

# **Effective = Engaging Messages using Strong Appeals**

NHTSA: “Asleep at the Wheel”

Panel 3: Public Awareness, Behavior, & Education

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# What You Already Know about Communication Campaigns

- Must have narrow and well-defined goals
  - Awareness, knowledge, severity & susceptibility, efficacy, behavior change, ...
- Must target specific populations
  - Drivers (professional, public), young males, licensing associations, friends (don't let friends drive sleepy ..), driver's ed, ...

# Perhaps Less Well-known

- Given a well-defined behavior
- Given a target population
- Well-established technique(s) in formative research
  - For discovering & assessing high-payoff beliefs
  - For evaluating message concepts efficiently and reliably
  - **See** Parvanta, Sarah, et al. "Applying quantitative approaches to the formative evaluation of antismoking campaign messages." *Social marketing quarterly*(2013): 1524500413506004.

# Recent Application of Technique

- Design of FDA's "Real Cost" campaign to youth
- Four core issues identified
  - Addiction; loss of control
  - Dangerous chemicals
  - Costs to health, appearance are real costs too
- Messaging to create, reinforce & counter

# Principle #1

- Given goal, given target audience
- Formative research to discover issues to target in messaging

Principle #2:  
Design Effective Messages around  
Issues from Formative

# Effective Messages Require ...

- Strong appeals
- That engage & sustain audience's attention
- But HOW?

## Principle 2a:

Emotion and reason are not at odds

- Appeals can be rational and / or emotional
- Emotional appeals are not irrational
- Rational appeals need not be emotion-free
- Education and persuasion are not enemies

# Strong appeals are ...

- About personal consequences (O'Keefe, CY 2012)
  - Compliance yields desirable outcome to you
  - Non-compliance yields undesirable outcome to you
- Ones emphasizing
  - what is desirable given the facts;
  - NOT what is factual given desirability (Johnson & Smith-McLallen, 2004 )
- Severity & susceptibility (Carpenter, HC, 2010; Carpenter, HCR, 2014; )
- In short, values, personalized

# One example from Realcost Campaign

- Constituents of tobacco – factual
- Constituents – valenced weakly (i.e. slightly emotional)
- Constituents – emotional

# Factual: Tobacco contains 7000 different chemicals and poisons. Here are some:

- Formaldehyde
- Benzene
- Polonium 210
- Chromium
- Arsenic
- Lead
- Cadmium
- Ammonia
- Butane
- Toluene
- Hydrogen cyanide

# Valenced: Tobacco contains 7000 different chemicals and poisons. Here are some:

- Formaldehyde in embalming fluid
- Benzene in gasoline
- Polonium 210 radioactive and toxic
- Chromium used in steel making
- Arsenic in pesticides
- Lead in older paints
- Cadmium in batteries
- Ammonia in household cleaners
- Butane in lighter fluids
- Toluene in paint thinners
- Hydrogen cyanide in chemical weapons

# FDA Youth Smoking Prevention

- [http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/  
CentersOffices/  
OfficeofMedicalProductsandTobacco/  
AbouttheCenterforTobaccoProducts/  
PublicEducationCampaigns/  
TheRealCostCampaign/ucm384433.htm](http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/OfficeofMedicalProductsandTobacco/AbouttheCenterforTobaccoProducts/PublicEducationCampaigns/TheRealCostCampaign/ucm384433.htm)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?  
v=QzBm7R0Im9k&list=UUxg\\_kBtJtScIPreOEjRD  
weQ&index=13](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzBm7R0Im9k&list=UUxg_kBtJtScIPreOEjRDweQ&index=13)

# Principle 2b:

## (Assuming exposure) Engage & Sustain the Audience's Attention

- Exposure is the *sine qua non*
- *Given exposure engage using ...*
  - Dispositions toward personal & interpersonal
    - Narratives & Exemplars
    - Characters; similar ones
  - Activation cues: Visual & audio variation
  - Appetitive / aversive cues

# Issues with Engagement

- Cognitive engagement → activation of mental resources
- Direct the resources
  - To enhance processing of core content
  - Avoid distraction to peripheral content

# Where would I put my Money?

- Given goals, target audience, exposure plan, formative research for key issues, then...
- Strong appeals
- Narratives and exemplars

# What would I be Careful about?

- Strong appeals are not necessarily negative appeals
  - E.g. pride and hope → build esteem, affirm values
- Narratives can distract from core content
- Exemplars of neg consequences can serve as a descriptive norm
  - Esp problem when building awareness of issue