



## Study Guide: Communications

### Issues and Questions

Throughout the semester you have learned how to conduct a HIA, including scoping, assessment, and recommendations. We now move on to discussing communication strategies, and how to frame your HIA findings to have the greatest impact on organizing and advocacy efforts. We will also explore the need to tackle health inequalities through HIA and the best way to discuss issues that can be divisive. The readings for Tuesday's session are meant to provide you with examples of communication practices. We hope they also raise important questions for you regarding how to move the needle on health disparities in the context of American values, inequality, and racism.

The **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's** (RWJF) guide is based on market research on how to talk about the social determinants of health. The purpose of this tool is to help practitioners effectively communicate with the general audience and garner support for health interventions. Much of the research presented stresses the importance of understanding how people interpret messages based on their beliefs and values. It also suggests that clear and simple communication is pivotal to helping people remember and understand health messages. One issue addressed in the RWJF piece, and explored more fully in the additional articles, is the difficulty of addressing divisive issues such as economic and social inequality.

New York Health Commissioner **Bassett** suggests that those in the medical community have a responsibility to engage in discussions of racial disparities in health. She notes a reluctance to address the role that racism plays in constructing health inequality, and suggests ways that the medical community can be more proactive on this issue. **Gollust et al.** examine the effect of messaging around childhood obesity on public attitudes about obesity prevention policy. **Gollust et al.** highlight the manner in which message interpretation differs between liberals and conservatives.

### Questions

1. Communications research presented in both the RWJF and Bassett's piece shows that issue framing that brings to mind racial and ethnic inequality frequently fails to engage wider audiences and can actually lead people to oppose progressive health policy. However, class and racism directly impact the health outcomes of thousands of Americans. Given the contention that these issues bring up, do you think that those working in the public health field should address issues of race and inequality? If so, what approach do you think they should take?
2. According to the RWJF's research, what are some of the things that make a health message effective?
3. The RWJF report suggests that the concept of social determinants of health includes two components. What are these components? What type of messaging does each require?
4. What are some of the consequences of childhood obesity that appear to be strong justifications for obesity prevention policy? What messages on childhood obesity resonated the most? Did these differ by populations' political values? How so?



5. What are some of the tools that Bassett suggests for tackling racism? How can these help us address the impact of racism on health disparity?

**Key Terms**

Black Lives Matter

Priming

Frames

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