

Messaging and Methods for Behavioral Change Media Campaigns: What Makes Effective Anti-Violence Media?

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Introduction

The use of media to change social behaviors is a common practice both internationally and nationally. Not unlike the constant bombardment of advertising from fast-food companies or the local car dealership, media campaigns should come from many directions and with a persistent and consistent message (Wakeman, Loken, & Hornik, 2010). Mass media outlets have made disseminating this information an easier task. Mass media such as newspapers, television, radio, the internet, and printed materials such as billboards, posters, magazines, and flyers allow messages to be viewed by many people covering vast regions. In general, some media campaigns have been shown to decrease risky health behaviors such as tobacco and illicit drug use, behaviors that contribute to heart disease and other terminal illnesses, and violence. Furthermore, media campaigns have also been shown to prevent negative changes in behavior by targeting audiences that are at risk of said behavioral change, such as with youth smoking (Wakeman et al, 2010).

In this paper, we explore media campaigns that have aimed to reduce risky health behaviors. We focus specifically on campaigns around anti-violence messaging, but also explore other forms of social norm changing media campaigns. We relate the concepts and practices of behavioral health media campaigns to potential messaging around urban street violence in order to begin to understand what makes media campaigns effective. This is the first in a series of papers that will discuss what a successful media campaign around the issue of street violence might look like in Rochester.

Media and Messaging Overview

It may seem simple to construct messages we want to convey about violence reduction, but there are many different types of violence to consider. Youth violence is among the biggest concerns because homicide is among the top causes of death among those 16-22 years of age (Smith & Cooper, 2013). When discussing youth violence, there are several topics that need addressing. Direct intervention with high risk individuals is a highly visible subject and one in need of dire attention; we must also consider informing parents, as well as youth, about child development strategies, domestic violence concerns, drug use and drug trafficking, and conflict resolution.

The introduction of the internet and cellular telephones offers additional outlets for mass media exposure of anti-violence messages. However, viewing information online or on a device still requires the user to choose to view or ignore an incoming message (Wakeman et al. 2010). The use of mass media, which includes television, radio, internet, and printed materials, is still the best way to spread a message for short-term or long-term campaigns. These types of media campaigns keep the message current, reach the largest audiences, and cost little per audience member (Wakeman et al. 2010).

There are two ways to consume media messages. The first is through a direct approach. This approach targets an individual or group and directly produces and distributes this media to that individual or group. This approach aims to affect the target group's decision-making processes in the hopes of that group changing a behavior (Wakeman et al. 2010). The second media approach is an indirect approach. The use of social programs and constant indirect blanketing of media can bring topics of concern into

everyday discussions and can permeate social networks, raising awareness among affected communities as well as groups ignorant to community concerns.

The indirect approach is the foundation for direct media campaigns, as it provides the baseline knowledge of the campaign's cause and is available as a source of information to those not impacted by direct media (Wakeman et al. 2010). For example, if a community distributes a pamphlet on gun violence, it may only affect those who have viewed it. Yet indirect campaigns provide fundamental information that reflects the campaigns goals. Indirect tactics work as a safety net providing relevant information to the target groups at all times. Outreach and community social programs are examples of indirect approaches.

Mass media can also have negative effects. First, it is important to note that many, if not most, media messages are made by those who control the media. This consists of corporations, wealthy individuals, and governments (Anti.Violence, 2012). As a result, many other people's views are not taken into consideration when constructing media campaigns.

Media literacy is important when trying to decipher a message, but it is also very important when creating a message. The Media Literacy Project produced a report informing consumers on media tactics to engage consumers and/or spread personal views. The report asks the viewer/consumer to be aware of who is making the message, what the message is saying, what the message asks of the viewer/consumer, to recognize bias, to evaluate the data, and finally, to get involved (Introduction to Media Literacy). Their report goes on to illustrate roughly forty persuasion techniques, from basic to advanced, and encompasses a variety of tactics including bribery and symbolism. These are marketing techniques employed by the largest sales organizations in the world (Introduction to Media

Literacy). It is their successful employment of these techniques that can provide powerful insight to media campaigns that hope to communicate with a “tough audience.”

Even with unlimited resources and the best of intentions, some media campaigns do fail. A major part of media campaigns aimed at changing behavior is to identify negative social norms and replace them with positive norms. With regards to anti-violence campaigns, this often focuses on masculinity. In the United States, 85% of violent crimes are committed by men (Tough Guise, 2006).

It is difficult to change norms that have been in place for a long time. Nonetheless, there are attributes that successful anti-violence media campaigns share. First, stay persistent (Promote Anti-violence). The constant bombardment of advertising from the world’s largest corporations (as with McDonald’s) shows not only the importance of a constant message and presence, but it also illustrates the time and cost corporations are willing to invest in that constant messaging and presence. The same should be true for anti-violence campaigns. If the message is not persistent and consistent, the audience may be ignorant of their options for dealing with violence or conflicts. Next, it is important to inform children of the media messages, such as the negative results of violence. Children as young as eight years old can develop permanent violent tendencies. Youth development is an important factor in cultivating non-violence (Promote Anti-violence).

A persistent message is important, but equally important is where the messages come from. The message of non-violence needs to come from all available media sources. Constant bombardment of the message can be impactful. Having the most possible resources when disseminating a media message ensures communicating to the largest possible population (Promote Anti-violence). What also must be considered is the ability of

the audience to actually absorb the information. Dealing with a portion of the population that is illiterate poses a problem in the creation of media materials. Creating strong imagery that communicates universally is vital. Color, sound, and motion are all important elements for media production. Visually, media must be able to cross cultural and class boundaries (Promote Anti-violence). However, a media campaign is only one element of an anti-violence campaign. The use of a powerful media campaign in conjunction with outreach and social programs yield the best results (Promote Anti-violence). Finally, monitoring the results of the media campaign is important. When working to bring innovation to a campaign, it is easy to abandon the question of whether the practices actually work.

Anti-violence media campaigns use several different approaches. The message of curtailing violence is applicable to many environments. School violence, inner city violence, and domestic violence are all areas of concern but do not necessarily all share the same causes nor require the same approach. The message of stopping gun violence and violent crimes in general is obvious. What is less obvious is the need to address related but less direct topics such as child development, conflict resolution, substance abuse, and defensive masculinity.

Printed Media

When disseminating information, printed material are still a relatively inexpensive way to reach the masses. Pamphlets, posters, billboards, t-shirts, and news articles are all ways to spread the message of non-violence. Maybe one of the oldest and most recognizable images is of McGruff the Crime Dog. This image is at the forefront of the National Crime Prevention Council's (NCPC) media campaign for crime deterrence.



<http://www.npc.org/>



If you always store your firearm safely, no curious kids will put their fingers on it. And no gun will accidentally fire. Which means no screams of pain will be heard. And no 911 calls will be made. And no scars will be left. Please, always remember to store your firearm safely.

LOCK IT UP

© 2011 National Crime Prevention Council. All rights reserved.



The NCPC has also released printed media addressing the topic of safe gun storage to reduce accidental child gun fatalities, as shown above, with posters depicting children playing with real firearms. The images are black and white with focus on the firearm and the child's playful and casual disposition to handling a weapon (Safe Firearm, 2014). The text is white and red for a dramatic contrast and the layout is poignant and serious.

Other anti-violence organizations that have gained ground over the past decade also use and produce printed media campaigns. CeaseFire is a Chicago-based anti-violence program founded in 2000 (Skogan, Hartnett, Bump, & Dubois, 2009). In particular, the Roseland, Illinois division of CeaseFire has released media aimed at reducing gun violence by attempting to change negative social norms. "Guns Don't Mean Respect" and "S.T.O.P.S.H.O.O.T.I.N.G.", as seen on the following page, are both examples of printed materials designed to change an individuals' thought processes when dealing with potentially violent scenarios (I'm Just Saying, 2014).

Anti.Violence.Project is a student-based organization from the University of Victoria in Victoria, Canada. They are devoted, primarily, to reducing violence towards women, homosexuals, and transgendered individuals (Anti.Violence, 2012). They have created a media campaign to heighten awareness of date rape and violence towards women. Examples can be seen in their "Consent" campaign (Anti.Violence, 2012).

Students Against Violence Everywhere, or S.A.V.E., is another student organization devoted to violence reduction and deterrence. Unlike the other groups mentioned above, S.A.V.E. produces and sells a variety of printed materials on their website (S.A.V.E., 2012). Personal apparel, promotional items, publications, and membership materials are all available via S.A.V.E.'s website (S.A.V.E., 2012). Though these printed forms of media do

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NEGATIVITY

CEASE FIRE
ROSELAND

GUNS DON'T

"I will be attending college next year and I will be a graduate"

<http://www.roselandceasefire.com/#i'm-just-sayin>

sex
with
respect.

@AVP

anti-violence project
your on-campus
sexual assault centre
uvss.uvic.ca/avp

strength
is not for
hurting.

@AVP

anti-violence project
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Get Consent!

@AVP Your On-Campus Sexual Assault Centre
516 8227 8-7, 10:00-5:00, 250-472-4388
uvss.uvic.ca or www.anti-violenceproject.org

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http://media-literacy-project.org/sites/default/files/resources/Intro_to_Media_Literacy.pdf

not reach as large an audience as the television or radio, they do reach large groups of people in local communities such as outreach workers, activists, and the target audience. They serve to increase the visibility of the campaign and are a necessary support element to other media efforts.

Another form of printed media has emerged in the effort to spread the anti-violence message. The use of billboards to convey information is being employed in Rochester, NY and many other cities across the country. Twelve billboards in the Rochester area deliver the “Choose Peace” message. These billboards are highly visible, image driven, public service announcements focused on alternatives to violence and diffusing violent situations in the community (Lowell, 2006). The billboard space was donated by Lamar Outdoor Advertising at a cost of roughly \$10,000 per month in revenue (Lowell, 2006). West Louisville, KY is also using a billboard campaign to promote the message of anti-violence. Twenty billboards spreading the “Team UP” message are going up in the Western District of Louisville, where most of the city’s shootings take place (Bowden, 2013). The billboards display a consistent and simple message of alternatives to violence. They are supported by rapper Master P, whose name appears on the billboards (Bowden, 2013). In theory, the endorsement of hip-hop and R&B artists lends credibility to the message of non-violence.

A youth group named Urban Peace Movement based in Oakland, CA conveys the message of “Stop the killing, Start the healing” in response to recent homicides in Oakland’s inner city (Stelzer, 2012). Boston, MA also uses billboards to spread the anti-gun violence message. A local activist organization in Boston called “Stop the Gun Violence” is at the center of billboard redesign (Dooling, 2013). The new billboard will have a digital window



<http://woodnews.org/post/billboards-carry-rochester-anti-violence-message>



<http://www.wbur.org/2013/12/14/new-anti-gun-billboard>



<http://www.wlky.com/news/local-news/louisville-news/antiviolence-billboards-go-up-in-west-louisville/22260274#!6oDFR>

representing the tally of people killed by firearms in a 24 hour period. The tally will increase by 83 each day. This is an estimate of the total number of American killed by firearms daily (Dooling, 2013).

The use of billboards to present information is not new. It now has a history of use among activist and outreach groups, especially those with an anti-violence message. They are highly visible reminders, through imagery and simple phrases, that provide a consistent and easily discernible message.

Conventional Mass Media Campaigns

Conventional forms of mass media such as television and radio have the capability of reaching millions of people. Public service announcements (PSAs) are commonly used as a form of mass media when spreading a message, as we have seen a variety of examples addressing many topics over the years. Some of the earliest messages come from the Ad Council. The Ad Council has been releasing public service announcements since the early 1940s (The Classics, 2013). Some familiar topics include wildfire prevention, polio vaccination, Red Cross promotions, pollution awareness, the United Negro College Fund, drunk driving, safety belt awareness, AIDS awareness, and domestic violence (The Classics, 2013). Today, the Ad Council is still releasing public service announcements, many of which have remained consistent with past topics. Some more contemporary public service announcements address topics like bullying prevention, safe gun storage, and natural disaster relief (The Classics, 2013).



<http://www.adcouncil.org/Our-Work/The-Classics>



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_Say_No

The “Say No to Drugs” campaign was an unforgettable anti-drug media campaign started in 1987 (Just Say No, 2014). This campaign was spearheaded by first lady Nancy Reagan in the late 1980s. The most memorable imagery was that of an egg being fried in a skillet. This was supposed to be an illustration of what happened to your brain as a result of drug use (Just Say No, 2014). In 1997, a follow up PSA was released to raise awareness on the use of heroin. The commercial included the familiar egg and skillet but with the more dramatic twist of throwing the pan down and splattering the egg about the room (Just Say, 2014). This government-funded program to raise drug awareness and reduce drug use came under some criticism for its cost and failure to address social issues such as unemployment and welfare (Just Say No, 2014). In the end, the results of the campaign were considered inconclusive. Though there was a significant drop in drug use during the Reagan Administration, a study conducted by the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research found no direct correlation between the reduction in drug use and the efforts of the “Just Say No” campaign.

As with television, the radio reaches millions of listeners each day. Because of the concentration of radio stations throughout major metropolitan areas, it is relatively easy to get a message to a target audience. Clear Channel in Chicago is engaging the problem of gun violence through a series of radio promotions (Spielman, 2014). Radio personalities from Chicago’s urban radio station, along with several other Clear Channel stations, are collaborating to spread the message of non-violence and anti-gun crimes (Spielman, 2014). The segments will focus on community responsibility and involvement, accountability, and conflict management (Spielman, 2014). These announcements are part of a monthly program devoted to persistently delivering the message of non-violence. Mayor Rahm

Emanuel feels that because of the importance of the message, it is equally important to keep it salient. Just as we have seen changes in behaviors such a seat belt use and a reduction in smoking and drug use through persistent campaigning over time, Mayor Emanuel feels these strategies will work for anti-violence initiatives as well. The Chicago campaign also includes weekly community fairs that showcase community outreach programs (Spielman, 2014).

With hopes of adding credibility to Chicago's radio anti-violence campaign, local rap artist Chance the Rapper has volunteered to help spread the message of non-violence. Chance has been seen at Lollapalooza and on MTV (Krzeczowski, 2014). Chance is from the Chicago area and takes a personal interest in the gun violence problems plaguing the inner city. Chance also takes a special interest in this project because his father is Ken Bennett, the deputy chief of staff and director of the Mayor's Office of Public Engagement (Krzeczowski, 2014). Along with spreading awareness, the goal of the campaign was to affect a ceasefire. The message was clear: no shootings for twenty-four hours leading up to the 2014 Memorial Day holiday weekend. Their goal was more than met with a consistent forty-two hours without a shooting (Krzeczowski, 2014). With Memorial Day's success in mind, this radio media alliance hoped to repeat this ceasefire coming 4th of July weekend. However, the high number of shootings in Chicago over that holiday weekend made national headlines. This speaks to the difficulty in claiming that a media campaign has had its intended effect or if it was simply a coincidence.

Other Hip-Hop and R&B artists are lending a hand as well. Snoop Lion (previously known as Snoop Dogg) has teamed up with MTV and Jewelry for a Cause to produce what they call "MTV x Caliber" bracelets. The goals were to bring about gun violence awareness



<http://politics.suntimes.com/article/chicago/urban-radio-joins-forces-campaign-put-guns-down/fri-05092014-208pm>



<http://www.mtv.com/news/1705249/snoop-lion-mtv-gun-buyback-initiative/>



<http://politics.suntimes.com/article/chicago/urban-radio-joins-forces-campaign-put-guns-down/fri-05092014-208pm>

and to remove illegal guns from the streets. The bracelets contained serial numbers from illegal gun buyback programs in Newark, N.J. (MTV, Snoop, 2013). The MTV/Caliber bracelets went on sale one day after the MTV Movie Awards. During the program, the bracelets and the cause were spotlighted. A portion of the proceeds went to the Newark, NJ Police Department to sponsor continued illegal gun buy-back programs (MTV, Snoop, 2013). Snoop Lion has continued his crusade against violence with his “No Guns Allowed” video (MTV, Snoop, 2013).

Internet and Digital Mass Media Campaigns

The Internet has opened an entirely new and vast network for communication. The Internet allows information to be disseminated quickly to a huge number of people. This is also a place for forums, where people can not only receive information but also communicate and share information and opinions. This communication happens within seconds. It is no surprise that this is an emerging media outlet for anti-violence and other social media campaigns. Most nationally-recognized social and outreach programs have an Internet presence. The Anti-Violence Project, Ad Council, National Crime Prevention Council, CeaseFire, and the Department of Justice all have online capabilities that serve as informative and communication resources.

Social media has emerged from the Internet “big-bang” and offers an even more in-depth form of mass communication, and it is being exploited by social activists and law enforcement alike. The New York Anti-Violence project found a home with Twitter in 2009 and also Facebook. Their presence has initiated a forum for a multitude of violence related topics and offers a twenty-four hour hotline to those in need of instruction or help.

Facebook has also embarked on an anti-violence crusade with its “No Stereotypes” Anti-Violence Campaign. Their page displays a variety of public service announcements ranging from youth issues and domestic violence to rape and assault. Again, this is a place to get information, share personal accounts, view video clips, and post opinions. Facebook provides numerous links to social programs and outreach organizations (No Stereotypes, 2014).

Law enforcement is also using social media in a number of ways. A huge amount of public information is available on social media sites like Facebook. The Police use this to their advantage. Some criminals boast about crimes they have committed. In some cases, they talk about crimes yet to be committed or upcoming gang activity (Kelly, 2012). Law enforcement agencies design sting operations based on intelligence gathered from Facebook profiles. Police can also use social media resources to disseminate information to the public in cases of missing persons, manhunts, sexual offenders, and other scenarios that may endanger the public or require its support (Kelly, 2012). The use of social media by law enforcement agencies is not a direct form of media communication, but it serves as a crime deterrent nonetheless. The use of public information, via sites like Facebook and Twitter, to gather evidence and proactively approach crimes before they are committed acts as another tool for law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement agencies have begun to use social media as a crime deterrent in another way. In a case In New Jersey, the Hopatcong Police Department has started to post blotter-like profile of local criminals detailing their exploits (Augestein, 2014). This was the case in late June 2014, when a profile of a 19 year old man emerged detailing his arrest for sexual assault (Augestein, 2014). There was both support and criticism for this action.



<https://www.facebook.com/147725988592062/photos/pb.147725988592062.-2207520000.1404366571./485255081505816/?type=1&theater>

Doing this brought exposure to a crime, thereby bringing shame to the alleged offender. In response to the criticism, the arresting officer responded with a post stating, "Society wants to know what is going on in their town and that is what we are doing...Don't break the law and you won't be on here" (Augestein, 2014). This course of action is likely to be considered controversial, but it illustrates social media at work as a crime deterrent.

Less Conventional Methods

A less invasive anti-violence approach can be seen around the country and here in Rochester. It is commonly referred to as *Wall Therapy*. In 2012, Dr. Ian Wilson embarked on a community intervention project (wall-therapy.com, 2014). The focus was to "heal" the city through the beautification of Rochester's more impoverished areas. The goal is to provide something beautiful and inspirational to communities that are unable to experience such examples of art. The hopes are to help change social *norms* through "city therapy" (wall-therapy.com, 2014).

Initially, these images were to be placed in selected locations to provide art to communities devoid of it. Today there are 47 walls completed in the Rochester area. These public works of art are intended to "heal a community," as violent offenders are often products of the environment. The Wall Therapy project works to bring beauty to poor and run-down neighborhoods. In theory, a change in the environment can bring about a change in behavioral norms. However, many of these works actually show up in the trendy parts of downtown. While interesting and beautiful, these are not intended for the communities most in need of them.

Conclusion

Social reform media campaigns have been a force in behavioral change for a long time. Social issues have changed and media campaigns with them. Technological evolution has rewritten the books on media campaigns many times. However, some things have remained the same. First, media campaigns must come from multiple sources. They must employ printed materials, radio and television public service announcements, and internet technologies, such as social media. Materials must communicate universally and effectively. This means strong imagery, high contrast, and powerful type without being text laden. Still, media campaigns are only one element of a movement to change behavioral norms, especially with an issue so complex as inner-city violence. They must work in conjunction with outreach programs and have community, local, state, and national support from government agencies. More importantly, the message must be consistent and persistent. Behavioral change can happen over time with repeated conditioning brought about by activism.

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