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Editorial: Non-traditional methodologies for social change and health prevention: Game-, music- and theatrical-based interventions

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Non-traditional methodologies for social change and health prevention: Game-, music- and theatrical-based interventions

One of the greatest challenges of health communication is making messages relevant to the day-to-day realities of individuals impacted by the issues being communicated. The challenge increases further when we consider audiences from communities that are traditionally ignored or marginalized by leaders and structures. This includes low-income and minoritized groups such as rural communities isolated by distance from urban centers, racial and ethnic minorities isolated by linguistic barriers and systemic bias, and other groups that do not typically see themselves in media and outreach campaigns (Villar, 2021). Stemming from a universalist perspective (Servaes, 2007), a viewpoint that promotes the norms of the dominant groups onto marginalized populations, these groups can inadvertently (or not) perpetuate power structures that negate community voices with content decided *for* instead of *with* community members, thus reinforcing exclusion and disenfranchisement.

Culture – which extends beyond race, ethnicity and country of origin and also includes age, class, stigma, health status, history of victimization, and power relative to other groups – plays a critical role in the formation and maintenance of attitudes and behaviors toward health and science (Kreuter and McClure, 2004). Additionally, worldviews, as expressions of culture, relating to the causes of illness, science communication (Aguirre Rios and de Regules, 2022), and trust in authorities and institutions (e.g., Gabay, 2015) greatly impacts how health communication messages will be interpreted (Yang et al., 2017). Similarly, interest in a health issue will vary based on perceived impact on one's own community (e.g., Elder et al., 2009). For health

communication campaigns to be efficacious it is essential that the target audience's attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs are understood prior to the development of intervention materials, particularly health messages (e.g., Torres-Ruiz et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2022). Communication and media studies have demonstrated that different media channels and the framing of issues impact groups differently (Noar, 2006; Noar et al., 2007; Kreuter et al., 2013; Wendorf Muhamad and Yang, 2017), thus it is critical that substantial research be conducted on relevant populations in order to accurately match media (format, communication channel), messages, and audiences (Silk et al., 2011).

The articles in this special edition present examples of health communication efforts tailored to different communities through various media and non-traditional delivery. Non-traditional methods are a promising way to engage communities as they enable the co-creation of content (theater, photovoice, games, fotonovelas) by individuals that are typically excluded from the development of health and science information (e.g., Castleden et al., 2017; Jull et al., 2017), as well as not requiring advanced technology equipment and/or skills which lead to higher uptake and sustainability.

The article by Marino et al., presents a case of a radio talk show produced in a psychiatric hospital in Toulouse, France with the aim of reducing stigma and giving voice to the patients living in the hospital. Based on a model developed in Argentina, Les Haute Parleurs (The Loud Speakers) is a weekly audio recording (later disseminated online like a podcast) in which individuals with chronic mental health conditions serve as the on-air hosts and discuss how they want to be understood by others. Through sharing their unique experiences they aim to create a bridge to others while advocating and empowering themselves. The article by Bowman et al., examines the literature on video games and their impact on violence among those who play them, but emphasizes the co-creation of meaning between the game content and the players. The authors argue that video games that involve players in violent situations can be reflective spaces, and ultimately contribute to the prevention of violence through simulated choices by victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. This contribution is extremely important in a context where violence prevention is rightfully focused on potential perpetrators and bystanders rather than potential victims. The study by Malova et al., situates graduate students, particularly international students, as a vulnerable group when it comes to access to healthy food choices. Photovoice is a participatory methodology that elicits storytelling and personal narratives that reflect participants' lived experiences *via* the use of photographs taken and described by individuals in the target communities. Beyond generating knowledge about an

issue, the groups' findings were shared with policymakers in order to advocate for improved food choices. The fourth article by Villar and Johnson reports on several projects that used non-traditional media (fotonovelas, radio stories, community theater, games) to communicate health information that was co-created with community members through a participatory research process.

These works illustrate the importance of health communicators working in partnership with and for audiences in the co-creation of content that resonates with target audiences and that holds intended meaning and where individuals feel identified and their voices heard. Whether through narrative and storytelling, games, or photo narratives, these projects highlight the role of lived experiences, local knowledge, and non-traditional methods as tools for problem solving rehearsal, cognitive and affective elaboration, and simulation of barriers and opportunities of action/inaction in a safe context. Most importantly, these works emphasize the importance of collaboration between those impacted by health issues, health communicators, and policymakers to make health-related content accessible, relevant, entertaining, and owned by communities. We hope these examples encourage health and science communicators not only to use non-traditional methods like those presented in the articles, but most importantly to work with their audience as equal partners.

Author contributions

Both authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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