

**Using America's Second Language to  
Advance Community, Prevention, and  
Social Justice**

***Oregon Public Health Division  
Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Section  
Annual Grantees and Contractors Meeting  
Portland  
July 23, 2013***

**Lawrence Wallack, Dean,  
College of Urban & Public Affairs  
Portland State University**

“In our personal ambitions we are individualists. But in our seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up or else all go down as one people.”

President Franklin D. Roosevelt  
2<sup>nd</sup> Inaugural Address, January 1937

# Objectives

- Understand basic concepts of framing
- Begin to think more strategically about communicating public health policy
- Learn some key communication tips that can be put to use immediately





*"I was able to get in one last lecture about diet and exercise."*

Thursday, October 17, 2002 SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

# OPINION



Thanks to CCPHA for this cartoon

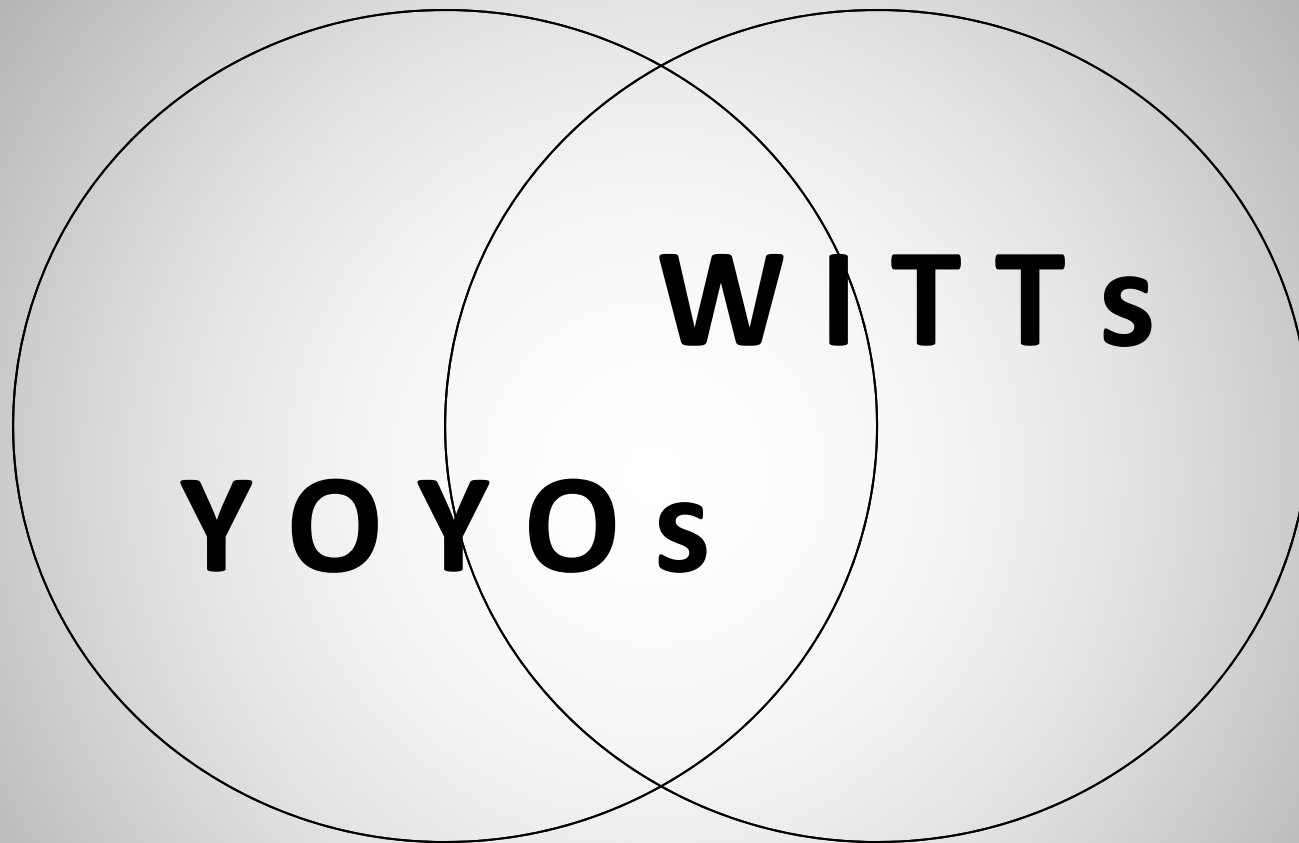
# The Environment Matters



# Childhood Obesity Narratives

<i>Personal, Individual, Behavioral</i>	<i>Social, Environmental, Political</i>
<b>You are what you eat</b>	<b>What surrounds us shapes us</b>
Poor Parenting	Massively promoted cheap, convenient, junk food
Bad Habits & Personal Choices Lack of self discipline	Neighborhood connectivity & safety (e.g. recreation, transportation)
Overactive Thumbs, Underactive Legs	Institutional policies (e.g. school lunches, physical education classes)
Victims of Excess	Local, state & federal policy issues (farm, tax, advertising, zoning)





Jared Bernstein, *All Together Now:  
Common Sense for a Fair Economy*



“Marketing is just washing over this country like a tidal wave, and we're trying to give people swimming lessons.”

Kelly Brownell, PhD  
Co-founder and Director  
Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity,  
Yale University

“Industry battles proposals to tax sugary sodas”  
Carolyn Lochhead, Chronicle Washington Bureau  
Sunday, August 16, 2009

# Thinking about upstream

If Oregon had the lowest possible obesity rates in the world, what would we look like?

How would our state be different than it is now and what would need to change?

What kinds of policies would be required to achieve this new environment?

How much would it cost, and how would these costs be equitably distributed?

What kinds of strategies are needed to create the public and political will to create this change?

## Some questionable beliefs

- ✓ The facts will set you free.
- ✓ The data speak for themselves.
- ✓ We need to educate everyone.
- ✓ We just need a catchier message/slogan.
- ✓ Those who don't support us don't make sense.

## Frame basics

Frames are mental structures that help people understand the world. Frames are shortcuts for people that connect abstract ideas to familiar things (and do so very, very quickly).

ODESITV



QPFSLTV





# OBESITY, as a cue, what does it mean...?

To policy makers	To people who are obese	To the general public
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

# Framing Tension

<b>Social Justice</b>	<b>Dominant (Market) Values</b>
<b>Shared responsibility</b>	<b>Self-determination/Self discipline/Rugged individualism</b>
<b>Interconnectedness</b>	<b>Benefits based solely on effort</b>
<b>Strong obligation to collective good</b>	<b>Limited obligation to collective good</b>
<b>Basic benefits should be assured</b>	<b>Voluntary and moral nature of behavior</b>
<b>Government involvement necessary</b>	<b>Limited government intervention</b>

Adapted from Beauchamp, 1976

# John Boehner on Health Care Reform

(House Minority Leader on PBS NewsHour 11/5/09)

“This bill is the greatest **threat to freedom** that I have seen in the 19 years I have been here in Washington....It’s going to lead to a **government takeover** of our health care system, with tens of thousands of **new bureaucrats** right down the street, **making** these **decisions** [choose your doctor, buy your own health insurance] **for you.**”

# Lakoff's three levels of analysis



**Level 1: Why does it matter?**

**Big ideas and universal values like fairness, equality, justice, family, community**



**Level 2: What kind of problem is it?**

**Issue types such as housing, education, civil rights, the environment, public health**



**Level 3: What can we do about it?**

**Specific issues such as beer taxes, toxic waste sites, health care coverage**

# The importance of metaphors

“Metaphors influence the way we reason about complex issues and forage for further information.... A metaphor (via a single word) can have a powerful influence over how people attempt to solve social problems....”

Crime as virus or Crime as beast

Does it matter?

**Metaphors We Think With:**  
**The role of metaphor in reasoning**  
(Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011)

# Crime metaphors

## **Beast preying on community**

- Catch and jail criminals
- Enact harsher enforcement laws
- “Capture/kill/cage the beast”

## **Virus infecting community**

- Investigate root causes
- Treat problem via social reform
- Inoculate community (especially via eradicating poverty & improving education)

# Covert Effects of Metaphor

- The metaphor provided a structured framework for understanding crime
- Persuasive effects of metaphor, however, were not recognized by subjects in either group.
- Most “influential” part of crime report was reported to be the statistics
- The metaphor had greatest power if presented early in report
- Subsequent information was chosen to confirm or elaborate original bias from the metaphor

- Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011

# Some interesting metaphors

- Safety net or hammock
- Liquid candy or soft drink, pop
- Consumer watchdog or nanny state
- Good neighbor or meddling busy body
- Brain surgery or changing a tire



# Simplifying Model

Explaining shifting weather patterns, including arctic chill in Europe and snowstorms in the deep south:

Scientists' theories describe "...a strong pressure difference between the polar region and the middle latitudes channels the jet stream into a tight circle, or vortex, around the North Pole, effectively *containing the frigid air at the top of the world.*"



**"Its like a fence."**



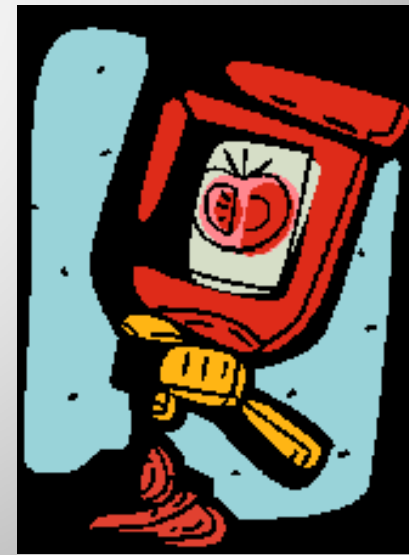
# Simplifying Model

Hanford Nuclear Reservation is moving radioactive waste 7 miles from waste tanks to treatment plant.

The waste is a non-Newtonian liquid and doesn't follow the laws of gravity and motion. At first you have to pump hard to get the waste moving, then less hard to keep the same speed.



**The “radioactive toxic brew acts like ketchup”**



<b>Step 1: Identify Vision</b>	<p>Our common goal. What we all want as a result of solving this problem and implementing this solution.</p>	<p>We all want communities in which...</p>
<b>Step 2: Identify Values</b>	<p>What is at stake for the community, and why everyone should care about and see themselves in this problem.</p>	<p>This is important to all _____ because...</p>
<b>Step 3: Briefly State Problem</b>	<p>Brief and easily understandable statement of the problem you are addressing with your policy.</p>	<p>We are currently facing. . .</p>
<b>Step 4: Specify Solution</b>	<p>Clear, specific statement of your policy solution as well as who will need to work together to make it come to pass.</p>	<p>Fortunately, we have the tools to solve this problem, what needs to be done is . . .</p>

## A few things to remember

- Understand the starting point of the discussion is not a blank slate
- Be clear about the social justice values and how to integrate these values into the story
- Move from values to policy/program; don't start at policy/program assuming values
- Think in terms of metaphors and larger social narratives that guide public policy making