

# Local News Media Framing of Obesity in the Context of a Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Reduction Media Campaign

Michelle Jeong, MA<sup>1</sup>; Joelle Sano Gilmore, PhD; Amy Bleakley, PhD<sup>2</sup>; Amy Jordan, PhD<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study examined local news media's framing of obesity preceding and surrounding the Philadelphia sugar-sweetened beverage reduction media campaign.

**Methods:** Using key search terms pertaining to obesity and sugary beverages, the authors searched the LexisNexis database and gathered local news stories ( $n = 167$ ) that were aired or published between October, 2010 and March, 2011. They conducted a content analysis, coding for framing-related outcome measures (underlying factors, action steps, and contextual agents).

**Results:** Overall, the news media employed individual-level framing in the majority of stories when discussing obesity, both before and after the campaign launch. After the campaign launched, however, stories were significantly more likely to mention systemic-level contextual agents such as food companies ( $P = .008$ ), beverage companies ( $P = .03$ ), and champions or advocates ( $P = .001$ ).

**Conclusions and Implications:** The researchers observed a shift in the local news media discourse toward more thematic framing of obesity, and suggest that public health officials consider the potential impact of news media frames on garnering public support for future policy implementations.

**Key Words:** mass media, health communication, news media framing, obesity, sugar-sweetened beverages (*J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2014;46:583-588.)

Accepted April 4, 2014. Published online May 27, 2014.

## INTRODUCTION

Obesity, 1 of the leading preventable causes of death,<sup>1</sup> has reached alarming rates in the US for children and adults. According to a report by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 36% of adults age  $\geq 20$  years and 17% of young people age 2–19 years are estimated to be obese.<sup>2</sup>

To address this issue of obesity, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, as part of the Communities Putting Prevention to Work program, granted funding to the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH), along with 50 other communities nationwide, to help promote healthy lifestyle choices among children and adults. The PDPH coordinated “Get Healthy Philly,” a multi-pronged public health initiative with various components, 1 of which was a media

intervention focused on reducing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). Although obesity can hardly be attributed to 1 single cause, some research has noted a positive association between excess consumption of SSBs and obesity in both adults<sup>3</sup> and children.<sup>4-6</sup>

The media campaign, which launched in mid-January, 2011, was composed of television and radio public service announcements as well as print ads. Cross-sectional telephone surveys conducted every 6 weeks during the 18-month campaign showed that by the second month of the campaign, 6 in 10 Philadelphians reported seeing  $\geq 1$  PDPH campaign messages in the past 30 days. By the final month, that number had reached 85%.<sup>7</sup>

Audiences develop their ideas about health from a variety of sources

beyond public health campaigns. Several studies found that Americans reported getting the majority of their health-related information from news media.<sup>8,9</sup> This has significant implications, especially when considering the potential influence of news frames. Frames emphasize certain aspects of an issue and make them more salient, thereby influencing the audience when recognizing the cause of the issue, evaluating the situation, and/or deciding on an appropriate solution.<sup>10</sup> Depending on whether a frame is individualizing (ie, focusing on the individual and suggesting behavioral change) or systemic (ie, focusing on the government and/or other large institutions, and suggesting a need for solutions at the societal level), news coverage may influence what action is taken at the individual level or which policies are supported to address the problem.<sup>11</sup> For example, when discussing obesity, an individualizing frame might focus on personal eating habits, whereas a systemic frame might discuss lack of access to healthy, affordable food.

Research has shown that individualizing frames are more common in general health reporting.<sup>12</sup> Similarly,

<sup>1</sup>Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

<sup>2</sup>Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

Address for correspondence: Michelle Jeong, MA, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 3620 Walnut St, Philadelphia, PA 19104; Phone: (215) 573-3517; Fax: (215) 898-2024; E-mail: [mjeong@asc.upenn.edu](mailto:mjeong@asc.upenn.edu)

©2014 SOCIETY FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOR

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2014.04.294>

analyses of news media coverage of obesity in past years found that the dominant tendency was for news to attribute blame to the individual by employing individual-level framing.<sup>13-15</sup> Although there have been several studies concerning media coverage and framing of obesity,<sup>9,11,13-17</sup> there is a lack of studies focusing on the framing of obesity in the context of a concurrent public health media campaign. Considering the possibility that a media campaign and news stories may provide contrasting information or convergent messages,<sup>18</sup> especially when both are targeting the same local population, the current study investigated the way local news media in Philadelphia framed the issue of obesity and examined whether news media framing shifted once the anti-SSB media campaign was launched. By offering a systematic assessment of the local news media environment both preceding and during the PDPH's media campaign, the current study examined the association between a public health media campaign related to obesity and local news media stories about obesity, thereby advancing the discussion of news media framing in the realm of public health.

## METHODS

### Procedures

The researchers used content analysis to examine news media from 5 television stations (ie, ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, and WHYY), 3 radio stations that included 2 local AM news channels and the public channel WHYY, 10 newspapers (ie, Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News, Metro Philadelphia, Philadelphia Weekly, Philadelphia City Paper, Daily Pennsylvanian, South Philly Review, Al Día, El Sol, and Philadelphia Sunday Sun), and 1 Web site (ie, <http://www.Phillly.com>). These media channels were chosen because they were local to Philadelphia, meaning that Philadelphians had the opportunity to be exposed to these sources on a regular basis. Articles or transcripts that were aired or published between October, 2010 and March, 2011 were identified through a search of the LexisNexis database, using the key words obesity, childhood obesity, nutrition, physical

activity, screen time, parenting, marketing, sugar-sweetened beverages, and soda tax. The latter 2 were included because of this study's particular interest in the PDPH's SSB-focused campaign. If the search yielded overly broad or irrelevant results, the key terms were searched in conjunction with each other. A subset of Philadelphia-specific articles was derived by searching Philadelphia within the broader results.

The researchers also used the same key search terms to search the individual archives of the same 20 news venues to confirm that all relevant articles were included. In the end, the complete search yielded a total of 167 news items, including newspaper articles ( $n = 63$ ), television news transcripts ( $n = 52$ ), radio transcripts ( $n = 26$ ), and Web site articles ( $n = 26$ ).

A coding instrument was developed, and included operational definitions for key terms and variables that were of interest to the research. Six coders were trained over a 12-week period and double-coded 20% of the sample ( $n = 34$ ). Cohen's kappa statistic ( $\kappa = 0.64-1.00$ ) was used to assess inter-rater reliability.

Review by the institutional review board was not required for this study because human subjects were not involved, as per US Department of Health and Human Services guidelines.<sup>19</sup>

### Measures

To examine how news media frame obesity, coders identified underlying factors that are seen as causing obesity, action steps that are suggested for addressing obesity, and contextual agents that are connected to the issue of obesity.

Underlying factors were defined as elements that were mentioned in the stories as being the cause of obesity. Potential underlying factors of obesity included lack of access to nutritious food, price of food, overeating or eating unhealthily, consumption of SSBs, lack of exercise, school lunches, stress, sedentary behavior, food marketing, built environment, and poverty.<sup>20</sup>

Action steps were defined as concrete suggestions intended to help address obesity, including changes related to food consumption, beverage consumption, exercise, and

sedentary behavior. These suggestions were not specific to individual behavior, and could be aimed at bringing about change at the organization, community, or policy level.

Contextual agents were specific actors, groups, or institutions in one's social environment that were mentioned in the story as being connected to, or forming the context around, the issue of obesity, such as the individual himself or herself, family, school, workplace, place of religious worship, community, media and celebrities, champions and advocates, government, health care professionals, food companies, beverage companies, and media companies.

All variables were dichotomous, where 0 represented not present and 1 indicated present. Coders were instructed to check 1 for all relevant variables within each measure, which resulted in a possible combination of multiple underlying factors, contextual agents, and/or actions steps per story. To look at differences in framing with regard to the timing of the PDPH media campaign, coders took note of whether each news item was published or broadcast before or during the campaign.

### Data Analyses

The authors used descriptive analyses to examine the prevalence of individual-level vs systemic-level framing within each measure, and conducted chi-square tests of independence to assess differences in framing on all variables from before and during the campaign. The level of statistical significance for all tests was  $P < .05$  (SPSS 19.0, IBM, Armonk, NY, 2010).

## RESULTS

During the 15 weeks before the campaign launched, there were 82 news stories about obesity. After campaign messages began airing in mid-January, there were 85 stories over the course of 11 weeks, with a visible spike immediately after the campaign launch (Figure 1).

Of all stories, 112 (67.1%) included  $\geq 1$  underlying factors for obesity. Overall, the local news media in the Philadelphia market more frequently

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/361176>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/361176>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)