

COMMUNICATING STRATEGICALLY ABOUT IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION: POLICYMAKER PERSPECTIVES



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'Narrative framing and building place-based narratives of inclusion at the local level'

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Goals of Immigration and Integration Communications

- (1) Inclusive communications: Promoting diversity and social cohesion
- (2) Informational communications: Weighing the costs and benefits of integration policies
- (3) Persuasive communications: Changing minds
- (4) Reactive communications: Responding to crisis

Match Goals with Communications Tools

- In selecting communications tools, need to consider:
 - communications goals
 - policy objectives
 - type of message
 - target audience
 - cost
 - level of interaction
 - resources
- Many approaches utilise a bouquet of communications strategies



Challenges Communicating About Immigrant Integration

- (1) Division of labour between policymakers and in-house communications teams
 - Lack of mainstream knowledge about integration within public communication teams
- (2) What works for one audience may backfire with another
 - Audiences are heterogeneous and segmented
 - Public communications may be bound by strict style guidelines that cannot be calibrated to the audience
 - Not a blank slate: Need tailored messages that account for the values, preferences, and concerns of particular audiences



Challenges Communicating About Immigrant Integration

- (2) What works for one audience may backfire (continued)
 - Explaining the ‘narrative turn’:
 - Potential benefits:
 - Storytelling can help make sense of complex phenomena
 - Shares information and feelings
 - Creates space for personal connections
 - Easier to memorise and recall
 - Reduced out-of-hand rejections and reactions
 - Compatible with cognitive dissonance

Challenges Communicating About Immigrant Integration

(2) What works for one audience may backfire (continued)

– Explaining the ‘narrative turn’:

- Potential cautions:

- Can trigger and reinforce particular ‘frames’ in different audiences

- » Common immigration and integration frames (Crawley et al., 2016) :

- » **Benefit:** real or potential positive contributions immigrants make to the economy or culture of a society

- » **Victim:** immigrants as victims, and potentially reinforce stereotypes of requiring more from society than they are contributing

- » **Threat/villain:** economic threats or burdens, cultural incompatibility, or dangerous criminals and threats to public order and safety

Challenges Communicating About Immigrant Integration

- (3) Communications can be dismissed or ignored
 - Especially if delivered by untrusted messengers or fail to acknowledge people's lived experiences
 - Tapping trusted messengers, such as strong local leaders, influential community members, and peers, can make messages more credible and persuasive



Challenges Communicating About Immigrant Integration

- (4) Messages can be confused by different priorities
 - Institutional inconsistencies
 - Diverging national and local priorities
 - Sensational immigration reporting and ‘fake news’



Implications for Integration Policy

- Words matter
- Body language matters
- The messenger matters
- Not everything should be communicated by governments



Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Know your audience
2. Listening is more important than talking
3. Reflect the priorities of the whole society
4. Acknowledge conflict
5. Success is often tied to the strength of individual leadership
6. Professionalise in-house communications

For more information

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