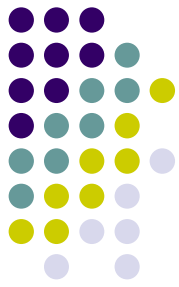


Getting the Message Out About Brain Health: A Cross Cultural Comparison of Older Adults' Media Awareness and Communication Needs on How to Maintain a Healthy Brain



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Presenter Disclosures

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Background



National Public Health Road Map to Maintaining Cognitive Health, June 2007 (www.cdc.gov/aging/roadmap)

- **Priority Communication Actions:**
 - 1) Determine how diverse audiences (e.g., general public older adults, health professionals, and caregivers) think about cognitive health,
 - 2) Develop communications strategies and tools to increase awareness among public health and aging service health care professionals about the current state of the science on cognitive health, and
 - 3) Disseminate the latest science to increase public understanding of cognitive health and to dispel common misconceptions.

Study Rationale



- Little is known about older adults' awareness of brain health information or their attitudes about maintaining brain health
- Prohaska and Peters (2007) recommend message recipients need to provide input into development of brain health messages
- This study was designed to increase understanding of culturally appropriate communication strategies for educating diverse older adults about brain health
- Older adults' recommendations for developing brain health promotion messages and communication strategies were explored

Theoretical Framework



- Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) model (Rogers, 1995)
 - How new ideas spread through culture and social systems
- Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion (Petty & Cacciopo, 1986)
 - Processes through which we interact with health messages



Methods: Study Sample

- Recruitment: word of mouth, flyers, and announcements at group meetings and seniors' centers
- Locations: California, North Carolina, South Carolina
- Diverse Sample:
 - African American
 - American Indian
 - Chinese
 - Vietnamese
 - non-Hispanic White

Methods: Focus Group Protocol and Coding



- Focus groups conducted in English
 - Except for 3 Vietnamese and 3 (of a total of 4) Chinese groups
- Focus groups recorded in English were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word
- Transcripts imported into Atlas.ti 5.0 (Muhr, 2004) for qualitative data management and coding
- Coded data examined for relationships among codes that represented themes, “axial coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)
- Quotes used to validate researchers’ coding



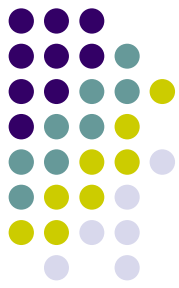
Results: Study Sample

- 177 adults age ≥ 50 years
- 19 focus groups in 3 States (California, North Carolina, South Carolina)
 - 6 African American groups (n=55)
 - 4 Chinese groups (n= 36)
 - 3 Vietnamese groups (n=26)
 - 2 American Indian groups (n=19)
 - 4 non-Hispanic white groups (n=41)

Results: Thematic Analysis



- 1) Brain health messages heard/seen in mass media
- 2) Communication strategies for informing others about brain health
- 3) Motivational approaches to encourage healthy behaviors which may reduce risk of cognitive decline



Focus Group Topic/Question	Category / Theme	Sub-Themes
1. Media Messages Heard about Brain Health	Lack of Information	
	Specific Content	Diet and Nutrition Physical Activity Brain 'Exercises' Medication and Supplements Research Advances
	Conflicting Information	Diet and Nutrition

Participant Quotes



- “I watch TV and ...don’t hear much about the brain, you know, but you might read it in books, but on TV and radio.., I don’t hardly hear advertising stuff for the brain.” (African American)
- “I don’t know if there’s anything left that really they [media] know that is healthy for you.” (American Indian)
- “Just recently, in fact, in the little tidbit paper that’s out there, I read something about conductors. They live longer because of the exercise that they do ... you ought to see me going around the house now. Every time I hear music, I’m conducting.” (white)
- “It seems like there is more about Alzheimer’s than before, all you hear about is a new drug or it’s always they did this for that, they did that, but it still goes back to that ‘after the loss’ and not to prevent it.” (African American)



Focus Group Topic/Question	Category / Theme	Sub-Themes
2. Communication Strategies (Informing Others)	Message Content	Existing Slogans
		New Spiritual Slogans
		Testimonials
	Communication Channels	Media -Television -Radio -CD/DVD -Print: newspapers/magazines -Multimedia approach
		Social -Field trips / outings
	Educators / Message Source	Social Networks Other Seniors
		Medical Specialists at Existing Group Meetings

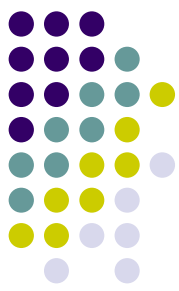


Sample Slogans

- Braintastik!
- Boost your brain power!
- Wake up and live!
- No matter your age, get fit!
- Eat Right, Stay Happy!

- Chinese and Vietnamese groups suggested slogans linking brain health with physical health:
 - “A healthy brain requires a healthy body.”

- African American groups recommended using spiritual slogans:
 - “Pull it up, Puff it Up and Praise it Up’ you know, you’re exercising, and you’re giving praise to God.”



Focus Group Topic/Question	Category / Theme	Sub-Themes
3. Motivational Strategies	One-on-one Strategies	Invite / Ask People
		Lead by Example
		Word of Mouth – tailor the information
	Social Approaches	Social Comparison
		Participation in Social Groups/Clubs
	Motivational Barriers	Individual -Negative attitudes -TV as a distraction
		Structural -Cost



Participant Quotes

- “Discussion groups are realistic which makes the idea realistic. People put it into practice right away. They see clearly, ‘Ahh...this man is 90 years old and is still like that, how is that possible?’ Those discussion groups are better than TV, newspapers, and magazines.” (Vietnamese)
- “You can take the horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. Because there are a lot of people out here that just have no interest in all these things until something happens to them. It’s really a hard thing to do.” (Chinese)

One Size Does Not Fit All!

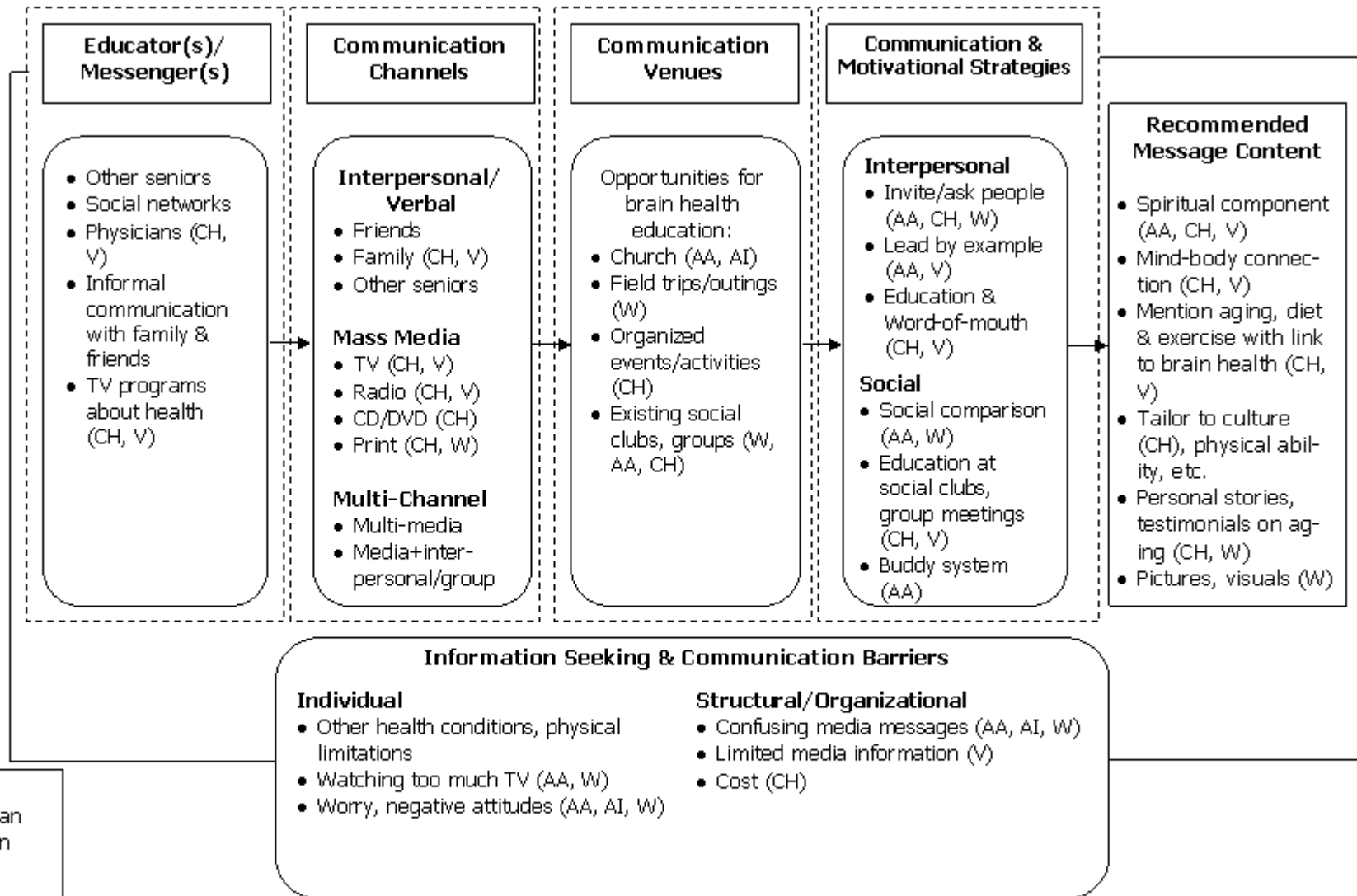


Figure 1. Summary of Communication Strategies Suggested by Focus Group Participants

Note: Strategies representative of all groups except where noted; () indicates more emphasis among specific

Conclusions and Implications



- Study provided communication strategies for reaching diverse populations with brain health messages
- Primarily Vietnamese groups, and some African Americans and Chinese, had not heard anything about brain health in the media
 - Efforts needed to develop language appropriate and culturally suitable resources and to ensure brain health messages are in ethnic media

Conclusions and Implications



- Participants identified both individual and structural barriers to seeking brain health information
- Only Chinese and Vietnamese participants stated explicitly that messages should link physical activity and brain health
 - Implication: not all participants may be aware of the association between healthy lifestyles and brain health

Conclusions and Implications



- Differences in information needs and sources, and in barriers associated with language or culture, will influence health communication efforts and brain health message development
- Findings suggest it would be useful to evaluate quality of brain health content in the mass media, and to explore older adults' opinions about the trustworthiness and quality of media messages

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