

PUBLIC HEALTH 2017 Canadian Public Health Association Annual Conference

Effective argumentation for policy change in public health

Workshop on messaging and argumentation in policy advocacy and action

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PUBLIC HEALTH 2017 SANTÉ
PUBLIQUE
JUNE 6-8 | HALIFAX WORLD TRADE & CONVENTION CENTRE | DU 6 AU 8 JUIN

The speakers (L. McIntyre and C. Mah) have no conflicts to declare.

AGENDA

- Introduction and objectives (5m)
- An interview with a Master of Policy Argumentation (5m)
 - Debrief (10m)
- Overview of political argumentation and framing (10m)
- Small group table-top activity (50m)
- Large group reflection and identification of take home messages (10m)

Vignette 1



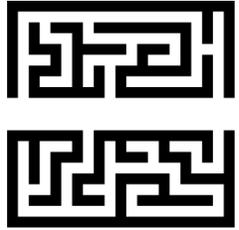
- Richard Henderson, 40, is the executive director of an anti-hunger non-profit organization in Toronto. Richard is frustrated by the current lack of action to use the existing food system to feed the hungry people in the community he serves. He is lobbying local politicians to propose an amendment to the Taxation Act that would provide a tax incentive for grocery chains to divert safe, perishable food from landfills to food banks.

Vignette 2

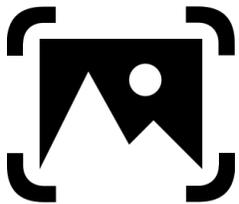


- Dr. Wayne Stewart, 67, is a former family physician and a government MLA representing a Prince Edward Island riding. In his 25 years of practice, Dr. Stewart has seen many poor children and families fall through the cracks. He plans to argue in caucus for a budget expansion to fund a provincial school breakfast program. He feels that rather than relying on non-profit organizations, developing a universal program will help address the issue of child hunger, and ensure children from food insecure families can start their day on a full stomach with a healthy meal.

Master of argumentation (1)



- Opens early by **rejecting the complexity** of the problem
“He doesn’t have enough fresh food to deal with the demand...and he doesn’t like rationing”

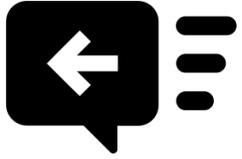


- **Arguments are simple**
“Schools are about education. Education can’t happen unless the kids have an appropriate nutrient level. The only way kids in poor homes can get out of poverty is by getting an education. The only way they can get an education is by having a good breakfast.”



- Speaks the language of **economics**

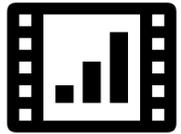
Master of argumentation (2)



- Sticks to **key messages**. No matter what topic, came back quickly to simple main message: food insecurity = **poverty**



- Uses simple statistics from time to time, but for the most part uses **stories and anecdotes** throughout



“PEI is small enough that we can have a guaranteed annual income pilot project here and probably about 70 percent of our population would need a top up but if it worked in Dauphin for a population of 17,000, it can probably work here”



- **Nimble and reflexive**. Moves back and forth between arguments and counter arguments.

Political argumentation (1)

- Public policy is about the power to **persuade**
- Defining a public health policy problem: **marshalling indicators** (can be symbolic) + **articulating values** + **framing** for both of these



Political argumentation (2)

- Certain forms of persuasion have greater impact than others
- In public health knowledge exchange we often talk about effective forms of communication (the **medium**) and **audiences** but here we focus on the structure and qualities of the **message**
- Persuasion is a **performance**
- **Positive** feelings (valence)

Arguments: hard vs. easy



Easy Arguments

Short, simple,
symbolic

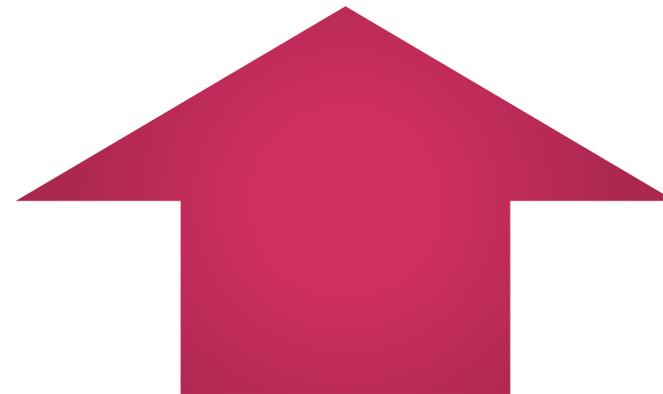
Focus on outcomes
(if x occurs, then y)



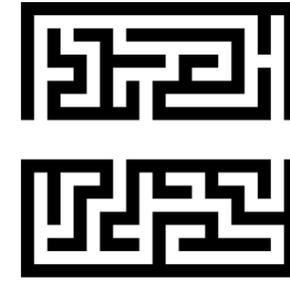
Hard Arguments

Long and complex

Focus on existing conditions
(if x and y, then z can occur)



Arguments: simple vs. complex



Facile

- $x = x$
- Food insecurity is wrong

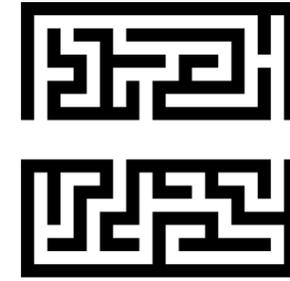
Simple

- $x = y$
- Food insecurity is about poverty

Complex

- $x = y + z$, if a or b
- Food insecurity measures variables related to material deprivation

Arguments: simple vs. complex



Facile

- $x = x$
- Food insecurity is wrong

Simple

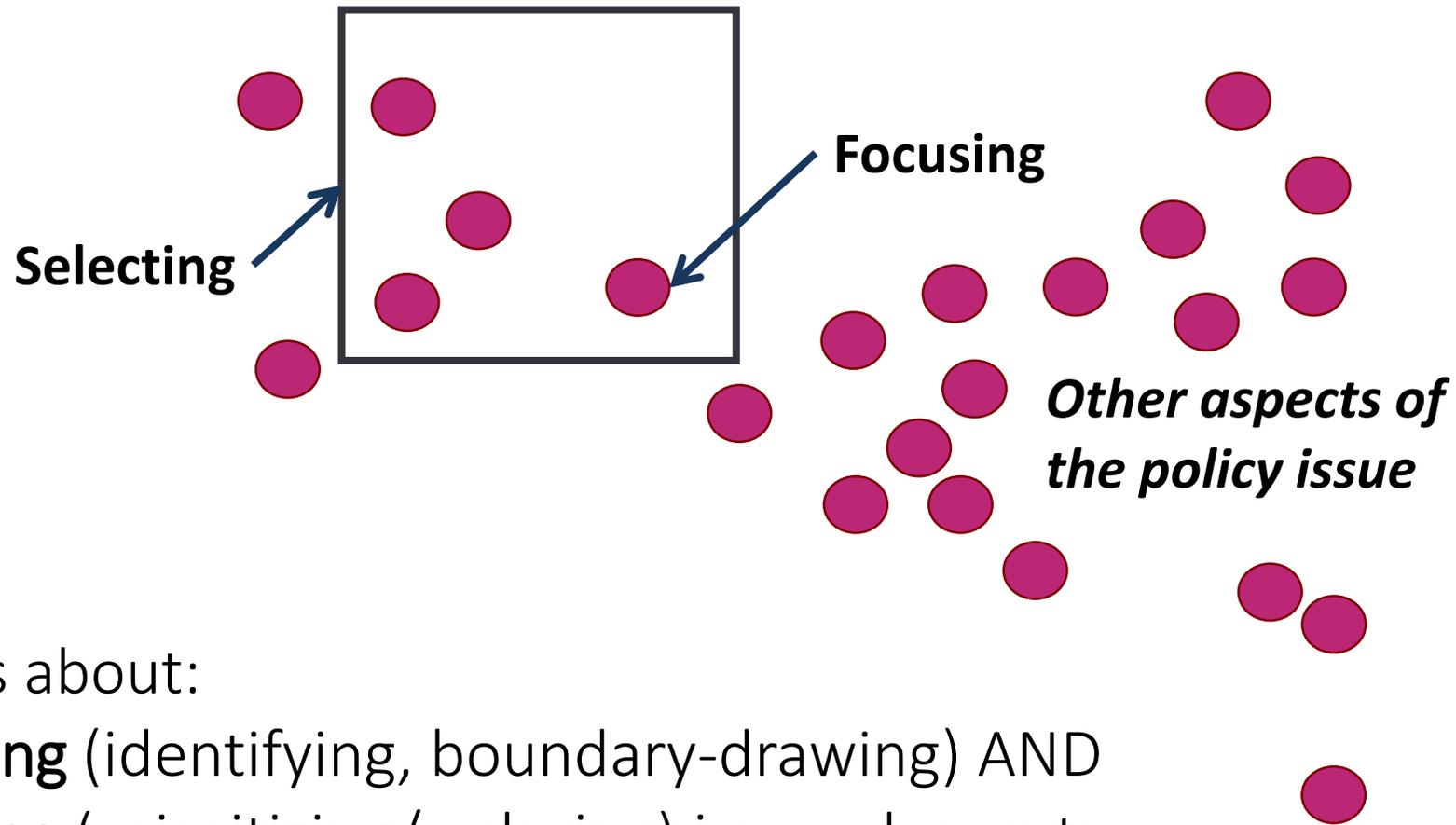
- $x = y$
- Food insecurity is about poverty

Complex idea but the argument is simple

Complex

- $x = y + z$, if a or b
- Food insecurity measures variables related to material deprivation

Persuasive arguments are framed



Framing is about:

- **Selecting** (identifying, boundary-drawing) AND
- **Focusing** (prioritizing/ordering) issue elements

Framing: explaining the causal story

- ‘Slums’—urban blight, story of neighbourhood and structural decay, threats are internal
- Metaphor: disease
- Solution (normative leap): cure—urban renewal, healing
- Organically emerging communities—spatial identity, social network, cohesive, threats external
- Metaphor: nature
- Solution (normative leap): preserve assets

Framing: explaining the causal story

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Stories tell us about the problem in a way that suggests the **solution**

Small Groups Round 1

INSTRUCTIONS

- Read the vignette provided
- Using the techniques described, put together a list of arguments **for** and **against** the policy proposed



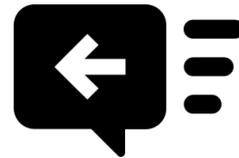
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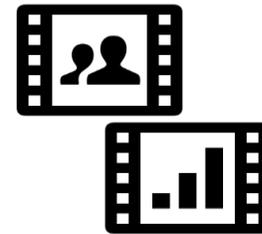
Simple



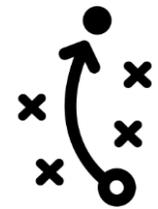
Symbolic



Short



Stories



Solutions

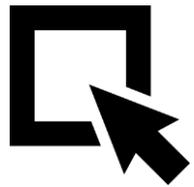
Vignette 3

- Richard (*who previously argued for tax credits for grocery chains to donate to food banks*) recognizes that in addition to food banks' reliance on food donations, volunteers are essential to their functioning. He feels that while volunteers are generally lauded for their contributions to society, praise alone is insufficient. In response, he is advocating for a volunteer tax credit program through which food bank volunteers would receive up to \$300 per year as equivalent to a charitable donation for at least 50 hours of documented food bank volunteering.

Small Groups Round 2

INSTRUCTIONS

- Read the vignette provided
- Using the techniques described, put together a list of arguments **for** and **against** the policy proposed



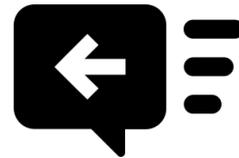
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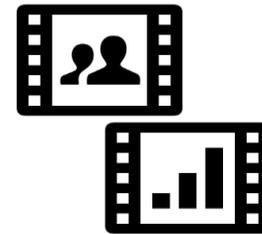
Simple



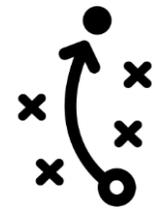
Symbolic



Short



Stories



Solutions

Vignette 4

- Melanie Wilkinson, 35, is a first term government member in British Columbia. Melanie's Vancouver riding consists of several neighbourhoods that are undergoing gentrification. She is very concerned about the high levels of child hunger and child obesity in the area. She wants to bring a strong focus on food, including gardening, preservation, and budgeting techniques into the broader school curriculum. As a first step to meet this aim, she is drafting an amendment to add food skills and nutrition education as Powers and Duties included in the School Act of British Columbia.

A few words from the Master of Argumentation

Large group reflection and
identification of take home
messages

Thank You

PROOF
Research to identify policy options
to reduce food insecurity

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Food insecurity is a serious public health problem that affects over 3.8 million Canadians.

Who we are

PROOF is an international, interdisciplinary team of researchers who are committed to the reduction of household food insecurity, which is the inadequate or insecure access to adequate food due to financial constraints.

Our mandate

In 2011, the Government of Canada's health research investment agency, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) awarded 11 Programmatic Grants to Tackle Health and Health Equity in Canada. Our team was privileged to receive one of these grants to execute a five-year research program to identify viable and effective policy interventions to improve household food insecurity in Canada.

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News & Updates

- Globe and Mail article: "Recession's legacy has food-bank usage soaring in Canada"
- New publication on the association between household food insecurity and heating cost inflation in Canada
- Canadian Government announces funding to address health equity
- United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier DeSchutter