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Editor's Introduction: Theoretical Approaches to Communication Campaigns

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Abstract
The articles published in this symposium make contributions to an increased understanding of the theoretical bases for communication campaigns. They add to a growing literature that aims to move communication campaigns from a formulaic craft to a theory-driven, but practical, endeavor (Hornik, 2002a; Rice & Atkin, 2001; Zaller, 1992).

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The articles published in this symposium make contributions to an increased understanding of the theoretical bases for communication campaigns. They add to a growing literature that aims to move communication campaigns from a formulaic craft to a theory-driven, but practical, endeavor (Hornik, 2002a; Rice & Atkin, 2001; Zaller, 1992).

Communication campaigns have long been accepted as a means for forming attitudes, increasing knowledge, and achieving social and behavioral change. Despite the almost formulaic treatment of the design and execution of communication campaigns (Maibach & Parrott, 1995), researchers in politics (Holbrook, 1996), health (Hornik, 2002b), development (Thomas, 1994), and other arenas have questioned the efficacy of even well-designed campaigns. Some are beginning to weigh seriously the conditions under which campaigns might produce consequences opposite to those intended (Werch & Owen, 2002). At the same time, communication campaigns can be effective (Snyder & Hamilton, 2002) even with behaviors that are difficult to modify, such as cigarette smoking (Worden, Flynn, et al., 1988) and drug use (Palmgreen, Donohew, Lorch, Hoyle, & Stephenson, 2001).

Understanding the mechanisms that activate campaign effects and, perhaps more importantly for the discipline of communication, the theoretical bases for the creation of effective messages to inform, persuade, and motivate audiences is the sine qua non of the design of effective campaigns.

The papers in this symposium take rather different approaches to the theoretical foundations of communication campaigns. Fishbein and Yzer work through the implications of the integrated theory of behavior change to explore the general content of messages that campaign designers need to consider. This is an important step. Some theories of persuasion, such as the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), describe the conditions under which high argument quality is essential. However, the theory is mute about the domain (or topics) of the arguments. Fishbein and Yzer offer useful guidance to campaign designers concerning the

beliefs that are especially relevant to changing a targeted intention or behavior.

Rimal and Real focus specifically on the social normative component of behavioral intention, exploring the conceptual bases of social norms that might work alone or in concert to account for alcohol consumption. Social norms are a potentially powerful but complex arena involving not only actual levels of behavior by those in the target person's social network, but also perception of the prevalence of the behavior. These objective aspects of normative force (that is, prevalence) are balanced by perceived approval and disapproval by significant others and motivation to comply with others' attitudes. Rimal and Real explore these components' ability to predict alcohol consumption in an empirical test targeting college-aged drinkers.

Hornik and Yanovitzky raise a somewhat different set of theoretical concerns. Many communication campaigns are subjected to careful evaluation to determine their effects on knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. In order to build theory from a strong empirical base, we must know which campaigns are effective and which are ineffective. Hornik and Yanovitzky argue that evaluations of campaigns can themselves fail to detect success if the evaluation investigates an incomplete set of paths through which a communication campaign might exert its influence. In effect, a successful and accurate campaign evaluation requires a well-specified theory of the campaign's routes to influence.

Morris offers readers a metatheoretical perspective on communication campaigns, especially those geared toward developing regions of the globe. She compares campaigns aimed at participation and empowerment to those aimed at diffusion of information and behavior change. In some cases, the former are an inadvertent by-product of the latter class of campaigns. Morris invites campaign evaluators (and designers) to think in terms of both classes of outcomes even if one or the other is primary at the initial stages of design. Morris's perspective on the problem of campaign goals can be seen as an expansion of Hornik and Yanovitzky's call for a theory of the campaign's influence and a broadening of the scope of the more precise (but limiting) perspectives of behavior change and social normative theories.

The articles in this symposium make significant steps toward building the theoretical substructure for communication campaigns. Large gaps remain, however. Although theories such as the integrated model of behavior change can tell us what general topics a campaign should pursue, it tells us little about how to build persuasive messages about those topics. Although the field of communication has developed some theories of message design to affect behavior and attitude change (Donohew, Lorch, & Palmgreen, 1998; Zillman & Brosius, 2000), investing addi-

tional resources will help to secure a central place for communication theory in the design of campaigns, their evaluation, and the creation of messages carrying the campaign.

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