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“Wow, That Was Funny”: The Value of Exposure and Humor in Fostering Campaign Message Sharing

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Abstract

In this study, we examined whether or not exposure to a humorous surround campaign in Iowa (United States) could produce a multiplicative effect based on Intermedia Theory. Until You're Ready, AvoidtheStork.com[®] was designed to prevent unintended pregnancies among young women. In the case of unintended pregnancy, interpersonal sharing is important because women's contraceptive decisions are influenced by what others, including their friends, think about the health issue. In a sample of college students ($n = 594$), cross-sectional survey results indicated that campaign exposure and humor were significant predictors of talking with and/or showing the campaign to others. Based on our results, we suggest that campaign practitioners should consider humor-based campaigns as a way to generate not only exposure-based effects but also conversation-based effects. Specifically, humor-based campaigns can increase the reach of a campaign through sharing.

Keywords

message development, evaluation, young adults, sexual health

“The most successful campaigns are ones where I think, “Wow, that was funny.” Be witty. Be clever. Don't try so hard. An example I can think of is the Avoid the Stork campaign (<http://avoidthestork.com>). I have seen ads for safe sex since junior high, yet this one just works for me. There's no preaching, it's funny but real and makes me think.” ~Posted to The Next Great Generation online magazine/blog

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Introduction

Despite the fact that the vast majority of young adults believe pregnancy should be planned, not many are taking steps to avoid a pregnancy they are not planning (Kaye, Suellentrop, & Sloup, 2009). It may come as no surprise then, that a little over 50% of pregnancies reported by women between the ages of 18–29 are unintended (mistimed or unwanted; Finer & Zolna, 2011). While potentially problematic for all women who have an unintended pregnancy, women under the age of 30 are particularly susceptible to having an unintended pregnancy (Finer & Henshaw, 2006) because they are less likely to use contraceptives compared to other age groups (Foster et al., 2004). A lack of contraceptive use is concerning, considering the ramifications of having an unintended pregnancy can include an increased probability of dropping out of higher education for women in their twenties (Prentice, Storin, & Robinson, 2012; U. S. Department of Education, 2002), increased emotional and financial stress (Kaye et al., 2009), and deleterious effects for the baby such as low birth weight (Gipson, Koenig, & Hindin, 2008). In light of this public health issue, a statewide surround social marketing campaign was developed in the state of Iowa to encourage 18- to 30-year-old women to avoid having unintended pregnancies by making better behavioral choices. It was the first statewide social marketing campaign in the United States to address unintended pregnancies among women. The humor-based campaign included media ads and other materials that were specifically tailored to the unique experiences and channels available on college campuses.

This present study focuses on the part of the evaluation of a campaign aimed at college audiences regarding the factors related to whether or not individuals talked about or showed the campaign message to others. Specifically, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) argue that media impacts are achieved in a two-step flow process mitigated by interpersonal communication. Before turning to our research hypotheses, we provide an overview of the formative research and message development phases of the campaign. We then focus the remainder of this article on the campaign evaluation which illuminates the importance of the role of humor in sharing the campaign message with others.

Until You're Ready, AVOIDTHESTORK.COM[®]

Formative Research and Message Development

In this surround campaign (i.e., a broad mix of campaign tactics and channels), we employed a classical social marketing approach (e.g., Grier & Bryant, 2005). In the campaign development, all aspects of the social marketing process were addressed such as audience segmentation, pre-program data gathering, resource management, exchange, competition, program development, and evaluation (Grier & Bryant, 2005). In addition, prior to beginning the campaign, other aspects such as access and cost were being addressed as part of increased funding to Title X family planning clinics. The campaign suggested a range of birth control options were available to fit every woman's needs. Initial planning included targeting a specific audience, 18- to 30-year-old women, who were at risk of unintended pregnancy. Despite stereotypes that unintended pregnancies are only problematic for teens and ethnic minorities, Iowa's unintended pregnancy statistics suggest that unintended pregnancy is a significant problem for all child-bearing age women. For example, approximately 50% of live births among women between the ages of 18 and 30 are unintended (Losch & Hoekstra, 2011). Formative research was conducted across the state including both 18- to 30-year-old women enrolled in college and those who were not college students. Women from the campuses included in this study participated. The formative research, including over 2,000 completed telephone surveys, 27 interviews, and 106 women in 18 focus groups, significantly influenced the way messages were strategically developed. Based on the formative research and subsequent concept testing of possible campaign strategies and images with 18 additional focus groups, two important findings were incorporated into the campaign development: (1) 18- to 30-year-old women were ambivalent about having an unintended

pregnancy; that is, they did not perceive an unintended pregnancy as severe or only perceived it as negative and (2) women were concerned about any campaign vilifying women who had unintended pregnancies and campaign messages that made babies seem unwanted or negative. In order to address these two significant findings, we turned to humor and the Extended Parallel Processing model (EPPM) to guide the development of campaign messages (Witte, 1994).

Humor. Messages and campaign images were strategically developed to incorporate humor. According to previous research, humor can grab individuals' attention, make something memorable, and foster attitude change and knowledge acquisition (Cline & Kellaris, 2007; Rossiter & Percy, 1997). Yet, not all humor is the same. Buijzen and Valenburg (2004) report a typology of humor that includes seven categories: (1) slapstick, (2) clownish, (3) surprise, (4) misunderstanding, (5) irony, (6) satire, and (7) parody. Formative research revealed that unfriendly humor belonging to the slapstick, satire, and irony categories and often expressed through irreverent behavior and embarrassment would be unwelcome. Additionally, formative research and concept testing suggested that a campaign targeting unintended pregnancy should not victimize women and their babies or "preach" a health message. Consequently, this campaign appropriated a more innocent type of humor (e.g., clownish behavior, absurdity, and surprise) as a tactic to decrease negative responses to the campaign. This was achieved by focusing the target of the humor mostly on the stork or absurd scenarios that involved the stork making unexpected deliveries of newborns.

Theory. The Until You're Ready, AvoidtheStork.com[©] campaign messages used Witte's (1994) EPPM as a framework, which suggests that if individuals feel sufficiently threatened (i.e., severity and susceptibility) and have enough self-efficacy and response efficacy, the individual will mitigate the threat by engaging in the recommended behavior (Witte & Allen, 2000). For example, messages included at least one fact about the severity of unintended pregnancy and emphasized individuals' susceptibility in order to create a sense of threat. This was designed to address the high levels of ambivalence about unintended pregnancy. In addition, messages promoted the idea that individuals, through a variety of highly effective means, could protect themselves and their partners from unintended pregnancy until they were ready to have children. For example, message content contained facts such as, "You should know a third of relationships that receive an unexpected delivery will end within 2 years. Until You're Ready, AvoidTheStork.com[©]." The visual accompanying the message included depictions of individuals who physically resembled the target audience in order to enhance perceived susceptibility. Additionally, the fact was juxtaposed with a humorous message such as, "Don't let the stork turn your life into a country song." All materials drove the audience to the website for more information about all methods of contraceptives (from abstinence to implants), locations of family planning clinics, and other advice about preventing unintended pregnancies.

Pilot Testing and Implementation

We completed a pilot test of the campaign for college students during the 2009 Fall semester at the largest university (enrollment of undergraduates is over 20,000) in Iowa and at the second largest community college (enrollment exceeded 15,000 students). The pilot test (pre- and post surveys) results showed a positive reaction to the campaign and indicated that the campaign had the potential to impact contraceptive behavior and the antecedents to this behavior. For instance, intentions to use contraceptives improved.

The execution of the full surround campaign was implemented at three state universities and the two largest community colleges from April 2010 to April 2011. The state universities were in separate media markets. Specifically, college students were exposed to a variety of different channels: (1) television and radio spots, (2) student newspapers and posters around campus, (3) web-based ads

on Facebook, MySpace, YouTube and Google, (4) napkins, coasters, java jackets, posters, and table tent games with AavoidtheStork.com[©] messaging at local bars and restaurants, (5) live appearances by the Stork and sponsorships at welcome week activities, football games, other sporting events, college-wide events like homecoming, and college health fairs, (6) movie theater ads, (7) billboards, and (8) condoms and posters in dormitories, student health facilities, and apartment complexes. Additionally, the college campaign distributed many items featuring the AavoidtheStork.com[©] brand (e.g., T-shirts) through the live events, sponsorship opportunities, and organizations on campuses. The give-away items were highly visible and served as exposure to the message and the website. On college campuses, more than 110,000 condoms, 4,000 cups, 17,000 fortune cookies, 12,000 drink koozies, 25,000 lip balms, 3,000 decks of playing cards, 5,000 T-shirts, and other items featuring AavoidtheStork.com[©] were distributed.

Review of Literature

Intermedia Theory

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) developed the two-step flow framework which posits that campaigns propagate communication in interpersonal networks/groups, which in turn, promotes behavior change. Unlike a one-step flow process that emphasizes direct communication with the audience, the two-step flow process focuses on how mediated messages diffuse among social networks through interpersonal sharing. This two-step flow framework eventually evolved into Intermedia Theory, which asserts that social networks anchor the “individual opinions, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors that media campaigns seek to modify” (Gumpert & Cathcart, 1986; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955, p. 44). This research also draws from Mills and Barclay’s (2006) finding that women’s contraceptive decisions are influenced by what others, including their friends, think about the issue. Consequently, interpersonal sharing and talk are meaningful factors when trying to impact contraceptive behaviors.

Exposure and Interpersonal Sharing

It may come as no surprise, considering past research (e.g., Baumann et al., 1988), that messages containing negative consequences influence individuals to turn to their friends to confirm that information. Additionally, research also suggests that individuals may share any emotionally charged information so that they can make sense of their experience, reduce dissonance, or enhance their social connections (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956; Peters & Kashima, 2007; Rime, Mesquita, Philippot, & Boca, 1991).

Specifically, individuals experience uncertainty when “. . . details of situations are ambiguous, complex, unpredictable, or probabilistic; when information is unavailable or inconsistent, and when people feel insecure in their own state of knowledge or the state of knowledge in general” (Brashers, 2001, p. 478). In order to manage this uncertainty, many individuals seek information through interpersonal communication and/or social support. Given the ambivalence (i.e., simultaneously feeling positive and negative emotions) surrounding unintended pregnancy (Schwartz, Lohrm, Gold, & Gilbert, 2007), it may be intuitive that messages about unintended pregnancy are likely to foster uncertainty and a need for individuals to manage it through interpersonal communication.

Exposure to the campaign message does not only refer to quantity (i.e., numbers of times a campaign message is seen) but also to the ways an individual receives the message (i.e., type of channel). This is critical because not all groups of individuals in a target audience have the same access to certain channels as others. For example, a study by Finnegan, Viswanath, Kahn, and Hannan (1993) suggests that the greater the number of channels available, the greater the exposure opportunities that exist, especially in communities that vary across socioeconomic status. In other words, a

surround campaign may reach certain individuals due to the sheer number of channels that may not have been reached by using only one channel alone. For other individuals, the number of channels may reinforce the message providing individuals with greater incentive to confirm information and reduce uncertainties. Consequently, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: The more channels through which individuals reported seeing or hearing the campaign, the more likely they are to share the campaign with others.

Humor and Interpersonal Sharing

In addition to exposure, humor may be a factor that drives interpersonal sharing. Gorham and Cristophel (1990) argue that while self-disclosure may promote bonding between individuals, humor can be the catalyst or invitation to start a conversation. In fact, humor facilitates communication by fostering positive emotions (Greatbatch & Clark, 2002) and by grabbing the audiences' attention (Meyer, 1997; Sternthal & Craig, 1973). Additionally, research has found that humor can increase learning, attention span, and retention of a message (Chauvet & Hofmeyer, 2007). In the context of new media, humor has been found to be an important determinant of sharing (Dobele, Lindgreen, Beverland, Vanhamme, & van Wijk, 2007; Lu, Deng, & Wang, 2010; Masland, 2001). Given the evidence that suggests humor is a determinant to sharing, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: The more humorous individuals find the campaign to be, the more likely it is they will share the campaign with others.

Method

Upon institutional review board approval from the University of Northern Iowa and the University of Iowa human subjects offices, an online survey was distributed to college students at three state universities in Iowa during the spring semester of 2011, following the campaign implementation. The survey was conducted as part of the campaign evaluation in order to investigate behaviors related to sexual and reproductive health, including whether or not subjects had been exposed to the campaign and whether or not they believed the campaign to be humorous. Random samples of 2,000 college sophomores, juniors, and seniors were collected from each school for a total sample of 6,000. First-year students were excluded because they would not have been on campus for the entirety of the campaign. Students were sent an initial e-mail with the elements of consent inviting them to participate, followed by a second e-mail reminding those who had not responded within one week. Participants received a \$10 gift certificate for an online store for their participation. The response rate (RR4; American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2008) for this survey was 19% ($n = 1157$). Because we were particularly interested in those individuals at risk of an unintended pregnancy in this study and traditional-age undergraduate students, we based the analysis on the $n = 656$ participants between the ages of 18 and 24 who indicated "I have had sex with someone of the opposite sex." After cases with missing data were eliminated, $n = 594$ were used for analysis.

Measures

Below is a summary of the measures included in this analysis (See Table 1 for descriptive statistics of measures).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	M	SD	Min–Max
Number of Channels Seen	3.03	1.55	0–7
I found AavoidtheStork:			
Interesting	3.86	0.75	1–5
Informative	3.83	0.85	1–5
Insulting	1.96	0.83	1–5
Annoying	2.25	0.97	1–5
Juvenile	2.36	0.87	1–5
Stupid	2.04	0.87	1–5
Humor response	3.59	0.85	1–5
Self-efficacy	4.40	0.67	1–5
Response efficacy	4.26	0.70	1–5
Perceived susceptibility	2.57	0.99	1–5
Perceived severity	3.63	1.05	1–5

Sharing. The dichotomous sharing variable was comprised of the items, “Did you talk about the campaign with others?” and “Did you show the campaign to others?”. We qualified an individual as having shared if they answered yes to either or both questions.

Number of Channels. Campaign exposure was operationalized using an additive variable representing the number of different channels through which students reported seeing or hearing AavoidtheStork.com[©] ads. Types of channels include television commercials, newspaper ads, billboards, web ads, movie theater ads, materials in bars and restaurants near campus areas, and campaign T-shirts or other give-away items.

Unprompted Recall. The unprompted recall variable was binary and captured the proportion of students who could freely recall the campaign without being prompted.

Campaign Impressions. Participants were also asked about their overall impressions of the campaign. Eight items were assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Items evaluated the extent to which participants believed AavoidtheStork.com[©] was funny, interesting, informative, insulting, annoying, juvenile, and stupid and if the Stork was funny.

Humor Response. Humor response was created out of two of the campaign impression items. The humor response variable was an average composite of the following 2 items: “The campaign is funny” and “The Stork is funny” ($\alpha = .77$). Responses were collected on a Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

EPPM Constructs. For all EPPM constructs, participants answered questions based on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*).

Self-Efficacy. The self-efficacy variable was a factor score calculated from three items ($\alpha = .76$): “I am able to use birth control consistently and appropriately every time,” “It is easy to use birth control consistently and appropriately every time,” and “I can use birth control consistently and appropriately every time I have sex.”

Response Efficacy. The response efficacy was a factor score calculated from 3 items ($\alpha = .75$): “Using birth control consistently and appropriately every time I have sexual intercourse works in avoiding unintended pregnancies,” “Using birth control consistently and appropriately every time

I have sexual intercourse will prevent pregnancies,” and “Using birth control consistently and appropriately every time I have sexual intercourse is effective at avoiding unintended pregnancies.”

Perceived Susceptibility. Additionally, 3 items were used to determine the susceptibility score ($\alpha = .85$), “I am/my partner is at risk for an unintended pregnancy,” “It is possible that I will/my partner will have an unintended pregnancy,” and “I am/my partner is susceptible to having an unintended pregnancy.”

Perceived Severity. Finally, severity ($\alpha = .82$) was measured by the following 2 items: “An unintended pregnancy is bad,” and “An unintended pregnancy is a terrible thing.”

Controls Variables. Control variables included participant sex, relationship status, and birth control use now. Specifically, participants reported their sex (male or female). They also reported their relationship status by selecting one of the following options: (1) married, (2) not married, but in a serious, long-term, committed relationship, (3) not married, but dating one person exclusively, (4) not married, but casually dating one or more people, (5) not in a relationship, or (6) prefer not to answer. Finally, participants responded to the question, “Are you or your partner currently using a form of birth control?” (yes, no, do not recall, do not wish to answer).

Data Analysis

After testing for differences across the university samples, the data were collapsed since no significant differences were found in the responses to the main variables of interest. We tested the main study hypotheses using binary logistic models in Stata 12.0. The dichotomized sharing variable (i.e., whether or not college students shared the Until You’re Ready, AvoidtheStork.com[©] campaign message with others) served as the dependent variable. The model was built in three steps. The control variables (i.e., sex, relationship status, and birth control use now) were added to Step 1. The EPPM constructs (e.g., self-efficacy, response-efficacy, perceived susceptibility, and perceived severity) were then added to Step 2. The EPPM variables were included to control for whether or not the theoretical constructs embedded in the campaign messages were driving interpersonal sharing. In the final step, ads seen, unprompted recall, and humor response were entered. This analytic test determined whether increased exposure and perception of humor was associated with increased campaign sharing.

Results

The majority of participants were female (65.3%), 94.1% identified as non-Hispanic White, and 73.4% identified that they were in some type of relationship. On average, participants were 20.9 years of age ($SD = 1.47$) and had been in college for approximately six semesters ($SD = 2.55$). Furthermore, 88.9% of students reported that they or their partner were currently using some form of contraception, although this use may not have been regular or appropriate.

Overall, 27.2% of students reported only talking about the campaign, 3.5% reported only showing the campaign, and 34.9% reported both talking about and showing the campaign to others. Additionally, 23.3% reported having freely recalled the campaign within the last 2 months without being prompted. Descriptive statistics for all continuous variables can be found in Table 1 and correlations between all continuous variables are in Table 2.

Participants who shared the campaign responded differently to AvoidtheStork.com[©] compared to those who did not. Those who found the campaign to be humorous were more likely to have shared the campaign compared to those who did not, $t(592) = -4.709, p < .001$. Additionally, those who found the campaign interesting, $t(592) = -7.203, p < .001$, and informative, $t(592) = -5.737, p < .001$, were more likely to have shared the campaign. Conversely, those who were more likely to agree that the

Table 2. Correlation Table.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. No. of channels seen	1	.129**	.217**	.212**	-.150**	-.153**	-.142**	-.154**	-.016	.019	-.067	-.040
2. Humor response		1	.425**	.268**	-.338**	-.335**	-.234**	-.312**	.025	.053	.005	.113**
3. Interesting			1	.607**	-.412**	-.488**	-.395**	-.48**	.047	0.070	-.095*	-.029
4. Informative				1	-.411**	-.443**	-.395**	-.478**	.084*	.108**	-.142**	.024
5. Insulting					1	.721**	.522**	.599**	-.103*	-.104*	.139**	-.108**
6. Annoying						1	.602**	.667**	-.089*	-.062	.094*	-.067
7. Juvenile							1	.670**	-.057	-.015	.161**	.044
8. Stupid								1	-.092*	-.048	.114**	-.001*
9. Self-efficacy									1	.584**	-.294**	.107**
10. Response efficacy										1	-.204**	.191**
11. Perceived susceptibility											1	-.013
12. Perceived severity												1

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

Table 3. Binary Logistic Regression.

Variable	Logits	OR	95% CI
Campaign Exposure and Humor			
Number of Ads Seen	0.489	1.630	[1.410, 1.885]
Unprompted recall	0.189	1.208	[0.759, 2.012]
Humor response	0.326	1.437	[1.140, 1.811]
EPPM			
Self-Efficacy	-0.168	0.861	[0.555, 1.288]
Response Efficacy	0.132	1.215	[0.788, 1.650]
Perceived Susceptibility	-0.068	0.938	[0.755, 1.157]
Perceived Severity	0.074	1.004	[0.884, 1.312]
Controls			
Sex (female)	0.628	2.059	[1.216, 2.885]
Relationship status	-0.049	1.070	[0.579, 1.564]
Birth Control Use Now	0.006	1.185	[0.504, 2.008]
Pseudo R ²	0.201		

Note. CI = confidence interval; OR = odds ratio.

campaign was insulting, $t(592) = 5.999$, $p < .001$, annoying, $t(592) = 7.082$, $p < .001$, juvenile $t(592) = 6.016$, $p < .001$, and stupid, $t(592) = 6.131$, $p < .001$, were less likely to share the campaign.

In the logistic regression models, adjusting for the control variables and EPPM constructs, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported; both exposure and humor were significant (see Table 3). In other words, the odds of sharing the campaign for those who saw or heard messages via more channels are 1.63 times the odds for those who saw or heard messages via fewer channels. Additionally, the sharing odds ratio for those who thought the campaign was humorous is 1.44 times the odds compared to those who did not think the campaign was funny. Women were significantly more likely to share the campaign than men. Of note, none of the EPPM variables were significant.

Discussion and Implications

As noted earlier, interpersonal sharing may be an important catalyst to influencing an individual's opinions, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors (Gumpert & Cathcart, 1986; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Consequently, we studied a sample of college students from three universities to determine whether exposure and humor influenced the likelihood the person would interpersonally share the campaign with other members of their social network. Results reveal that both tested hypotheses were supported, as we found that students who were exposed to the campaign message through more channels and those who thought the campaign was funnier were more likely to share the campaign message with their social network. This relationship was significant even after adjusting for control and EPPM variables, meaning that in the model, response efficacy, self-efficacy, perceived severity and perceived susceptibility did not drive interpersonal sharing. Additionally, women were more likely than men to share the campaign with their network members. This may come as no surprise, given the fact that the campaign was primarily directed toward women and pregnancy typically is perceived as a women's issue (Sonfield, 2002). More specifically, unintended pregnancy is typically regarded as a problem for teenage girls (Furstenberg, 2009), despite the fact that women report unintended pregnancies throughout their fertile life span.

These results also are consistent with literature that suggests that physiological arousal is a key component driving online sharing (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Berger and Milkman argue that message content that inspires awe (i.e., positive arousal) and anger or anxiety (i.e., negative arousal) is more

likely to go viral than messages that evoke sadness (i.e., low-arousal). In other words, one reason individuals may have shared with others is due to the positive arousal they experienced as a result of finding the campaign funny.

This study has several limitations. One limitation of this study was that we did not know the exact content of what the students were sharing. It is possible that the interpersonal messages being shared were not compatible with the campaign's goals. However, given the positive relationship between sharing and individuals' ratings of liking the campaign, we expect that individuals were sharing positive messages. In light of this study's findings, future research might want to consider the exact effects of sharing or what kind of information individuals are choosing to share. This would provide significant insight into what are the most salient features of the campaign message.

Additionally, the response rate for this survey was lower than ideal. However, response rates for all forms of surveys have declined over the past 20 years (Curtin, Presser, & Singer, 2005). Recent surveys recruiting young people and women of child-bearing age typically have response rates below 40%. However, the response rate in this study with college students is not unlike response rates found in past work with similar samples (James, Chen, & Sheu, 2005; Morrell, Cohen, Bacchi, & West, 2010; Nulty, 2008). The majority of this sample was female and non-Hispanic White. The large majority of non-Hispanic Whites in the sample is not significantly different from the enrollment at one institution, but was slightly overrepresentative of the others. In addition, since the students had been there an average of six semesters, they were older than the average college student at the universities. This is likely the case since we excluded those students who had not had intercourse. A final limitation is that we collected cross-sectional data. Future studies should consider the collection of longitudinal data and the use of control groups.

Finally, future researchers may want to explore exactly what types of humor are most conducive to interpersonal sharing. Specifically, future studies may want to explore how different types of humor may foster different types of sharing in terms of valence, topic, and the message target. In other words, certain types of humor may be more appropriate to share with certain audiences or in certain contexts. Nonetheless, researchers may want to examine exactly the ways in which humor is functioning.

Practical Applications

At the applied level, our results underscore the importance of formative research in campaign development, the use of humor, the importance of encouraging sharing, and measuring sharing as a component of the campaign evaluation. Formative research allows us to describe our target audience and understand the context of their health behaviors. We conducted extensive formative research for this campaign that allowed us to identify theoretical constructs and key messages to support behavior change. Public health practitioners and social marketers should continue to strive to utilize formative research to inform their campaigns. Further, exposure may not only directly impact health behavior, but it may promote interpersonal communication, which can indirectly impact behavior. Sharing can potentially multiply the effect of the campaign on the exposed as well as increase the reach to the unexposed. Humor, in this case, may encourage intended audiences to react positively to campaigns about sensitive health issues such as sex, contraceptive use, and unintended pregnancy. In fact, a study by Campo, Askelson, Spies, and Losch (2010) found that a humorous website about sex education prompted women to think about it and share it with friends. Yet, while women found the website funny, they also were occasionally offended and confused. This might be the result of the types of humor used in the website, which included more irony and satire as classified by Buijzen and Valenburg (2004). Thus, if social marketers opt for a humorous campaign, they should also attend to the type of humor that is appropriate for their health issue and audience. Taken together, campaign practitioners should seek to generate not only exposure-based effects but also conversation-based effects.

Practitioners should also make sure to test their message and pay attention to the focus of the humor (e.g., who or what is being made fun of) as well as the type of humor in the campaign message.

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