Framing and Strategic Messaging

Jeff Niederdeppe, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Communication
Cornell University
jdn56@cornell.edu
Four Points I Will Make in My Remarks

1. Health communication and health promotion often emphasize individual behavior; this is limiting.

2. There is emerging theory and research on effective communication to promote evidence-based health policies.

3. Inoculation and narratives are evidence-based message strategies to re-frame health issues toward collective (policy-oriented) solutions...

4. But neither of these are a panacea.
Health Communication and Health Promotion Often Emphasize Individual Behavior
Determinants of Human Health

- Health Behaviors: 30%
- Clinical Care: 10%
- Social & Economic Factors: 40%
- Physical Environment: 10%
- Genes & Biology: 10%
- Genetics: 30%
- Individual Behavior: 40%
- Health and Well-Being: 40%
- Health Care: 10%
- Social and Environmental Factors: 20%
Health Behaviors and Health Care are Heavily Influenced by Social and Policy Context
Emphasis of Health Communication / Promotion

Figure 2. Integrated Behavioral Model

- Feelings about behavior
- Behavioral beliefs
- Normative beliefs – Others’ expectations
- Normative beliefs – Others’ behavior
- Control beliefs
- Efficacy beliefs
- Experiential attitude
- Attitude
- Instrumental attitude
- Injunctive norm
- Perceived Norm
- Descriptive norm
- Perceived control
- Personal Agency
- Self-efficacy
- Knowledge and skills to perform the behavior
- Salience of the Behavior
- Environmental Constraints
- Habit
- Intention or Decision to Perform the Behavior
Health Campaign Effects Can Be Small and Short-Lived

% Change in Sales of High Trans Fat Products Associated with 1-Unit Change in Media Coverage of the Harms of Trans Fats

-16% -12% -8% -4% 0% 4%

Buttered Popcorn (6g)
Crisco (2006 only, 4g)
Buttered Biscuits (3g)
Stick Margarine (2.5g)
Crescent Rolls (1.5g)

There is Emerging Theory and Research on Effective Communication to Promote Evidence-Based Health Policy

Public Opinion (move the opposition)

Public Will (mobilize issue publics)

Policymaker Action

Policies To Create Healthy Environments

Healthy (Economic, Physical, Marketing) Environments to Promote Health and Healthy Behavior
Also... There Is Lots of Competition
These Industries…

- Oppose evidence-based policies
- Outspend advocates by a huge margin
- Emphasize:
  - Threat to individual freedom/choice
  - Harms of big government
  - Benefits of self-regulation
  - Uncertainty in relevant science

Soda Industry Spending Against Public Health Tops $100 Million

*Spending Since 2009 Targets Taxes, Warning Label Measures*

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Related Links

Read the report here
These industries (and other factors) have shaped public opinion about factors that shape health

There are Evidence-Based Message Strategies to Re-Frame Population Health Issues…

But None of These are a Panacea
Inoculation Strategies
Inoculation Theory

• Medical analogy

• Two main message components:
  
  • Forewarning
    • “These guys are going to try to persuade you; they are not credible because X, Y & Z”

  • Refutational preemption
    • “Here’s why they are wrong”
Soda companies will try to convince you that a tax on sugary drinks is arbitrary because it does not affect foods like donuts, cookies, and candy bars. They will say that they are an unacceptable intrusion of government into people’s personal choices. They will call them “food taxes” to try to confuse people.

But sugary drinks are not food – they have no nutritional value. In fact, research suggests that sugary drinks are the single largest driver of obesity in the United States. Nobody is telling anyone what to drink. But, by adding a few pennies to the price of a soda, many people will choose differently.
Effects Differed by Political Ideology

Inoculation can work as a pre-emptive strategy
Less successful if there is prior exposure
Narratives of Policy Success

Personal Stories
Narrative Theory

- Concrete form of information, easy to process
- Bread and butter of advocates and news media
- Narratives work (in part, sometimes) by reducing counterarguing of advocacy messages
- Narrative effects can increase over time
Key Ingredients of Successful Narratives

1. Emphasize social factors / causes, but...
   - DO NOT ignore individual actions
   - AVOID incidental details that derail the train

2. Scale up
   - “XXX is not alone – others face this problem”
   - Maps conveying the scope of the problem
   - Community-level stories

3. Clearly demonstrate HOW the policy will help the character / community
Narrative Example – Marketing Restrictions

- **Character:** Cynthia, mother of two, struggles with:
  - Her daughter’s weight problem (soda),
  - Her daughter’s experimentation with smoking (cigarettes)
  - Her own struggles with addiction (Rx pain meds).

- **Conflict and Resolution**
  - The story described how industry marketing influenced her or her daughter’s behaviors,
  - Described her efforts to offset these marketing practices,
  - Placed struggles in a broader context (“many parents face similar challenges”), and
  - Showed how policy change would address these issues.
Condition Effects on Support for Message-Targeted Health Policies Over Time

Condition Effects on Support for Message-Targeted Health Policies Over Time

Support for Targeted Policies

Closing Thoughts

- Need much more emphasis in theory and research on effective health communication about social/community factors and policy solutions.

- **Inoculation** and **narrative** strategies can help to re-frame these issues and move audiences toward support for collective, community-level solutions.

- These strategies can backfire if done carelessly.
When Does Public Opinion Matter?
When Does Public Opinion Matter?

• In direct democracy states
But the Policy Process is Often Complex...

When Does Public Opinion Matter?

• In direct democracy states

• To move toward a tipping point?
Social Change Can Happen Quickly

Tracking the Pace of Social Change
Number of states that have removed a ban, by year
(Prohibition shows the number of states that enacted)

- Interracial marriage
- Prohibition
- Women’s suffrage
- Abortion
- Same-sex marriage
- Recreational marijuana

States in U.S.

1920 18th Amendment
1967 Loving v. Virginia
2015 Obergefell v. Hodges

1973 Roe v. Wade
Changes in Public Sentiment can Set the Stage for Changes in Policy

Do you think marriages between same-sex couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?

Note: Trend shown for polls in which same-sex marriage question followed questions on gay/lesbian rights and relations
1996-2005 wording: "Do you think marriages between homosexuals ..."

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Questions? Comments? Thank you!

Contact: jdn56@cornell.edu

For full references and links to papers cited, please visit: niederedeppe.comm.comm.cornell.edu