Social Marketing and Stigma Change

In the past few years, NCSE has been engaged in efforts to research and evaluate social marketing approaches to stigma change. Broadly put, social marketing represents the strategic use of economic and social forces in order to change behaviors that lead to social problems (Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, 2002). Domains in which social marketing have been used include health promotion, injury prevention, environmental protection, and community involvement. Social marketing is like commercial marketing in several ways. Both have a customer focus; i.e., the target of change is a market sector that is defined in terms of social exchange between the group in control of marketing and the group whose behavior is the focus of change. These sectors are segmented; the effectiveness of marketing depends on defining relevant sectors and then crafting a marketing format that reflects the sectors needs and interests. Customers of both efforts must perceive the benefits of partaking in the product or behavior exceeds the costs of engaging in a different behavior.

Despite these similarities, there are notable differences between social and commercial marketing. The two approaches markedly vary in terms of product. Commercial marketing circumscribes products or services that are purchased by the market segment. The product in social marketing is behavior change. Behavior change includes accepting, rejecting, modifying, and abandoning targeted behaviors. The major reinforcer describing success differs across approaches. Goals of commercial marketing are financial, mostly pursuing to maximize profit. Social marketing seeks to address societal problems through behavior change of the targeted population. Approaches also vary in terms of competition. Competition in commercial marketing is the other companies or organizations that sell similar products. Competition in social marketing is the status quo behavior that keep a group from diminishing the social problem.

A variety of government and NGO-based efforts around the world have used social marketing strategies to attack the stigma of mental illness. Prominent in social marketing efforts are public service announcements (PSAs), issue-focused advertisements, featured in television, radio, print, outdoor, online, mobile and other media. Typically, these are developed as part of a broader social marketing campaign, a multi-level program designed to tackle stigmatizing attitudes and discriminatory behavior. Significant resources are being invested into these approaches to erasing the stigma of mental illness. Hence, evaluating these kinds of approaches have become a public health priority, one NCSE has actively joined.

Research on social marketing and stigma change is not an obvious enterprise. It offers many challenges when compared to the narrower kind of research that has dominated evaluations in this arena thus far. Key issues include:

• Penetration: assessing the degree to which a population is aware of and remembers the gist of a social marketing campaign;

• Impact: evaluating whether the campaign actually changes stigmatizing and affirming attitudes and behaviors; and

• Population: doing this kind of work with the restricting exigencies of mapping population response.

Below are recent NCSE activities in this regard:

Publications:

Corrigan, P.W., & Gelb, B. (2006). Three programs that use mass approaches to challenge the stigma of mental illness. Psychiatric Services, 57, 393-398. Click here to download a copy of the manuscript.

Corrigan, P.W. (in press). Where is the evidence supporting public service announcements against mental illness stigma? Psychiatric Services. Click here to download a copy of the

manuscript.

Involvements:



NCSE PI Patrick Corrigan is on the steering committee of the SAMHSA Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity, and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Health

[**SAMHSA ADS Center** http://www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov/]





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