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The effect of public communication campaigns on family communication and behaviour.

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Masters of Business Studies in Communication
Management, at Massey University, Palmerston North**

Kane Hopkins

2004

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Margie Comrie and Frank Sligo for their patience and ability to refrain from using cuss words at me. Their ability to keep sane through this process demonstrates the level of professionalism, knowledge and quality of teaching these two remarkable people have.

Thanks to all the families who let me into their homes and indulged my 'need to know' while providing an endless supply of coffee and biscuits and also to the staff of the Auckland Regional Council and Clean Up New Zealand.

Thanks to my parents for helping me in so many ways to become 'the little son that could'. My biggest thanks must go to Anna Finn, who had to endure my frustrations and tantrums. You are quite possibly the most loving, encouraging person on the planet.

Lastly, this work is dedicated to Robyn Logan who supported and looked after me throughout the journey. Never forgotten.

Abstract

This thesis examines how mass communicated messages from a public communication campaign affect interpersonal communication within families. It also considers how interpersonal communication among family members flows on to affect behaviours in the family. The study uses McDevitt and Chaffee's five-stage sequence of behavioural activation within families to examine two pro-environmental campaigns: the Big Clean Up and Clean Up NZ.

Seven families exposed to the messages of the communication campaigns were interviewed to gain an understanding of what communication process occurred as a result of these interventions. "Downward" (parent to child), and "upward" (child to parent) flows of communication were examined.

The results suggest that communication among family members has a substantial bearing on a family's behavioural response to campaign messages. However, the person who engenders the discussions also plays a major role in the success or otherwise of the communication outcomes. The campaign messages had different effects on children than they did on parents. There were no significant behaviour changes in families where the parent was the initial message receiver; however where the child provided the initial intervention behaviour changes tended to occur. While children received new information, and developed new behaviours based on the campaign messages, parents tended to have existing beliefs and patterns of behaviour endorsed.

The relationship between interpersonal family communication, campaign messages and changes in behaviour has implications for communicators developing campaigns that aim to change behaviour.

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