SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL FOR:
Single Conversations Expand Practitioners' Use of Research:
Evidence from a Field Experiment

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October 19, 2020

Additional Information about the Experiment

More details about the workshop participants and the context for the experiment

As noted in the main text, workshops took place in Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, and Ecuador. In many cases participants traveled for several hours by land in order to reach the workshop location. Participants typically worked at small nonprofits located in rural areas with missions to promote environmentally sustainable behavior and public health in their local community.

They all attended a workshop hosted by my partner organization in order to learn how (and why) to conduct issue awareness campaigns to help achieve these goals. This activity was new to them and, if they conducted it, would represent a sizable shift in their day-to-day activities. It was also costly, which is why grant funding was important. The issue awareness campaigns entailed clearly identifying a problem and concrete solution (i.e. an action that they wanted people in the community to take), conducting systematic research on the likely audience, and then creating messages for wide distribution. This is how they would be applying the scientific information shared in the workshop and in the follow-up. Many of the people they would be targeting with their issue awareness campaigns lacked access to reliable digital technology, and so the media used to spread these messages included new songs to play on the radio, billboards to display on the side of the road, puppet shows that parents and children could watch together, and so on.

Participants' specific goals for the outreach campaign differed, though they all related to public health and environmental sustainability concerns in some way. For instance, one participant wanted to reduce monocropping among local farmers. Another participant was focused on promoting pig farmers' use of living bio-beds instead of allowing waste from pigs to collect on a concrete floor and then pollute nearby waterways.

While in many ways the participants for this experiment were unique (as with any experiment), they shared several key attributes with others who work at nonprofits more generally. The grant-funded task would be resource-intensive and new to them. They faced severe resource constraints in terms of annual budget, office space, and personnel size. In most cases they had at least a minimal Internet presence (e.g. a basic website) though most business was not conducted online. They received funding from a variety of public and private sources (though there was large variation on this across location). In addition, they worked in areas with limited infrastructure. Weather (e.g. heavy rains) and spotty Internet were concerns, as were roads that were not always reliable.

Overall, many of these attributes and constraints are hardly unique. While it is always difficult to say for certain what would happen if we conducted a similar experiment comparing *dissemination* and *dissemination+interaction* among an entirely different group of workshop participants, it seems unlikely that the impact of interaction observed in the present experiment would not be observed elsewhere.

More details on experimental design

One workshop leader led the workshops in Kenya and Nepal, and another led them in Mexico and Ecuador. We believed that having these leaders conduct all of the follow-up communication (emails, treatment group conversations) would seem most natural to participants and help maximize compliance with the request for the Skype call. It also made sense for the experiment given that, as workshop leaders, they are experts on the research literature. It is also worth noting that there was no formally-scheduled one-on-one time between leaders and participants during the workshop itself (most exercises were group-based with practice scenarios).

More information on the content of the disseminated materials

As part of their full-time jobs all workshop participants were already raising awareness of health and environmental challenges in their local communities. The purpose of the workshop was to show how conducting an issue awareness campaign could expand the reach of their efforts. All workshop materials on how to do that were created by my partner organization. The research evidence and guidelines shared were based on findings from the fields of communication, public opinion, and behavior change.

One part of conducting an issue awareness campaign involves gathering systematic background information on one's audience using in-depth interviews and surveys. During the main workshop leaders talked about this, including why it is important, some evidence-based techniques for doing it, and how the results should inform their campaigns. They also briefly touched on some biases that can arise if done improperly.

That said, due to time constraints during the main workshop there was more that could be shared. For the disseminated materials in the field experiment we decided to share two other documents (also created by my partner organization) that discussed research and evidence-based recommendations on how to minimize systematic biases when conducting in-depth interviews and surveys.[1] Both of these documents contained material that would be directly relevant to practitioners and worth bringing to their attention as they decided how to conduct background research within their own local community (and, by extension, how to complete a successful grant application).

Note that while grant applications covered content other than the topics covered in the disseminated written materials and discussed during the conversations, it was the case that having a detailed plan for designing and conducting systematic in-depth interviews and surveys

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[1] In order to preserve organizational anonymity, copies of the disseminated written materials are not included here.

was one key requirement. In other words, submitting a complete grant application required applying the research evidence from these follow-up materials. Afterwards, workshop leaders reported that the submitted applications met minimum competence thresholds in this area in all but one case.

Further notes on randomization and participant inclusion criteria

In some cases more than one person from a given nonprofit attended a workshop, which raised concerns about a situation in which one colleague was randomly assigned to the treatment group and one to the control group (which might produce unintended spillover effects). To avoid this, participants were randomized at the level of the nonprofit. The *nonprofit-level clustered random assignment* took place within blocks defined by the number of participants from a nonprofit (1 or 2) and the location of the workshop (Kenya, Mexico, Ecuador, or Nepal). In total, there were 6 blocks: single or paired participants from Kenya and Mexico, and then single participants from Ecuador and Nepal. There were no paired participants from Ecuador and Nepal. This pre-treatment blocking reduced the chance of imbalance between the treatment and control groups and also improved the precision of the estimates.

In addition, participants were excluded from the experiment if it was not possible to conduct random assignment within blocks that they were part of. For example, there was one nonprofit that sent 5 participants to the Mexico workshop, but because there was no other nonprofit that also sent 5 people to the Mexico workshop, it was not possible to randomly assign some of these participants to receive the treatment and some others to receive the control (instead, we would have ended up with a large imbalance in which 5 people with a highly unique circumstance – the fact that they had 4 colleagues who also attended the workshop with them – were in either the control or treatment group). A similar situation occurred in Ecuador with one group of 4 and in Nepal with one group of 3. Finally, I also excluded some participants from Nepal due to large language barriers between them and the workshop leader (thus making it difficult to conduct the treatment group conversations; the main workshop had had a translator).

Other Spillover Considerations

Although workshop participants did not generally live in close physical proximity to one another (with exceptions noted above), they were part of online discussion boards created as part of the workshop. We closely monitored these boards during the experiment to ensure that treatment group participants were not talking about their conversations. We found no evidence of this.

Script of treatment group conversation

In advance of the Skype conversations I provided workshop leaders with the following script. It used relationship-building techniques to demonstrate responsiveness and caring (Leary 2010). While some aspects of the script use language that is unique to this context (e.g. my partner organization used the term "social marketing campaign" rather than "issue awareness

campaign"), much of the basic structure could easily be applied in other contexts. *[Note that I have redacted some aspects of the script that contained possibly-identifying information]*

"Great to talk with you again. Thank you for taking the time. I wanted to first review some of the content that was in the documents that I shared."

"Remember that we talked about conducting in-depth interviews. These are critical for learning a lot about your target audience. They also take a lot of time. One of the key decisions you have to make is who you are going to interview."

"A number of participants said that they weren't totally certain about how to make this decision, which is totally understandable given that there wasn't a powerpoint on this and we didn't talk about in depth."

"So that's why I shared the extra document with you called [redacted]. Have you had a chance to look at it yet? By the time you're ready to do in-depth interviews, you'll already have a good idea of your target audience, and if you have multiple target audiences."

"These are useful [evidence-based recommendations for choosing who to interview], but of course I can't tell you exactly what to do. You have to decide what's best for your site. You know your audience best."

"So what do you think? Given what you know about your target audience so far, what kinds of people do you think would be ideal for in-depth interviews?"
[Probe why; give participant time to respond, and then let the conversation go from there…]

[After talking for a short while…]
"So how are you feeling about conducting in-depth interviews? Feel like you have good ideas?"

"Is there anything else I can help with on this?"

"OK so now let's move on to the other topic that people had a lot of questions about: how to design the sample for the household questionnaire."

"Remember that one of the key parts of a social marketing campaign is having a survey questionnaire that you administer before your campaign and then afterwards to test its impact."

"A number of participants said that they weren't totally certain about how to decide who should receive the household questionnaire – [about the biases that can arise, why they arise, and evidence-based techniques to minimize them]. This is totally understandable – although we talked a lot about [other aspects, and practiced them as a group, we didn't discuss this as much]."

"I can't tell you exactly what's right for your org, as you know the target audience best."

"So what do you think? Given what you know about your target audience so far, let's talk about some of the neighborhoods where you would be interviewing people at their houses. How might you [apply some of this]?"
[Again, here give participant time to respond to respond…]

[After talking for a while…]
"So how are you feeling about this? Is there anything else I can help with on this?"

References
Leary, Mark R. 2010. "Affiliation, Acceptance, and Belonging: The Pursuit of Interpersonal Connection." In Susan T. Fiske, Daniel T. Gilbert, and Gardner Lindzey (Eds.) *Handbook of Social Psychology* Vol. 2 (pp. 864-897). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Survey questionnaire

The survey was distributed to everyone in both the control and treatment groups prior to the grant deadline. The results presented in Figure 3 of the main text are composed of averaged indices of the following questions:

> *(Objective) Correct knowledge of what to do: Q1-Q6*
> *Subjective feelings of uncertainty about what to do: Q7-Q11*
> *Subjective perceptions of self-efficacy: Q12-15*
> *Subjective perception of the likelihood of receiving the grant: Q16*

[Note: In some cases the questions below use terms that are specific to my partner organization, including the fact that they referred to the issue awareness campaigns as "social marketing campaigns" and participants as "social marketing managers".]

1. For in-depth interviews, it's acceptable to select interviewees that you know already or are recommended by a community leader.
     a. *True*
     b. *False*
     c. *I'm unsure right now, but I'll review the training materials later on*

2. You've identified one potential audience segment for your target audience. The minimum number of in-depth interviews you should conduct is:
     a. *3*
     b. *6*
     c. *9*
     d. *12*
     e. *I'm unsure right now, but I'll review the training materials later on*

3. If at all possible, as the social marketing manager, you should not be the interviewer for in-depth interviews.
     a. *True*
     b. *False*
     c. *I'm unsure right now, but I'll review the training materials later on*

4. Ideally, if at all possible the representative sample for your household survey questionnaire should be randomly selected.
     a. *True*
     b. *False*
     c. *I'm unsure right now, but I'll review the training materials later on*

5. In creating a systematic sampling frame, choosing which houses to go to (every other, every third, every fifth, or every ninth) will depend on which factors:
     a. *The total population of the village*
     b. *The number of interviews you've calculated you need to conduct*
     c. *The population density of the village*
     d. *All of the above*

e. *I'm unsure right now, but I'll review the training materials later on*

6. Conducting your survey at a central location (e.g. town hall or community center) may be appropriate in some cases depending on your target audience:
    a. *True*
    b. *False*
    c. *I'm unsure right now, but I'll review the training materials later on*

7. Right now how uncertain are you about the best way to state your theory of change?
    a. Extremely uncertain
    b. Very uncertain
    c. Somewhat uncertain
    d. A little uncertain
    e. Not uncertain at all

8. I feel that I fully understand how to construct a concept model.
    a. *Strongly agree*
    b. *Agree*
    c. *Somewhat agree*
    d. *Agree a little*
    e. *Don't agree at all*

9. Right now how uncertain are you about how you'll pick the best people for your in-depth interviews?
    a. Extremely uncertain
    b. Very uncertain
    c. Somewhat uncertain
    d. A little uncertain
    e. Not uncertain at all

10. Right now how uncertain are you about how to design the sampling strategy for the household questionnaire?
    a. *Extremely uncertain*
    b. *Very uncertain*
    c. *Somewhat uncertain*
    d. *A little uncertain*
    e. *Not uncertain at all*

11. I feel like I fully understand how to draft a budget and work plan.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat agree
    d. Agree a little
    e. Don't agree at all

12. I consider myself well-qualified to design and run a social marketing campaign.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat agree
    d. Agree a little
    e. Don't agree at all

13. Regardless of how you answered the last question, how nervous do you feel about running a social marketing campaign?
    a. Extremely nervous
    b. Nervous
    c. Somewhat nervous
    d. A little nervous
    e. Not nervous at all

14. I feel that I could do as good a job in designing and conducting a social marketing campaign as other workshop participants.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat agree
    d. Agree a little
    e. Don't agree at all

15. I am uncertain about whether I'll be able to persuade people at my organization to conduct a social marketing campaign.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat agree
    d. Agree a little
    e. Don't agree at all

16. If you submit a grant application, how likely do you think it is that you'll get it? *[Note: only Ecuador and Nepal participants received this question]*
    a. Extremely likely
    b. Likely
    c. Somewhat likely
    d. A little likely
    e. Not likely at all