

## **Carson B Wagner**

Retired Professor, Mass Communication (Media Effects)  
and Director, ViDS Effects Laboratory

### **Biography**

**EDUCATION:** Ph.D., Communication (emphasis in Mass Communication and Social Psychology), University of Colorado at Boulder (USA), 2002; M.A., Media Studies, Pennsylvania State University (USA), 1998; B.A., Integrative Arts, Pennsylvania State University (USA), 1994 (emphasis in Digital Media and Popular Culture).

Dr. Wagner first served as a faculty member in the Advertising Dept. at the University of Texas at Austin, before moving to the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, from where he retired, in May, 2017. He is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa and Kappa Tau Alpha as well as having been active, during his career, in the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), the American Academy of Advertising, and the Society for Consumer Psychology. He was Head of AEJMC's Graduate Education Interest Group (recently renamed Graduate Student Interest Group; GSIG), chairing its 2000 Mid-year Research Conference in Boulder, CO, as well as on the executive committee of Internships and Careers and the AEJMC Advertising Division's Teaching Awards committee. AEJMC's GSIG awards the "Carson B Wagner Scholar-to-Scholar Award" yearly to the judged top such presentation at the AEJMC Annual Convention.

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:** Dr. Wagner has taught Strategic Communication Principles (undergraduate level), Mass Communication Theory (graduate level), Advanced Research (graduate level), Advertising Research (graduate and undergraduate levels), Consumer Behavior (graduate level), and Media Effects (graduate level).

Carson has often served as a consultant for various advertising and branding agencies, including J. Walter Thompson, Olgilvy & Mather, Brand Synchronicity, DDB Worldwide, and the Sundt Memorial Foundation, among others. He has worked in and with the advertising industry at various levels for nearly 30 years.

In Summer 2008, Dr. Wagner established the ViDS Lab (Veridical information Detection Systems), a dedicated research facility located in the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism, with a focus on new technologies in media presentations and effects measurements. A variety of state-of-the-art devices, including digital response latency and psychophysiological measures, as well as with an array of media stimulus presentation systems, from HDTV and desktop computers, to mobile media, and video game consoles.

In Fall 2006, he founded the E.W. Scripps Participant Pool, a research resource that has generated nearly 800 observations per term for E.W. Scripps faculty and students.

**RESEARCH INTERESTS:** Dr. Wagner's research focuses on passive cognitive processing in persuasion and decision-making. His research into anti-drug ads' sub-conscious effects suggests that the widely-used practice of creating attention-grabbing commercials, such as those that link terrorism to drug use, may be ill-advised as ads that "come in under the radar" do better in modifying implicit attitudes towards drugs. This line of research has won various awards and grants, including AEJMC's Communication Theory and Methodology Top Paper award and grant monies from the tobacco industry's settlement with the state of Colorado. A collection of studies appears in the *American Journal of Media Psychology*. Wagner's most recent publication, on which he is the second author, along with his former mentee and lead author, Dr. Chen Lou (Nanyang Technical University, Singapore) and former E.W. Scripps Professor, Hong Cheng (Virginia Commonwealth University, USA), entitled, "Press Nationalism Emerges in Political Disaster Reporting," was published in the Spring, 2016 issue of the *Newspaper Research Journal*.

His master's thesis, which demonstrated the curiosity-arousing effects of anti-drug ads, has been widely publicized in web and wire articles, magazines, radio shows, and textbooks, and it was subpoenaed for the first Congressional review of Office of National Drug Control Policy campaign spending in 1999. He also served as consultant to Ogilvy & Mather in their review of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, in 2003, and his collective work on the subject of anti-drug ads has been featured in *Popular Science* magazine, NPR's "All Things Considered," and *The Washington Post*, among a number of other widely-consumed media

outlets.

Another of Dr. Wagner's lines of inquiry surrounds the sub-conscious effects of product placements. The initial study, which won Top Research Paper in AEJMC's Advertising division, was the first to demonstrate that placements can persuade audiences. Further research has indicated that cultural identification, among other individual differences, can modify a placement's effects.

In collaboration with Caroline Johnson of Starcom USA, he published research in 2011 on the subconscious effects of music in advertising for the American Academy of Advertising. An initial study suggests that although people may report ad "wear-out," they can still be positively affected by ads at a subconscious level. Follow-up research suggests we pay more attention to the concept of "wear-in" in advertising.

Across numerous research studies that Carson has (co-)authored, presented, and/or published, he has been working with Megan Kent, recent Global Business Director at JWT/NYC and current author and consultant, on a book, tentatively entitled "Synchronized Branding and Constructed Intuition: Message Consistency and the Subconscious in Developing and Maintaining Consumer Relationships."

Prof. Wagner's most recent research presentations include those about his work with E.W. Scripps School master's students, Jerrod Clark (current Ph.D. student, Advertising, Public Relations, & Retailing Dept., Michigan State University, USA) on which Carson was lead author, as well as Xiyuan "Michelle" Liu (current Ph.D. student, Dept. of Communication, University of Illinois, Chicago, USA). The first details how sports sponsorships viewed, when one's favorite team wins, is significantly more positive than not viewing, and, in turn, more positive than when one's team loses. Therefore, the opposite is also the case, suggesting we subconsciously attach attitudes toward our teams' performance to sponsorships' presence during sports events. The second, derived from Ms. Liu's thesis work, demonstrates that processing diverse portrayals of homosexual TV characters significantly lowers subconscious stereotyping and prejudice, as a function of associative network growth and its connected associative interference, in inferring stereotypical characteristics, toward such oft-stigmatized members of society. The work won the year's Top Paper Award at the AEJMC's Mass Communication &

Society Division, at the Midwinter Conference, the forum at which both pieces were presented.

Dr. Wagner continues his relationship with the Graduate Student Interest Group, and was last discussant for its Top Papers Panel—at which the Guido H. Stempel III Top Paper Award is annually presented—in 2016, his seventh straight year to be honored with that invitation from GSIG members, for the AEJMC Annual Convention.

Makayla Moore from the University of Arizona won GSIG's Sixth Annual Carson B Wagner Scholar-to-Scholar Award, at the 100th AEJMC Annual Convention, August, 2017, in Chicago IL.