

Up Front

Vital Data

From This Issue

Communication scholars have long recognized that some individuals receive information directly from mass media channels, while others obtain this information indirectly through their discussions with peers. This concept of indirect exposure to a mass media program dates back several decades to the two-step model of information flow. Despite the longstanding acceptance of the concept of indirect exposure, few studies have attempted to measure the extent to which indirect exposure broadens the reach of a mass media program's messages. The first article in this issue of the *Journal of Health Communication* examines the role of interpersonal communication in extending the reach and effectiveness of a family planning radio program in six villages in rural Nepal. Indirect exposure was measured by interviewing all currently married women of reproductive age in six villages in Dang District, Nepal (N = 667) and mapping out the family planning discussion networks among these women. Women who were connected to exposed individuals through their discussion network were considered to be indirectly exposed to the radio program. The study observed that indirect exposure to the radio program was extensive; half of all respondents were indirectly exposed to the program's messages and the overall reach of the program increased from 50–75% when indirect exposure was considered. The results also suggest that community groups may facilitate both direct and indirect exposure to a health-related mass media program. Members of community groups had higher levels of direct exposure to the radio program and more extensive and diverse social networks, allowing them to serve as a conduit for these messages into the wider community. Finally, interpersonal communication appeared to be an effective conduit of the program's messages. While direct exposure to the radio program appeared to influence family planning knowledge, indirect exposure was more strongly associated with contraceptive use. These findings suggest that program evaluations that ignore indirect exposure underestimate the impact of a mass media program on behavior. Boulay, M., Storey J. D., and Sood, S. Indirect Exposure to a Family Planning Mass Media Campaign in Nepal. (p. 379).



In the second article of this issue, Coleman and Thorson examine whether changing the way newspaper stories report crime and violence could induce shifts in readers' perceptions of the problem. With an experiment that manipulated the framing and graphic presentation of newspaper stories on crime and violence, the study discovered that the

The Up Front section is edited by Wendy Meltzer, Managing Editor, *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*.

public health model of reporting that calls for news stories to incorporate information on context, risk factors, and prevention strategies did contribute to readers learning more about the context in which crime and violence occurred. Reporting about crime episodes while also pointing out their pattern of occurrence, and what variables are associated with their occurrence, can produce greater knowledge in readers. Interestingly, putting that information in a separate graphic did not consistently prove stronger than when it was in the text alone. It seems people do pick up the public health information, but do as well when it is in the story itself as when it occurs in a separate location. Additionally, the public health information led to greater endorsement of prevention strategies in addition to punishment. For example, people were more likely in public health context conditions to agree that education and community involvement in prevention programs were more effective in reducing crime and violence than prisons. People who saw the public health information were also more attuned to societal risk factors and causes of crime and violence. The experiments also demonstrated that embedding public health information into stories can change readers' attributions of responsibility. Attitudes become more critical of society's role in crime and violence rather than simply focusing on the individual's role. In fact, readers of public health-enhanced stories tend to place less blame on individuals and more on society. The not-so-good news is that the public-health enhanced stories were evaluated more negatively by readers. Without the feature of "liking" for stories, readers are obviously less likely to read them; without this most basic motivation, any of the positive effects are unlikely. Coleman, R., Thorson, E. *Effects Of News Stories That Put Crime And Violence Into Context: Testing The Public Health Model Of Reporting.* (p. 401).



The third study of this issue used agenda-setting and framing theories to examine HIV/AIDS coverage in five African-American newspapers (*Amsterdam [NY] News*, *Oakland [CA] Press*, *Washington [DC] African-American*, *Atlanta Inquirer*, and *Chicago Citizen*) from 1991–1996, a period during which HIV/AIDS became the leading cause of death of young adult African Americans. Earlier mainstream media focus on a possible African origin of the HIV virus and its associations with homosexuality and intravenous drug use reinforced existing African American concerns about racism, stigmatization and neglect (Burkett, 1995; Chirimuuta and Chirimuuta, 1989; Dalton, 1989; Jones, 1993). Review of the literature indicates that while African Americans may receive their basic information on HIV/AIDS from the mainstream media, they may be less likely to rely on the mainstream framing and more likely to turn to the African American newspaper and periodical press to identify important issues and interpret current events. Agenda setting theory has found that if the media emphasize an issue, the public and policymakers are more likely to see it as an important issue in their community. Framing theory notes that journalists conceptualize or "frame" their stories by selecting aspects of a perceived reality and making those more salient in defining the story issue or problem, which helps determine how the audience remembers and evaluates the issue (Entman, 1993). Reporters have framed the HIV/AIDS issue by seeking out ways in which the story can be told with the conventional news "values": sensation, conflict, mystery, celebrity, deviance, tragedy, and proximity to the reader (Dearing & Rogers, 1992; Klaidman, 1990). This study found that the selected African-American newspapers reframed discussion of HIV/AIDS in striking ways. Although a majority of the 201 articles analyzed framed the story primarily as a health issue, a large proportion also exhibited a critical attitude toward the government and the "AIDS

establishment” about their commitment to saving the lives of minorities. Articles often conveyed the message that fighting HIV/AIDS first requires substantial action regarding the larger contextual issues – economic, political, and social – that cause health inequities. Alternative theories of cause and treatment, such as the possibility that AIDS was created as an extermination plot against African Americans, or that Kemron, the drug endorsed by the Nation of Islam, was the most promising treatment for HIV, generally were discussed as legitimate, even though much evidence exists to refute these theories. These frames reflect distrust and rational concerns rooted in the historical context of American race relations, including the legacy of the Tuskegee study. Increased understanding of the frames presented in the African American press may contribute to the ability of researchers, health practitioners, and health journalists to constructively respond to the concerns of the African American community. Pickle, K., Quinn, S. C., Brown, J. D. *HIV/AIDS Coverage in Black Newspapers, 1991–1996: Implications for Health Communication and Health Education.* (p. 427).



Exposure is often cited as an explanation for the success or failure of public health communication efforts. A lack of validation evidence for exposure measures typically used in evaluation, however, suggests the possibility of either misdirected measurement or incomplete conceptualization of the idea. If whether people engage campaign content on a basic, rudimentary level is what matters when we talk about exposure, a recognition-based task should provide a useful measure of exposure, or of what we might call encoded exposure, that we can validate. Data from two independent sources, namely a national survey and estimates of advertisement purchases, offer such validation. In the fourth article of this issue, as a part of the evaluation for the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (NYADMC), researchers have conducted the National Survey of Parents and Youth (NSPY). From November 1999–December 2000, a multistage cluster sample representing all U.S. youth ages 9- to 18-years old and their parents or caregivers participated in the first two waves of NSPY. Respondents used touch-screen laptop computers and headphones brought into their homes by an interviewer to view each question (or listen to a prerecorded reading of the question) and to respond. Implementation of the campaign itself offered a second source of data. From September 1999–December 2000, campaign organizations placed advertisements in national network, cable, and in-school television programming, as well as in local television programming in over 100 U.S. metropolitan areas. Data detailing such advertisement purchases, in the form of gross rating points, offered an estimate of the achieved prevalence of each NYADMC campaign advertisement. Two different analyses then suggested the usefulness of the NSPY encoded exposure measure. First, both youth and their parents were much more likely to recognize actual campaign advertisements presented in NSPY than to claim they recognized bogus advertisements inserted in NSPY for testing purposes. Second, gross rating points for an advertisement correlated strikingly with average encoded exposure for that advertisement among both youth ($r = 0.82$) and parents ($r = 0.53$). These results suggest that recognition-based measures can be a fruitful tool for tapping a population’s encoded exposure levels with reference to a media campaign. The results also remind us that widespread exposure requires ample air time (or space in print or on the Internet), an idea that highlights the limits of relying on donated time and space alone. Southwell, B. G., Barmada, C., Hornik, R. C., Maklan, D. M. *Can We Measure Encoded Exposure? Validation Evidence From a National Campaign.* (p. 445).



In the final article of this issue, the authors study the impact of the personality trait “emotional stability” and attitude toward the brand on Coca-Cola consumption decisions during the Coca-Cola crisis of June 1999 in Belgium. In absence of convincing biological evidence of health complaints, the crisis was diagnosed as an outbreak of mass sociogenic illness. The research tests for associations between the personality trait emotional stability, attitude toward the brand, and self-reported behavior. Cross-sectional data have been collected from a sample of Coca-Cola drinkers aged 19–22 years. The data have been analyzed through the specification and estimation of a structural equation model and ANOVA. The authors find a direct and positive effect of attitude toward the brand on the behavioral response, i.e. restoration of Coca-Cola consumption after the crisis. Trust and consumption are faster reestablished with consumers who have a more positive attitude toward the brand. Reversibly, the authors do not find a direct effect of emotional stability on behavior. However, indirect effects of personality mediated by attitude were discovered. Furthermore, emotional stability is found to correlate negatively with importance attached to information during the crisis. Evidence is shown that respondents with lower emotional stability require more information during crisis periods, and that they also attach higher importance to the provided information. Based on their findings, the authors argue that fast and transparent communication with specific attention to lower emotional stability groups is needed in crisis situations. Immediate information related to the crisis background, details and actions undertaken should be followed by scientifically based information aiming at consumer re-assurance. The authors finally recommend the inclusion of personality and attitude measurements in future health and food safety studies. Verbeke, W., Van Kenhove, P. Impact Of Emotional Stability And Attitude On Consumption Decisions Under Risk: The Coca-Cola Crisis In Belgium. (p. 455).

Upcoming Conferences and Events

The 88th Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association will be held November 21–24, 2002 in the New Orleans Marriott and the Sheraton New Orleans. The theme for the 2002 convention is Communication in Action. The theme of Communication in Action allows the Association to stay the course with recent convention themes. Reflection on the past themes where speakers urged participants to “color outside the lines,” illustrated how we are an engaged discipline, urged a radical(izing) of our roots, and created a readiness to act. Organizers hope that the NCA 2002 Convention will provide an opportunity to engage in thoughtful, meaningful, and empathic action. For more information visit: <http://www.natcom.org/convention/>



The 37th National Immunization Conference, Immunization: A Strong Foundation for Today’s Challenges, will be held March 17–20, 2003 at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers in Chicago, Illinois. The goals of the Conference are to provide information that will help participants; provide comprehensive immunization information for all age groups; explore innovative strategies for developing programs, policy, and research to promote immunization coverage for all age groups; and to explore innovative strategies for developing programs, policy, and research to promote immunization for all ages today for a healthy tomorrow. During three and a half days of plenary sessions and workshops, many topics will be discussed in the areas of science, policy, education, and planning

issues related to immunization in general and vaccine-preventable disease. For more information about the 37th National Immunization Conference, please contact Suzanne Johnson-DeLeon at (404) 639-8225 or via email at NIPNIC@cdc.gov

Internet Sources

Exchange (in partnership with the Communication Initiative & INASP-Health) is undertaking a collaborative “mapping” exercise focusing on the different ways organizations are documenting learning, showing the impact of this learning on their own work in health communication for development, and sharing this learning. Exchange will bring these maps together and make the ongoing results available in a variety of formats (web-based updates, e-mail discussion, short bulletins) to build up and share the emerging picture of lessons learned and good practice. If your organization is interested in joining the mapping exercise, please see the guidelines and return the questionnaire that is available to download at <http://www.healthcomms.org/new.html#Map>



Murray State University has compiled a listing of “Online Communication Courses: Courses Being Offered & Practices of Faculty Who Use New Technologies in Instruction.” The listing, compiled by Stephen Cox, includes information concerning online courses being offered by communication departments, online degree programs, related Internet sites, data on institutional support for online instruction, and advice about online instruction given by faculty who teach these courses at <http://campus.murraystate.edu/academic/faculty/steve.cox/test.htm>

Prescriptions

Boulay, Storey, and Sood examined the role of interpersonal communication and community group membership in extending the reach of a family planning mass media campaign in Nepal. The results of their study suggest that:

- Informal communication networks can have a substantial effect on the overall reach of a mass media program’s messages.
- Community groups can facilitate the diffusion of a mass media program’s messages through these informal networks by promoting conversations between women who have heard the program and women who have not heard the program.
- Evaluations of health-related mass media programs that do not account for indirect exposure to the program’s messages may underestimate the behavioral impact of the programs.

-M. Boulay, Storey, and Sood



Coleman and Thorson studied how the inclusion of contextual information about crime and violence as called for by the public health model of reporting affects readers’

attributions of responsibility. Their recommendations for public health professionals and communication researchers are:

- Researchers should experiment with ways to write stories that include contextual information about crime and violence that makes them more interesting and compelling to readers.
- Longitudinal studies should be conducted to assess the effects of exposure to multiple public health model stories on crime and violence over time.
- Public health professionals should make an effort to collect base-rate data in a uniform manner and make it accessible to journalists.

-R. Coleman and E. Thorson



Pickle, Quinn, and Brown examined AIDS coverage in selected African American newspapers through a content analysis employing agenda setting and framing theory. This research suggests the following:

- African American newspapers provide a critical interpretation of AIDS, the “AIDS establishment,” and the impact of both on African American communities.
- Articles conveyed the message that AIDS prevention can only be successful when health programs also address the social, political and economic factors which contribute to the spread of AIDS in minority communities.
- Researchers, health practitioners, and health journalists must develop the knowledge and skills required to constructively respond to the concerns and distrust reflected in these newspaper accounts.

-K. Pickle, S. Quinn, and J. Brown



Southwell, Barmada, Hornik, and Maklan have investigated media campaign exposure in a national sample of U.S. adolescents and their parents. Their work suggests the following ideas:

- Recognition-based measures appear to offer simple, valid indicators of past exposure that campaign researchers should employ whenever possible.
- Portable computers and emerging digital technologies appear to hold great promise for media campaign evaluation, allowing evaluators both to present multimedia content to respondents and to record responses with the same program.
- Achieving exposure in the U.S. is not cheap, as there generally appears to be a positive and linear relationship between the obtained media prevalence of campaign advertisements and the degree to which respondents remember being exposed to them.

-B. G. Southwell, C. Barmada, R. C. Hornik, and D. M. Maklan



Verbeke and Van Kenhove studied the impact of the personality trait “emotional stability” and attitude toward the brand on Coca-Cola consumption decisions during the Coca-Cola crisis of June 1999 in Belgium. Their recommendations for risk communication and future research related to food-borne health scares are the following:

- Consumers with lower emotional stability require specific attention in communication. They request larger amounts of information and attach more importance to the information they receive compared to consumers with high emotional stability.
- Crisis communication with the public should start immediately after the occurrence of a food safety incident because information vacuums catalyze the transition from a small-scale incident into a large-scale scare.
- The initial focus of risk communication should be on providing background information, incident details, and actions being undertaken. Communication aiming at consumer reassurance should follow in a next phase after scientific investigation of the events.
- Food safety and health risk researchers and practitioners need to consider the impact of consumer personality and attitude, as well as to include consumer behavior scientists in their multidisciplinary research and communication teams.

-W. Verbeke and P. Van Kenhove

If you would like to suggest materials for this section, please send your suggestions with your name, e-mail address, fax and phone numbers to:

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