Because it explains why there is a self-other difference.

But then, if you are just thinking about influence on others and what explains perceived influence on others, and just ignoring the self, maybe it's the same thing because you could say the more you see messages, negative or unfavorable or bad for you, the more influence you perceive, that would also be optimistic bias. But you could also think about attribution theory or I don't know what else. Maybe there is a…Later on, I'm gonna come back to another question about that. So anyway, that, you know, er… that's one thing.

And then, a second thing is several people in my talk here asked me what if the third-person effect is really just people are giving that answer when you ask the question even there isn't any real third-

person effect. I think it's always useful to ask. This is basically the falsification idea. I think about every theory. It's useful to say "is this actually real?" Is there some way in which we might be measuring an effect that's not actually something people really do and/or it's really fundamentally different from what we think it is.

You know, that's the idea, that's a big idea that Thomas Kuhn described in his 1962 book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. He explains that, you know, over time, some young people like you, are going to have some new ideas about something that an old guy like me, never thought about. And it will change or it will revolutionize the paradigm. So, you know, thinking about this in a different way might. You know they say sooner or later, every scientific truth is replaced by a more…by something else. So that's the possibility.

And then also, a third thing as I think, mostly, a lot of…only a few researchers really paid much attention to who the audience is and in presumed-influence research, I think there is a lot of room for asking about particular audiences or influences on particular audiences. There is, you know, that paper by McLeod, Eveland, & Nathanson from 1997, they did a study with rap music, right? And they found that depending on what audiences you asked about, people see more or less influences. I did that study in Nepal where the unintended audience was actually the audience of interest, even though they weren't the target audience. But… So those are examples of other types of audiences or more clearly-defined audiences. That would be theoretically interesting. It's an important part of this research program that needs more examination.

And then the fourth thing I thought of is consequences. I think there are many consequences that haven't been explored… There are many potential consequences of presumed influences. We need to ask more about what kinds of outcomes. And why they happen.

SC: **In terms of theoretical contribution… I mean, we can of course test the consequence of presumed media influence or try to link third-person perceptions with actual behavior in different contexts. For example, you tried to link third-person perception with support for censorship (Gunther, 1995), or you compared how frequently scholars accept media interview and their presumed media influence. Other studies examined voting or health behavior,**

etc. But would testing consequences of third-person perceptions or presumed media influence in different settings really make a contribution? After all, we are trying to find a connection between perception and behavior. Is it important to explore different types of behaviors in different contexts?

AG: I would say yes because… So I have two answers. First of all, there are two elements at issue here. One is a conceptual element, like what's the concept, the variable that you want to measure as your outcome and if it's behavioral? That's…I agree with you that's important to pursue. For example, even when you talk about restrictions on freedom of speech or restrictions on political activities or something. You can ask people about support for that, but you are right, that's an attitude, but I think it's a useful thing to think about whether there are ways to measure behaviors in a research format.

Like can you ask questions, just for example, could you ask questions about, instead of saying would you support restrictions on political protests, for example, or news coverage of divisive political protests, you can actually ask people if they would donate money, or not if they would, but actually ask them to, like give them a chance at the end of the survey to click on the bottom and say that "Ok, alright, I want to get more literature on this" or "I want to talk to somebody about the issue…"

You know something when they actually have to do an action, at least via a mouse click, and you can call it behavior. Or yes, I want somebody to give me information about donating money. I mean these are difficult, a little tricky, and you can get much more sophisticated if you had unlimited resources in terms of measuring a behavior, like keeping track of whether kids start to smoke, or start to drink, or when they have sex or when they, you know, or whether they actually go to a political protest or whether they sign a petition. All those things could be actual behaviors that you could measure. But that's a conceptual, that's really an issue of what variables you're choosing and how you measure them.

The other question, the other element is what's the theory that predicts that kind of outcome? I think those are two different things. So, like, social influence—that huge social psychology theory in all of its different forms—would be a theory that could be developed more carefully in this direction. But some kind of paternalism theory

could be, could also be at work when you're looking at censorship or support for restrictions. So anyway, I think there are a lot of things that could still be done.

The other kind of consequences… we mentioned before this idea. You and I talked about this idea in your dissertation research. The idea that other kinds of outcomes besides compliance might be at work? Like defiance? Or the oblige one where people may do something because they think others will expect it? There are several of these different categories of consequences. So the short answer is, I think "yes, there are still lots of places to go."

SC: **That's a good news. Next, many of your research projects, especially those about hostile media effects, concern partisans and special interest groups. These people form a small portion of the entire population in a society. How do you account for the generalizability and significance of this type of research?**

AG: Okay, so, first I would say, you have to acknowledge that my answer might be biased, because yes, most of my research is on these "special interest groups." But here are several points: One, these special interest groups now it is getting to be popular enough to call them "issue publics". It is a phrase from 1990, from "Krosnick" or some-body. One, the issue public has, in proportion to its size, a very loud voice. Because these are people who care a lot about an issue, they tend to get together, and reinforce each other. So they often speak up in a way that gets a lot of attention. So, it may be true that the number is small, but the voice is very loud. It is like a small dog but with a very big bark. So you can be frightened by this dog if you don't see that it is actually pretty small.

Two, "issue publics" are no longer always small because of the Internet. So, now you can get massive numbers of people involved in an issue, because if they have any interest at all, they look on the Internet and pretty soon, they are part of a group. They are on an email list, or several email lists. When I was interested in doing gun control research, I called the organizations that have online mailing lists for gun control. They have hundreds of thousands of members. That's not a small "issue public". And we did a project just last year with a group called "Discovery Institute". It's a nice name for a group that's actually a Christian Evangelical. It's the people who are trying

to get schools to teach alternatives to evolution. They are against Darwin. They don't like the U.S. constitution that wants to keep religions out of school curriculum.When I called them and convinced them to take part in my research, I was shocked by how many people belong to that organization. We got a huge response from them, when we asked people to participate in our survey. So that's the second thing: I think the groups are sometimes now pretty large.

And it's also a part of that is that, a kind of the third thing is that, because the Internet makes it so easy for an individual to become a part of a group, you don't have to be physically there anymore. It can drive in a lot of people that are, in the beginning, only moderately interested in the issue, or moderately concerned. Once they get drawn into the group, their attitudes get reinforced, and probably more extreme, more polarized. So that's the third thing.

Just one more point. A major concern in the U.S. is polarization: group polarization. One example of it is you see in Washington D.C., everybody says the congress is way more polarized than it used to be. Politicians are so far apart, and they are fighting so much with each other that they can't get anything done. That's another reason why interests groups or "issue publics" are important: because we see the potential for a highly polarized public, or at least many people in the population being highly polarized. We think these special interest groups or "issue publics" are the bases for that. And it is more challenging for the democratic process. So the fact is that these groups may be small, but they are still very far apart. They are becoming more far apart, because of the process involved in special interest group communication. It is a potential problem for democracy.

Can I give you an example? In Wisconsin, … Wisconsin has always been a very interesting state politically, because sometimes it is republican, sometimes it is democratic. You might have heard that in the last few years there have been a lot of conflicts surrounding the governor because he took away some rights from the unions. He is making the state worker pay more salary for health care. So there have been huge protests after he first took office (he is republican). Now people would say the state of Wisconsin is highly polarized, like never before. People are either for him or against him. This professor I mentioned, Katherine J. Cramer-Walsh, she has spent a few years driving around this state interviewing people about this,

both before and after (he) became the governor. So she has a good picture how the special issues that came with the governor affected so many people that it sort of pushed people to two opposite camps in Wisconsin. Now there is a lot of concern about whether the state is really split, maybe for a long time. So I guess what I am saying is that to the extent these interest groups play a role in polarization, they can be very important.

SC: **What you just said seems to imply that having these partisan groups is not very healthy for democracy, because they split the society. But actually in democracy we do need different opinions. Do you mean research on these groups is very important because they actually bring problems to democracy. I don't think you are holding such a negative view against them, do you?**

AG: I guess my answer to that would be…you could say too little…there is sort of a happy median. It's true that you want people to be involved in an issue, engaged in a issue, thinking about issues, and being concerned about them: environment, health care, social issues, whatever it is. If they are not concerned, then there is not enough healthy public debate. People don't get involved, and you don't have a well-functioned democracy. So if it's too little, I think it's not good. But the other side of the coin is, if it is too much, people get too far apart, they also can't get anything done. Because they can't see each other's points of view, there is no compromise. You know a lot my research does have a lot to do with, what we called, motivated reasoning. These ideas are that, once people form a strong pre-existing opinions or attitudes, it can become difficult to communicate, or to reach a consensus, or to settle on a compromise, which is part of democracy all about. So, I think too little is not good, and too much also may not be good.

SC: **News media report certain issues because they want to get people involved or concerned. But according to your research on hostile media effect, once people are involved, concerned and become partisans, they are likely to see media as biased. Their perceptions of biased or hostile media may in turn polarize their views or enhance the divisiveness of their stands. So, what is the role of press in our society anyway?**

AG: Well, I think the hostile media effect isn't necessary always a bad thing. I think it's natural, people will see, if they feel strongly about an issue, then they are going to be critical of media coverage of that issue. That's not necessary causing a problem. Maybe the hostile media effect just makes people think, "Oh, I need to do more to get my side of the story into the public eye." That actually probably would be a good thing. I mean….what I am saying is that I think hostile media perception is a natural part of becoming a partisan, you know. Just about every politician who has ever been elected eventually says, "Oh…the media are against me." So, I think it's kind of unavoidable for people who feel strongly about something.

They are sort of chicken and egg question about what the media's role is. It's true that part of the (de fact role of) mass media is to get the people involved issues by letting them know what's going on. So, all the press coverage of the Occupying Central movement is informing people a lot, even millions of people outside Hong Kong, about the democracy question in Hong Kong. You know, I think the traditional media, still most forms of communication, part of the way it works is because the media and messages you get from mass media are trying to reach audiences. One of the things we know of that audiences like is conflict. So, media tend to play up the conflict elements in issues. That tends to get more people interested, and to some degree, that's good. I think to a large degree that is good, because of the discussion of conflicts people hear different sides of the issue, right? What part of the conflict is about is the arguments on your side of some issue are different from the arguments on my side of some issue. It is important to hear both sides in the conflict and coverage is what gets those out there. You know, so I don't think it a bad thing.

But unless, or until, people are getting so strongly polarized about the issue. They can no longer hear the arguments of the other side, or no longer consider whether some of their arguments might not be correct. And then if people become so deeply entrenched in their own camp, then you could say that's a problem. You can think of examples. The abortion issue, which is a complicated issue in the United States, has been a problem for thirty, forty, or fifty years, because people on both sides of the issue cannot find the middle ground. They either feel strongly in one way or the other way. Gun

control is kind of the same. We have huge gun problem in the United States. Things are happening everyday with guns now that are terrifying or horrifying. But half of the population is still very strongly committed to the right to have gun. You know, some baby finds a gun in the kitchen and accidentally kills his mother. The other half of the population thinks this is ridiculous to have so many guns and not much gun control. But these people are so polarized that they cannot reach any kind of compromise. Politicians don't even want to deal with that issue because they know whatever side they take, half of the population will be against them. There, I think, are examples of cases where polarized "issue publics" are somewhat dysfunctional. But again, I think it's a process. And now there is a lot of concern in the US, and a lot of discussion about whether on many issues, people are too polarized. They only look for information that supports their own view. I am getting a little off-topic here. But now you see media channels that tend to cater to people who just have one particular point of view. That's not what we used to think of as the traditional beneficial functions of media and democracy.

SC: **But according to the hostile media effect, people, especially partisans, tend to consider news media biased, not neutral. They therefore won't trust media. What could media do then?**

AG: I don't know whether it is exactly an answer to your question: When I was young, a traditional model of mass communication was newspaper on your door in the morning, television news on your TV at night. People were all getting kind of the same news content from those two major sources, also sometimes radio. But newspapers and television were the main thing. Every channel and every newspaper would say, "We are doing our best to give you unbiased, objective, fair coverage of news." And anybody who says we are not resented or that's not unfair because we are doing our best to tell the truth. And I think people in general accepted that argument, even they might disagree with one story or another story, especially something they care about.

There is another model that is different. And the other model is that the news media don't try to present a fair and completely objective version of the truth. They present whatever their political interests tell them to. You are seeing that now even in the US, but that has been true forever in many places like in Europe, for example.

You often hear people discuss the partisan press. In countries like Italy, or especially noticeable in some European countries… So, in Italy, for example, people would say, ah, yeah, there is no newspaper that tells the whole story. You have to get this one to read the Green's point of view, then you have to get a different newspaper to read somebody else's point of view. So you have to look around a lot, do a lot of surveillance in the information landscape to know what's going on.

And in another context, let's say, countries where the news is heavily censored. People might say, okay, I can get some information from mass media, but I know, there are some things that I am not getting. I have to go somewhere else to find out those things, talk to my neighbors, get some news at the market on Saturday morning when I go and talk to the people from another town, try to get information from outside of the country, pay attention to especially to information that is censored, because maybe it's more likely the truth. So, in those models, people are having to work harder or having to approach mass communication in a different way, not just take it for granted that it is accurate. Maybe those people are actually, in some ways, better in processing information. So this is a long story, but I guess what I am saying is I think for people to be a little skeptical about the news, even in the old U.S. model it's probably a good thing. In U.S. you could say people are swallowing without chewing.

You know now a lot of republic people tend to go to Fox news in the US, for example, that's the biggest example of partisan press in the US. Fox news is a TV channel that becomes a conservative voice, very very clearly. Everybody would say that. There are some channels that have become somewhat the opposite, on the liberal side or the democratic side. So Obama recently call Fox news the "publicity arm of the Republican Party" or something like that. One concern has been that ok, all the republicans are going to Fox, and all the democrats are going to MSNBC or some other channels. So they are all getting different news. Ah…I am not so sure... I think… people cross over. There is conflicting data about what people are doing and this is also a fairly new phenomenon. This is all happening in this context. This is why the hostile media effect is still interesting. Because now it is not always just unbiased neutral news that different people see in different ways. So you could actually say that but news

itself is slanted so what happens then? So some of my recent experiments have to do with actually slanted coverage.

SC: **Thinking from your own area like presumed media influence or hostile media effect. Do you think that the research work can eventually develop our own theory? Communication research is considered as applied research by scholars of psychology and sociology. We often "borrow" theories from psychology and sociology when we study media effects. Your research, for example, has referred to a number of classic theories in social psychologies, such as social judgment theory, optimistic bias, and attribution theory. In your opinion, is it plausible for communication research to develop its own theories? For example, do you think research work in the areas of third-person effects, presumed media influence, or hostile media effects have the potentials to result in communication theories?**

AG: Yeah, I heard of this question before. I think people discuss this question sometimes. When I was in graduate school, somebody said: Who is going to invent the theory of communication? So I have two ideas about this, but I don't have answers. One, I think part of the problem I think is that we are suffering from a problem. You know about racism or sexism, right?... thinking about particular categories of people or gender or something in stereotypical ways, or as somehow different from other people. So I think this is discipline-ism. In a sense that we tend to think about theories as belonging to some disciplines like social psychology. It is true that most of my research has used theories from social psychology, occasionally from other places. But, really, those academic areas are very artificial. We say that we are in the communication field, and somebody else is in the psychology field. But there are people in psychology who work on communication, also people in political science, history, and sociology. So the discipline boundaries are really something that people just invented partly to help make university work or set up. I guess they make it work the way to organize things. And people want to organize things in some fashion and vast categories. So I mean I think there is no surprise that a lot of theories that work in communication, for communication research questions, happen to be theories where you could say, well, that's a social psychology theory, like optimistic bias probably, or at least a

psychology theory. Well, a lot of what you and I do is psychology in the origin. In a way, it's not necessarily important to have a theory in our own field, because the field itself is just an artificial construction.

Yes. Okay. Having said that, can you think of any theories that seem to be sort of unique to communication? So what about reach, if you could call the reach hypothesis a theory? I am just thinking of one thing that I have worked on, you know, might be part of the explanation for hostile media effect, and maybe even the presumed media influence. Okay. If something has a broad reach that people are aware that something is going to reach a very large audience. It affects the way that they think about the thing, about the information, for example. So I did a research experiment where I think we show some evidences that if you have a big reach for a message, people are more defensive about the message if they care about the issue. More hostile media effect. I think that's a theory that's kind of specific to mass media and mass communication. One, I don't know if it's a theory that makes sense. But, two, I don't see that theory in the psychology field or anywhere else I know. I mean I didn't find any literature about it when I was first thinking about it.

SC: **Do you see Internet bring in new directions or new challenges for the research of perceived media influence and also the research of hostile media effect?**

AG: OK. My answer is yes and no. First, the no part, I think. When I was in graduate school, my advisor Steve Chaffee said, every time a new technology comes along, everybody goes crazy, and says, ah, "It's going to change the world." And he says it never does. So I think it's possible to overestimate, to overstate the importance of the Internet. Every time you have a new technology, I think it's possible to over-estimate its influence or importance.

But, ok, so having said that, I do think I see some interesting…I love this sort of new era of Internet and especially interactivity because I think it's exciting. It does change a lot of things. So…I have to, you know, think twice about almost every theoretical idea I learnt when I was in graduate school or idea I worked on since then.

So just give one example. In the late 1990s, I published some papers on an idea called the persuasive press inference, the idea that people think news media coverage…is the slant of news media

coverage likely to influence what other people are thinking and that therefore, people will change their… that may affect their perceptions of public opinion. And we did experiments, manipulating the slant of the news article and sure enough people would report public opinion differently depending on which news article version they read (see Gunther, 1998). Somebody, ten years later, started doing experiments I think in Korea, saying now we have news media articles that also have comments, and is that…how does that change Gunther's idea about the persuasive press inference? And sure enough, if you put, let's say, a lot of comments under an article…that kind of contradict or argue with the slant of that article. I think the comments can change the way that people perceive public opinion.

I know you know this because we were talking about it two days ago. So there is an example of where the persuasive press inference idea is going to be altered by a new technological development that changes the way mass media present information because there is this, sort of, public feedback loop added on to it. And it's kind of interesting theoretically because, does that happen because of people's presumed influence of the comments, you know, like I was asking the other day, or because they think the comments are representing, the exemplars of real public opinions.

Other things are just like more interactivity, much more interactivity and the idea of the crowd, you know, that not the cloud but the crowd that now we so easily feel like we are tapped into what other people are doing. I remember when Netflix offered a million dollars to somebody who could improve their algorithm for recommending movies. So when I, after I've picked 10 Netflix movies, Netflix runs the algorithm on me and then tells me, "Based on your previous choices, this is what people like you would like to watch, so maybe you would like to watch, too." So my diet of movies might be altered by this sort of huge faceless crowd of other people that called "like me". That's an interesting new development and you see it everywhere, right? All these show that new media technologies might bring in new research directions.

SC: **Question 6 to 8 are actually in my opinion more general. Six is about what's your advice for people who want to do experiments or quasi-experiments?**

AG: Ok. My first advice is…I think the biggest problem with experiments is usually the manipulations, and maybe underlining that those problems, the…, having a clear idea about the causal variable or the independent variable. So one part of, one thing I think it's good for students to think about is if you think you have a good idea for an independent variable, manipulation.

First, think about… is exposure to this…if you are going to do an experiment with subjects, either getting a manipulation or getting a control condition…one, is exposure to this going to be just another exposure out of ten thousand exposures? So I heard some famous person once saying, the problem with experiments is, you ask people to watch a video about something, or some movie with violent content, or some health-related message, but these people have already seen in the last year ten thousand messages. So really your manipulation is ten thousand and one, it's a very small spoon for all of stimulus and a huge ocean of stimulus that people get in everyday life. So is it really gonna make a difference? So I often say, let's make sure the manipulation is very distinctive, or strong, or it's clearly going to create the emotion or the outcome that we are expecting and that it is substantial enough to do that.

That's one thing, and then of course, one of the biggest design problems with experiments is that somehow the independent variable has a confound. You figure out a way to manipulate something but you accidentally have some other things also getting manipulated. That's sometimes difficult to avoid. So an example is I designed an experiment (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004) when I want to test the "reach" idea, where the, it was either a big audience for a mass…for a newspaper article or a very small audience because the same message but student composition for a class. And the idea was it was a manipulation of the size of the audience, and it worked very well. But afterwards or even before I was done, I was thinking, but wait a minute, I manipulated the reach of the message but I also sort of, I couldn't help also manipulating the source of the message, that's in one case the journalist, the other case the student. So that was a very clear confound, because you could say, hey, maybe it wasn't the reach of the message, maybe it was the source that produced that result. People just saw more hostile media effect on the journalist than on the student. So then I tried to figure out a way to design a

second experiment to separate those two things. We did that (Gunther & Liebhart, 2006) and it turned out to support the reach hypothesis, but also the other factor, the student versus journalist, also was important. A significant effect also. Two independent effects. So that's just one example of thinking about confounds.

There are a lot of things to consider with experimental designs. Oh, here is my third piece of advice about this. For next, when I think about experiment is that you can set up a pretest or a pilot test. Do it with just a few people. Test your manipulation. See if people get it. Look at the results. I mean, you can do it with just 20 people. And it doesn't have to be this…, although it's nice to use the same population that you are using or the same group that you are using for the full-scale experiment. But I've done, several times, I've done a small version of an experiment before I do a big one, just to see if it's going in the right direction. Several times I revised the design because of that.

SC: **Here is a question, like my students, or even myself, when we do pretest or pilot studies, sometimes we don't see significant effect and we don't know whether we should attribute this non-significant effect to the failure of the manipulation or the small sample size? So in what condition would you say let me revise this or in what condition you think that it's just the small sample size I think my manipulation or my design is OK to go.**

AG: I don't know. Do you know what a barn storming pilot it is? It's in the old days, in the United States in the 1930s, maybe other places, 1920s, 1930s. These pilots, young guys learned to fly an airplane. They would fly around the country and land their plane in a cornfield or a dirt road in some little town and give people rides on the plane. Everybody wanted a ride on an airplane. For a dollar, you could take a 15 min ride around and look out the window. And the barnstormers, they just fooled around, they were famous for flying what they called the seat-of-the-pants flying. Very few instruments, they just looked out the window when they wanted to know where they were. They had some maps, but they didn't have much to go in the way of guidance… and I think that's how I do research—by the seat of my pants. So I will just do a pretest and see if it looks like the pattern is, the pattern is going in the direction that you expect.

SC: **So not necessarily you get significant effects?**

AG: Right. I wouldn't do a significance test with the small pilot test or a pretest because you are right, probably the power issue. But usually you can tell, if you can see a clear pattern.

SC: **Because you are experienced, you are giving advices to non-experienced people.**

AG: I know, I know. I think even when you are not experienced, you can see if there is, if it looks like there is a… there is actually a statistical test, it's called Tukey's Test to Duckworth's Specifications (1959), t-test or something like that. You can look it up and you can…It's considered useful with small sample sizes, but it requires a fairly dramatic difference between groups to show significance. It's fun because it uses a stem-and-leaf plot. I always teach it in my class because it's a fun way to understand, analysis in an experimental design and I always do a stem-and-leaf array. Typically you do it with 20 people also. But I wouldn't even require significance in that kind of test, too, whether if I decide to proceed to the full-scale test. It's just, it's kind of an idea about how to look at the difference, how to look at the results systematically. And I mean, part of my point is clearly if you do experiments with 20 people, and you are not seeing any differences at all, you gotta change something. You don't wanna go on just on the basis of that, so…that's my…

SC: **Ok, the last question. For young scholars, the common problem is that they know what phenomenon they are interested, especially now the new media has brought so many interesting communication phenomena. However, they don't necessarily know how to develop research topics from the phenomena that they are interested. You have won so many top paper awards. First of all, how do you get an idea? Secondly, when you have an idea, how do you know it's a promising idea that you should pursue? I believe that you have more ideas than the research projects you have published. I mean there must be a lot of ideas that ran into your mind but you didn't really pursue. So how do you decide what to pursue and what not to pursue?**

AG: I forgot more good ideas than I can count. Sometimes I remember one and I think I gotta do that. I don't know if they're good ideas but

…ok…so one answer I have is, you know, getting familiar with the forest by wandering around the forest is a way of beginning to understand what's going on in the forests. So you know, part of the idea of getting to know what's a good idea is just by reading other research or studying other research and coming to realize what other people, what questions other people were asking when they started asking something that they came up with an answer. You know, like…to use another example outside communication, when Festinger was thinking about cognitive dissonance, what people do and they have two conflicting ideas that they have to resolve in someway and kind of feeling his way along to a way of answering that question by doing that experiment with that famous example of, the experiment when you write an essay that contradicts your own viewpoint and you get one dollar or you get 20 dollars depending on, you know. It's a good illustration of cognitive dissonance. But…so, I think one answer is just to get familiar with research in general and you begin to become more aware of what kind of thinking other people came up with good research questions and good ways to test what they did.

The second thing is, I think, when I was in graduate school, you know, I got interested in these two basic ideas, I had been a journalist, so I was sort of interested in the credibility and that made me interested in the idea of why people sometimes don't trust the news and what you see if you read my research is a long string of, you know, 20 years of thinking about this, not every minute, not all the time, not when I am, you know, playing with my kids, or on a date, or rowing across the lake, but thinking about other time, sometimes in the middle of the night when I wake up, a few times… So the more you think about something, the more these questions become clear. So, you know, you can…

So here's an example. The first third-person effect research, a project that I did while still in Stanford (Cohen, Mutz, Price & Gunther, 1988) and… You know, when read Davison's article about perceived influence on others, and you started to design a project, and I was thinking to myself, what do we mean by others? When you first read Davison's article, you don't really think about that. He doesn't talk about that very much. But when you started designing your own project, that's actually the third point… not just… The second point is just spending a long time to think about the research idea.

The third point is actually designing a study. Because when you start to design a study, when you start to think about how I'm gonna do this, sometimes you think of questions that turn out to be important questions. So, when we designed that study, we asked about influence on self and influence on others. But when we thought about the others, we said to ourselves, hey wait, do we mean other people in your same class, or do we mean other people in the whole university, or do we mean other people in California, or just everybody, other people in general? So we got the idea of social distance. And social distance corollary kind of grew out of that, that having to think about how to ask the question, made the part of the whole idea much more clear and it became interesting because the more social distance, the more people see an effect, a bigger effect.

And there is actually some theory about how people feel, how people think about more distant, other people. You know, I forget what's her name, but is a women who shows some evidence of this in psychology. She published some stuff about how we tend to think about other people in very generic terms, not as individuals with particular characteristics, but just generic human beings, and we tend to think of them as... The less we think about particular characteristics, the more we think they are vulnerable, and persuasible, and not gonna be resistant to influences, stuff like that. So anyway, and so…But just spending a long time thinking about something, not expecting to have everything become clear in a…as soon as you start to think about it. The more…the more things become…You know.

Another example is when, after I've done a few third-person effect experiments, I started to say to myself, hey wait, is this real thing or is it just because I'm asking the question or the order of the questions. Is that just because we were asking about influence on you and then influence on other people? So I didn't think of that for a few years. But then I did, and it was easy to design a questionnaire to test that order effect problem and it didn't turn out to be a problem and that was a good contribution, I think.

SC: **The four things you mentioned here are all about where you get the ideas, but what about the part that I have an idea, but I don't know whether it's good enough to pursue?**

AG: Ok. I do have an answer for that. I'm not sure if it's a big help. But most of the time, when I have an idea, at first I thought it was a small idea. Sometimes I even thought (it was) so small that not worth paying attention to. But then as I thought about it more, it became… I began to see why actually this would be important. Like when I thought third-person effect, why don't we just ask about perceived influence on others? At first I thought, one, that's so obvious, and two, it's just, you know, it's not such a big deal. So I would say, you don't know always if it's a good idea, but if you have any idea, it's worth following that idea, and see if it gets to be a bigger idea.

And maybe sometimes you decide to give it up. It's kind of like you go on some dates, how do you know if you have met a good person, somebody you're gonna like. The only way to know is to keep…spend some more time with that idea, go out and eat with that idea, go to the movies with that idea, you know, go for some walks with that idea, and either that idea gets to be better and starts to look attractive and more interesting, and you think, yeah yeah, this is actually worth pursuing. Or you dump the idea, like a bad date.

Selected Works by Albert C. GUNTHER

Please refer to the end of the Chinese version of the dialogue for Albert C. Gunther's selected works.