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Framing and Strategic Messaging

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Four Points I Will Make in My Remarks

1. Health communication and health promotion often emphasize individual behavior; this is limiting
2. There is emerging theory and research on effective communication to promote evidence-based health policies
3. Inoculation and narratives are evidence-based message strategies to re-frame health issues toward collective (policy-oriented) solutions...
4. But neither of these are a panacea

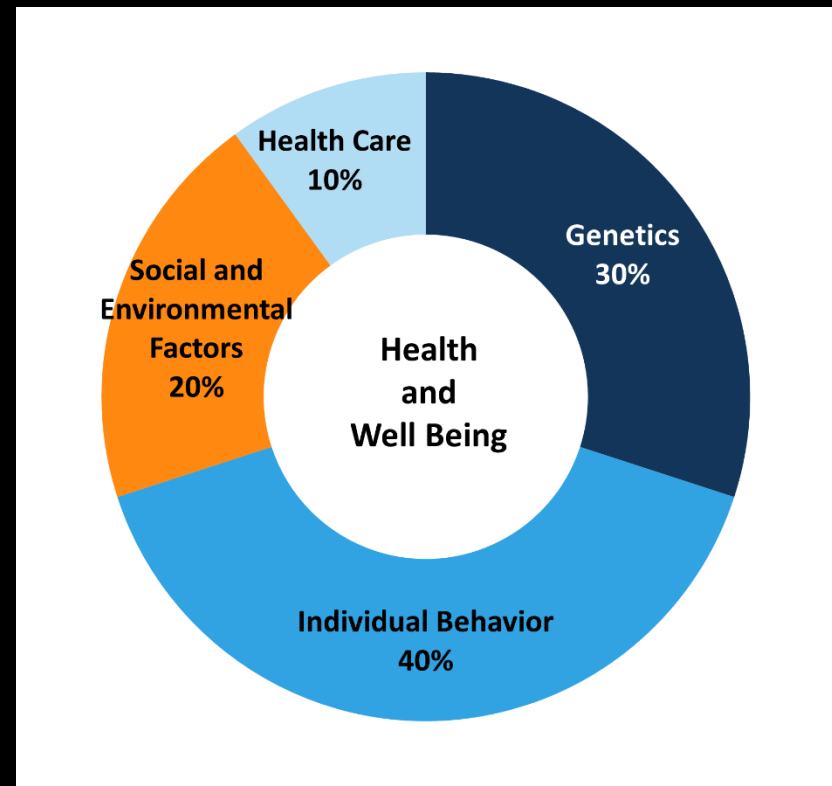
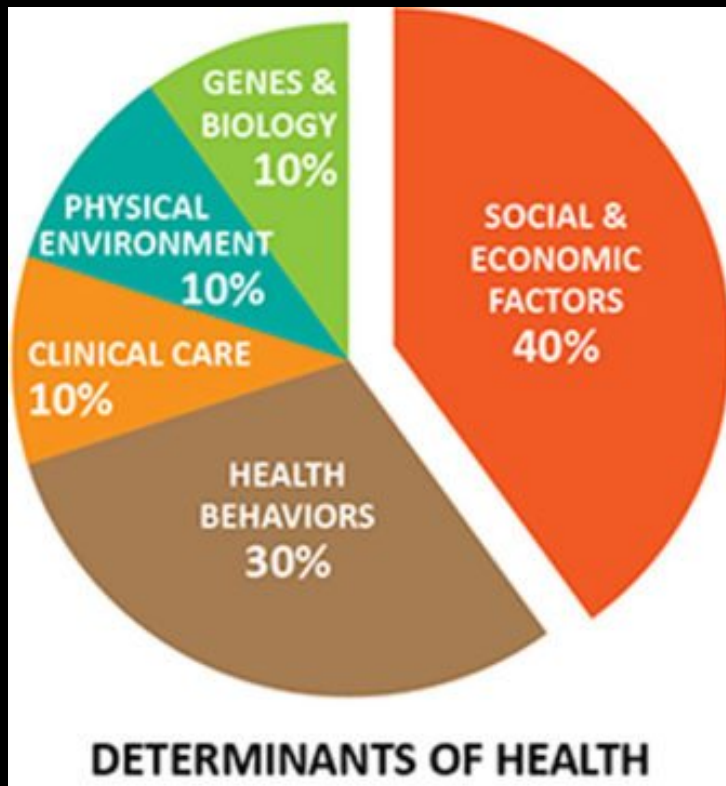


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Health Communication and Health Promotion Often Emphasize Individual Behavior

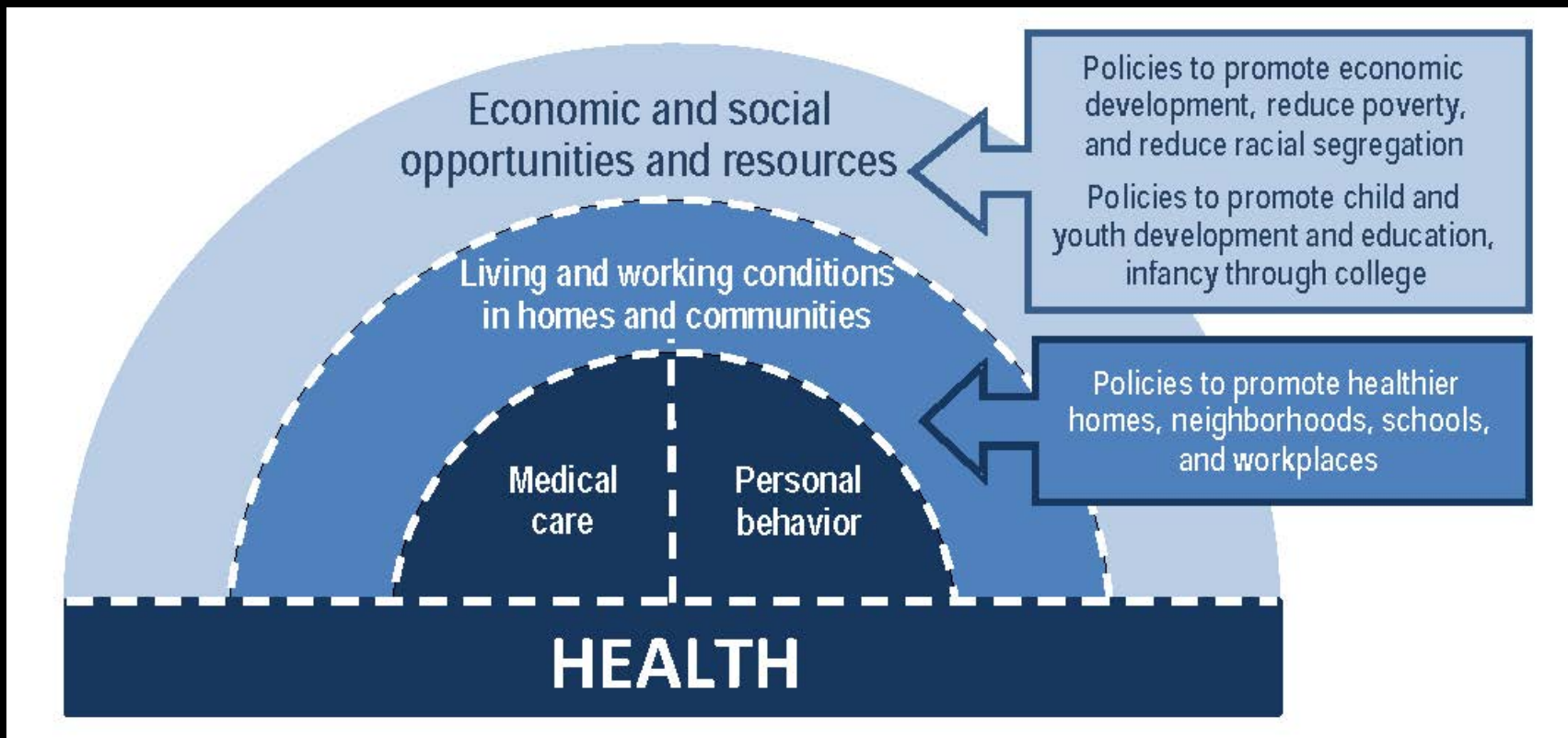


Determinants of Human Health





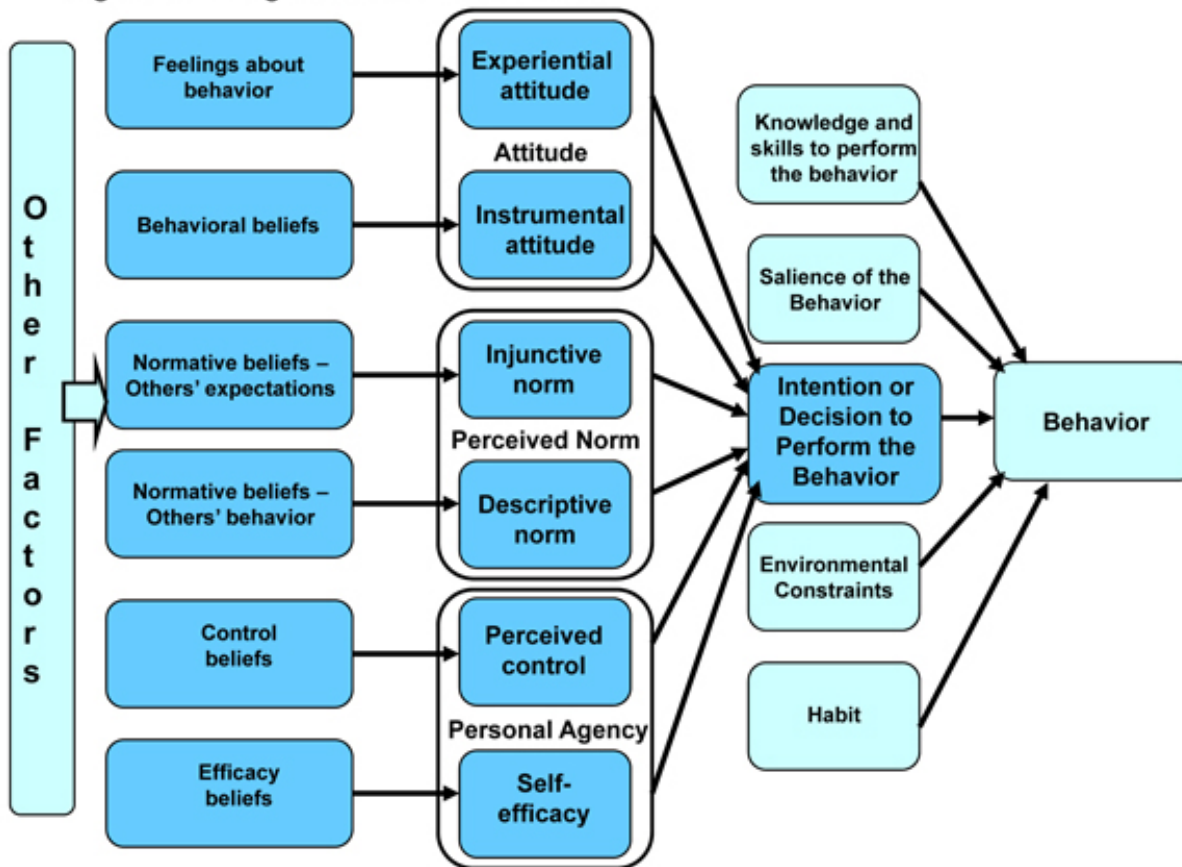
Health Behaviors and Health Care are Heavily Influenced by Social and Policy Context





Emphasis of Health Communication / Promotion

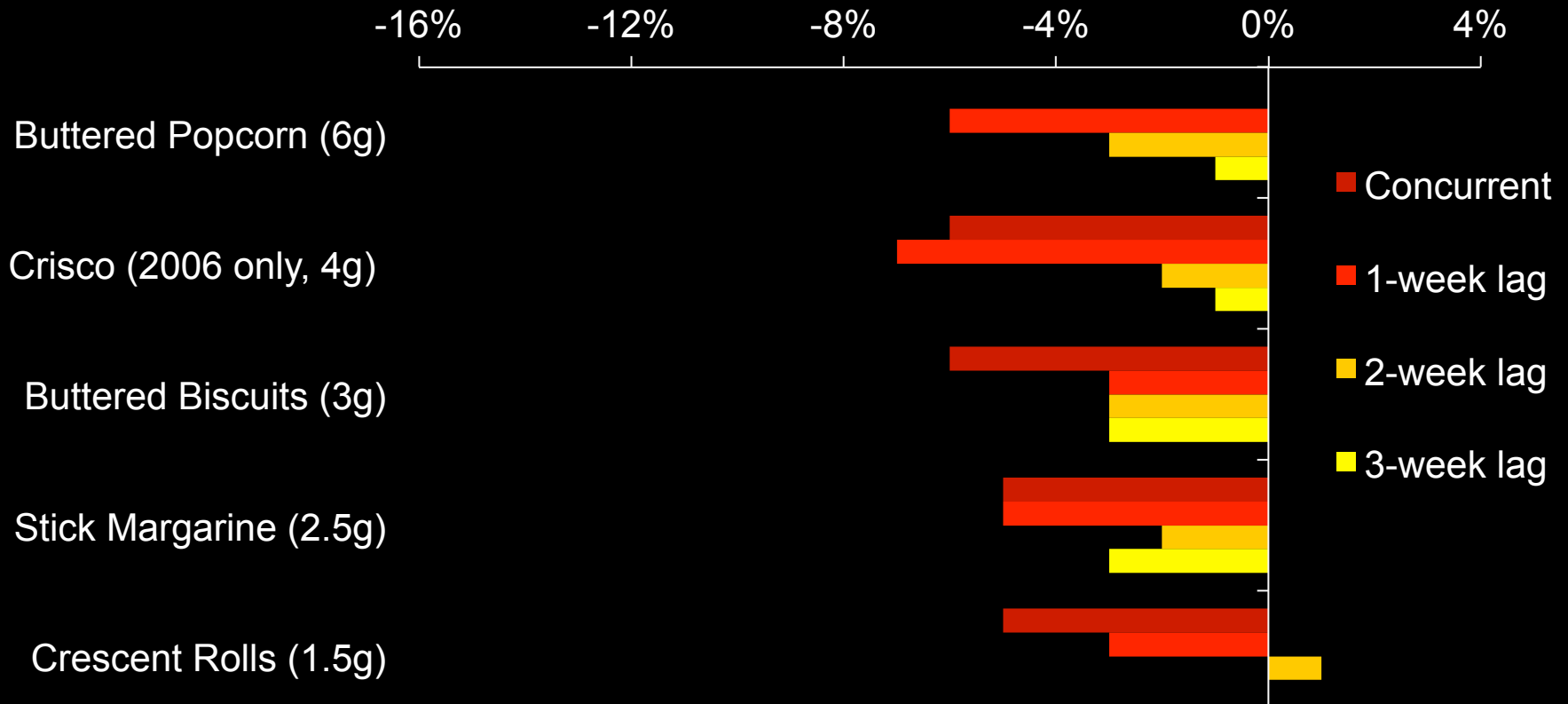
Figure 2. Integrated Behavioral Model





Health Campaign Effects Can Be Small and Short-Lived

% Change in Sales of High Trans Fat Products Associated with 1-Unit Change in Media Coverage of the Harms of Trans Fats





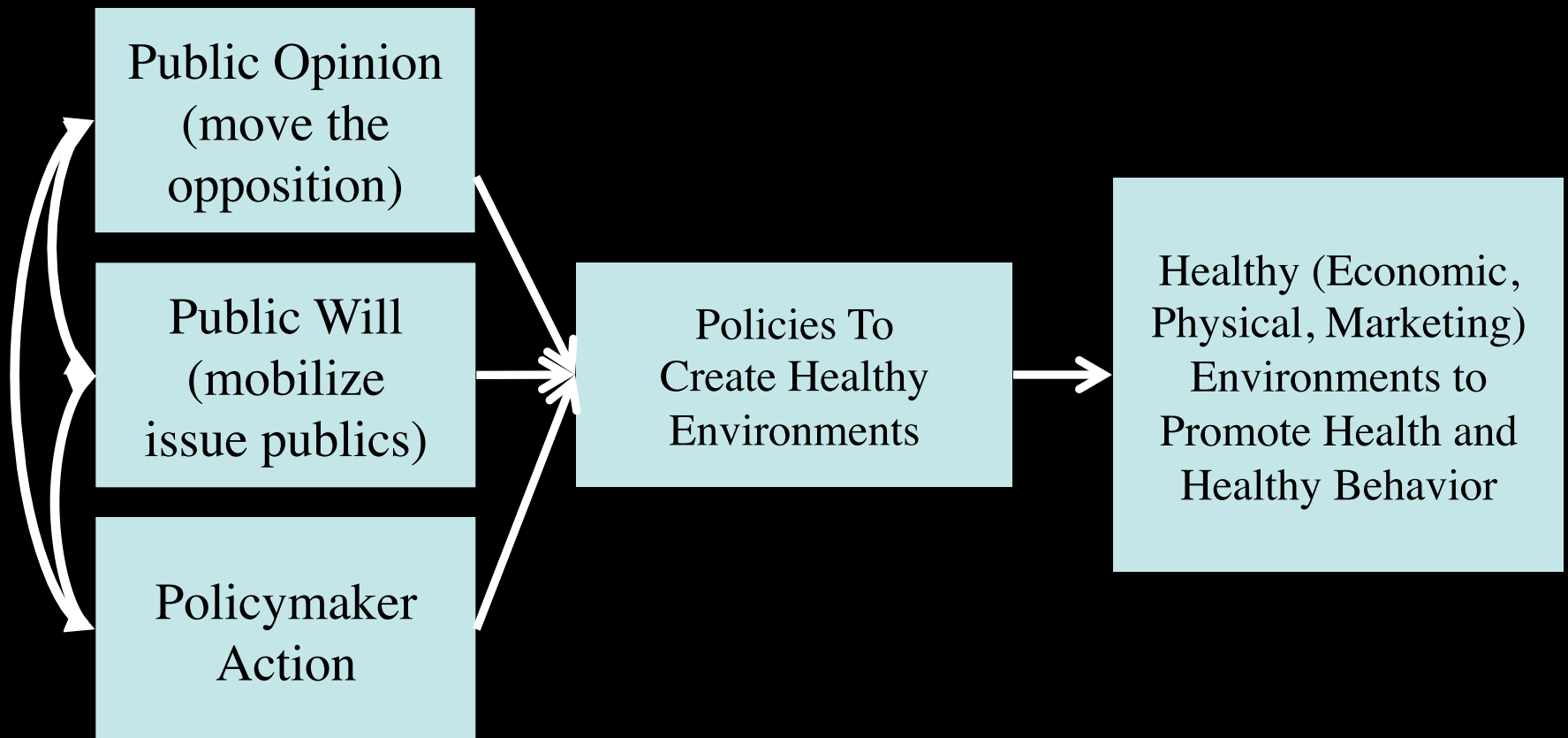
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There is Emerging Theory and Research on
Effective Communication to Promote
Evidence-Based Health Policy



WHO Matters for Policy Change?

Models of Public Opinion and Policy Processes





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Also... There Is Lots of Competition





These Industries...

- Oppose evidence-based policies
- Outspend advocates by a huge margin
- Emphasize:
 - Threat to individual freedom/choice
 - Harms of big government
 - Benefits of self-regulation
 - Uncertainty in relevant science

Soda Industry Spending Against Public Health Tops \$100 Million

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Spending Since 2009 Targets Taxes, Warning Label Measures

August 25, 2015

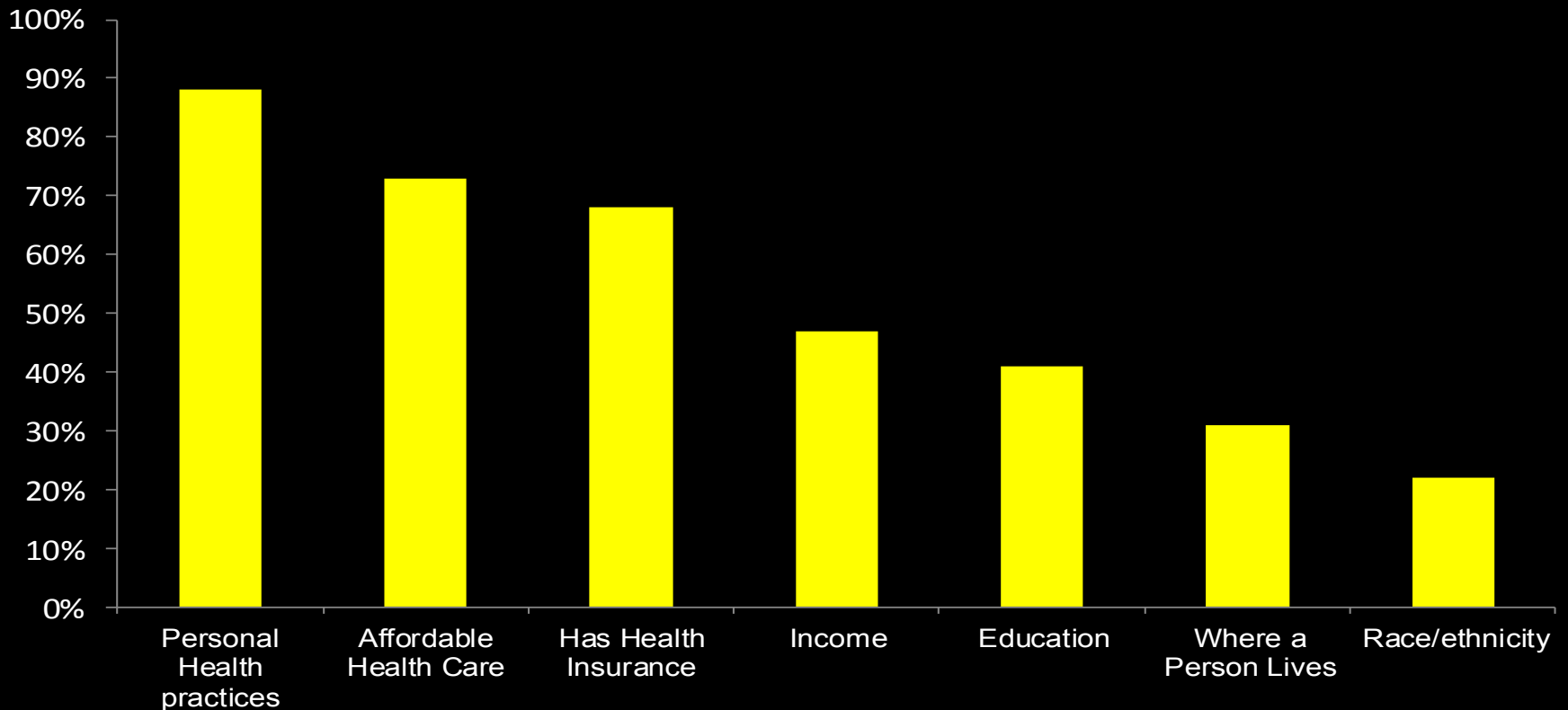
Related Links

[Read the report here](#)





These industries (and other factors) have shaped public opinion about factors that shape health





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There are Evidence-Based Message Strategies
to Re-Frame Population Health Issues...

But None of These are a Panacea



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Inoculation Strategies





Inoculation Theory

- Medical analogy
- Two main message components:
 - Forewarning
 - “These guys are going to try to persuade you; they are not credible because X, Y & Z”
 - Refutational preemption
 - “Here’s why they are wrong”



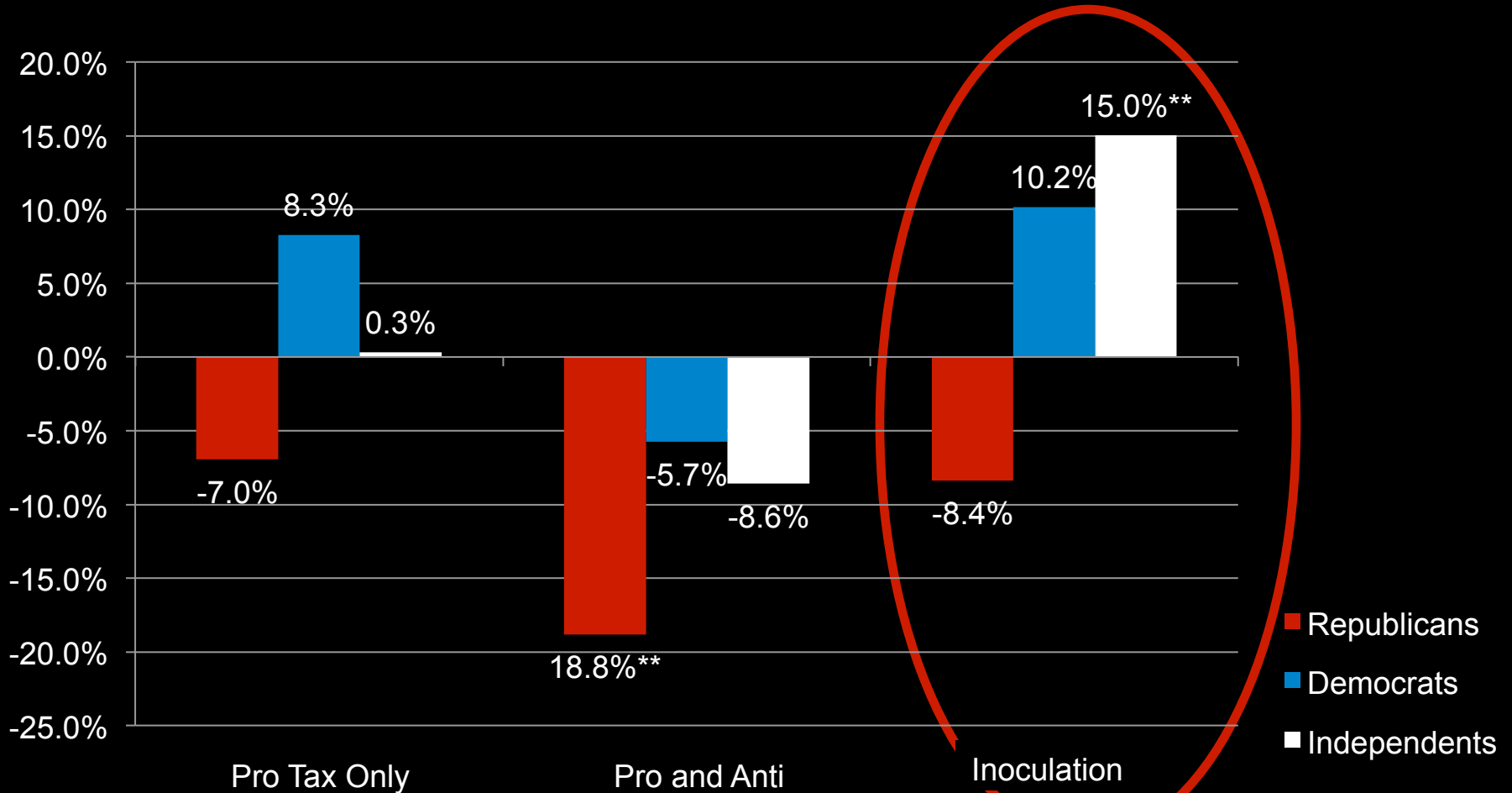
Inoculation Example – Soda Tax Debate

Soda companies will try to convince you that a tax on sugary drinks is arbitrary because it does not affect foods like donuts, cookies, and candy bars. They will say that they are an unacceptable intrusion of government into people's personal choices. They will call them "food taxes" to try to confuse people.

But sugary drinks are not food – they have no nutritional value. In fact, research suggests that sugary drinks are the single largest driver of obesity in the United States. Nobody is telling anyone what to drink. But, by adding a few pennies to the price of a soda, many people will choose differently.

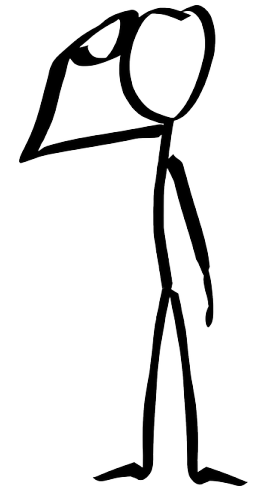


Effects Differed by Political Ideology





Inoculation can work as a pre-emptive strategy



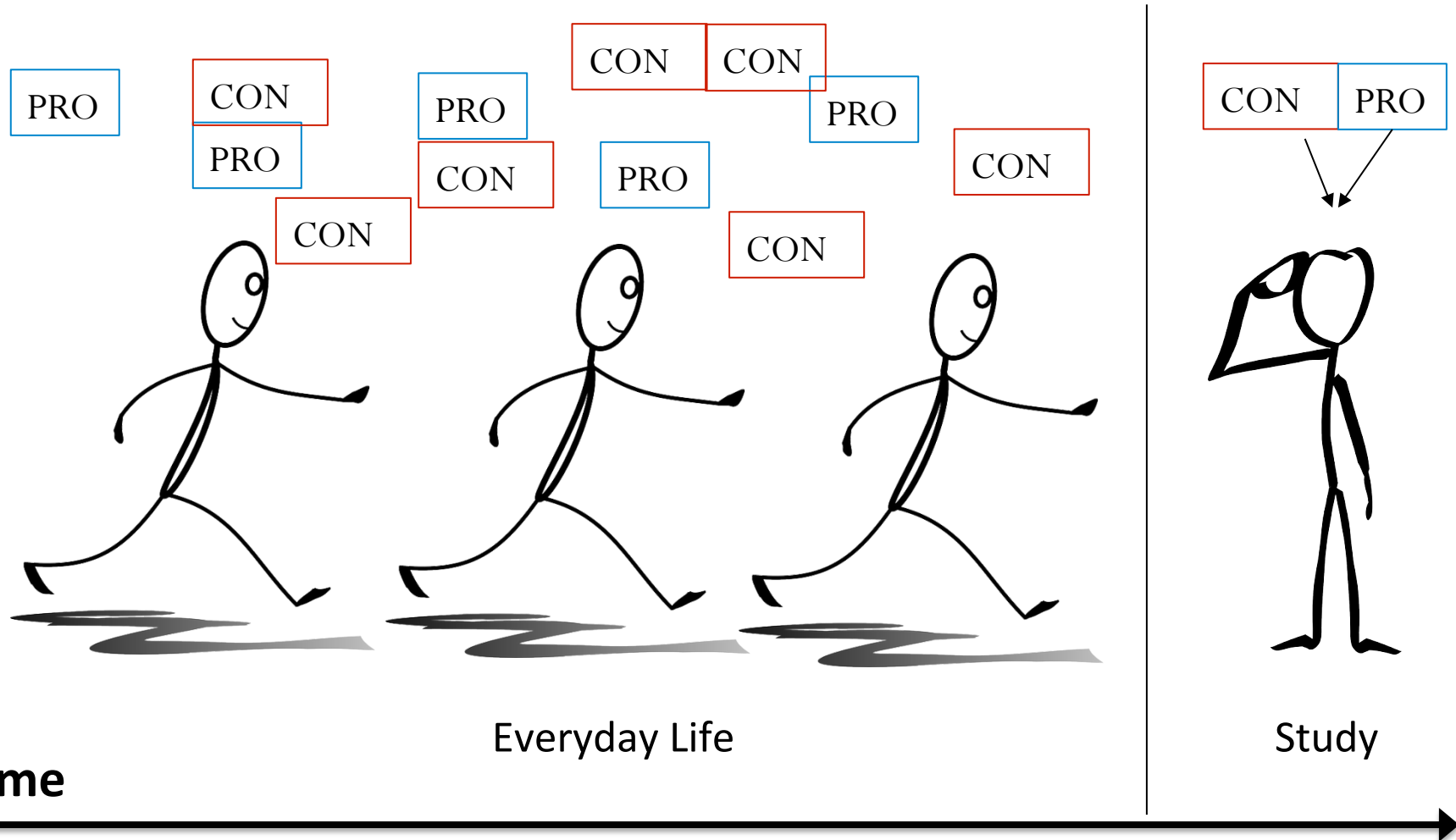
First exposure

Time





Less successful if there is prior exposure





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Narratives of Policy Success

Personal Stories





Narrative Theory

- Concrete form of information, easy to process
- Bread and butter of advocates and news media
- Narratives work (in part, sometimes) by reducing counterarguing of advocacy messages
- Narrative effects can increase over time



Key Ingredients of Successful Narratives

1. Emphasize social factors / causes, but...
 - DO NOT ignore individual actions
 - AVOID incidental details that derail the train
2. Scale up
 - “XXX is not alone – others face this problem”
 - Maps conveying the scope of the problem
 - Community-level stories
3. Clearly demonstrate HOW the policy will help the character / community

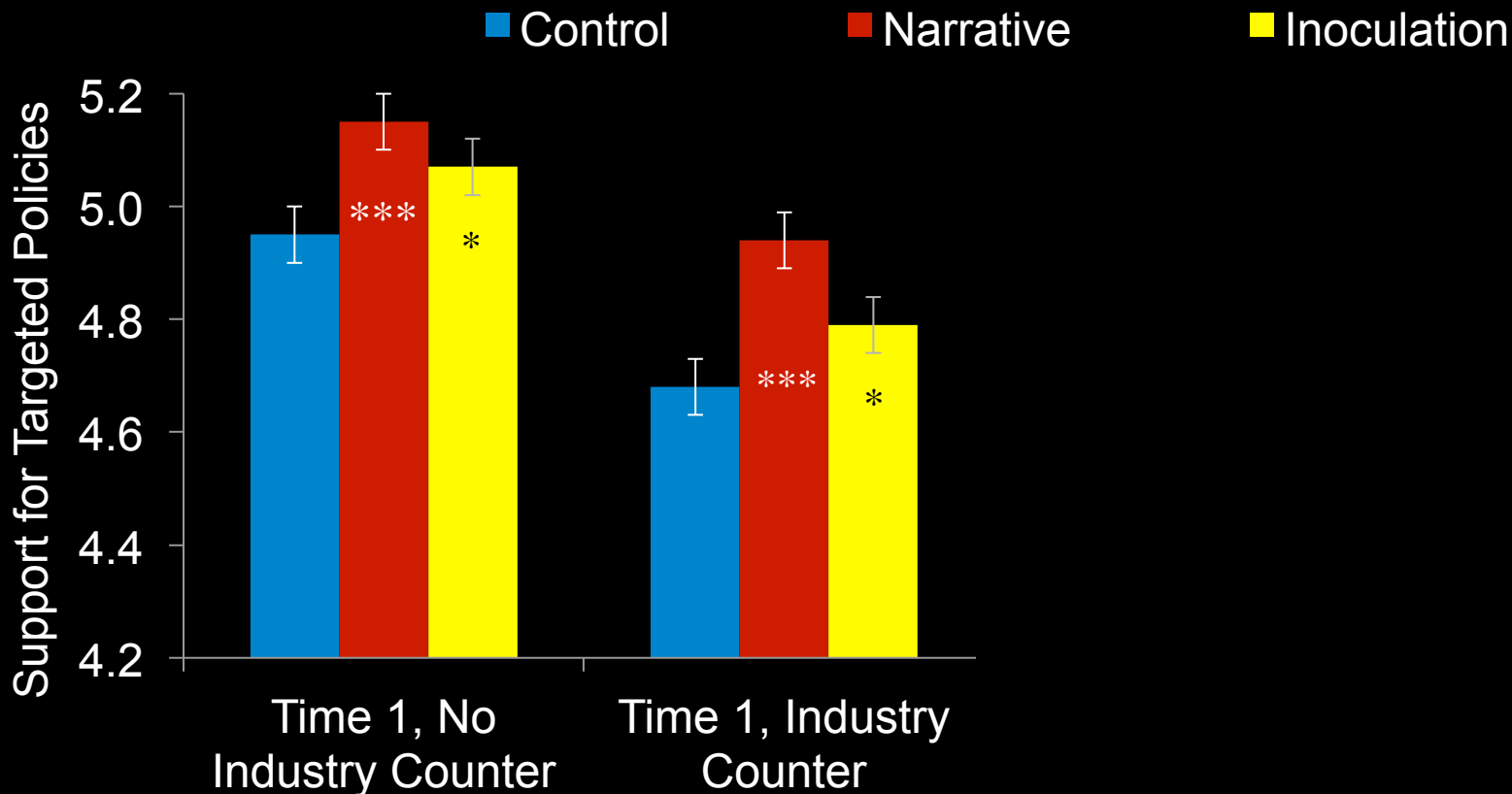


Narrative Example – Marketing Restrictions

- Character: Cynthia, mother of two, struggles with:
 - Her daughter’s weight problem (soda),
 - Her daughter’s experimentation with smoking (cigarettes)
 - Her own struggles with addiction (Rx pain meds).
- Conflict and Resolution
 - The story described how industry marketing influenced her or her daughter’s behaviors,
 - Described her efforts to offset these marketing practices,
 - Placed struggles in a broader context (“many parents face similar challenges”), and
 - Showed how policy change would address these issues

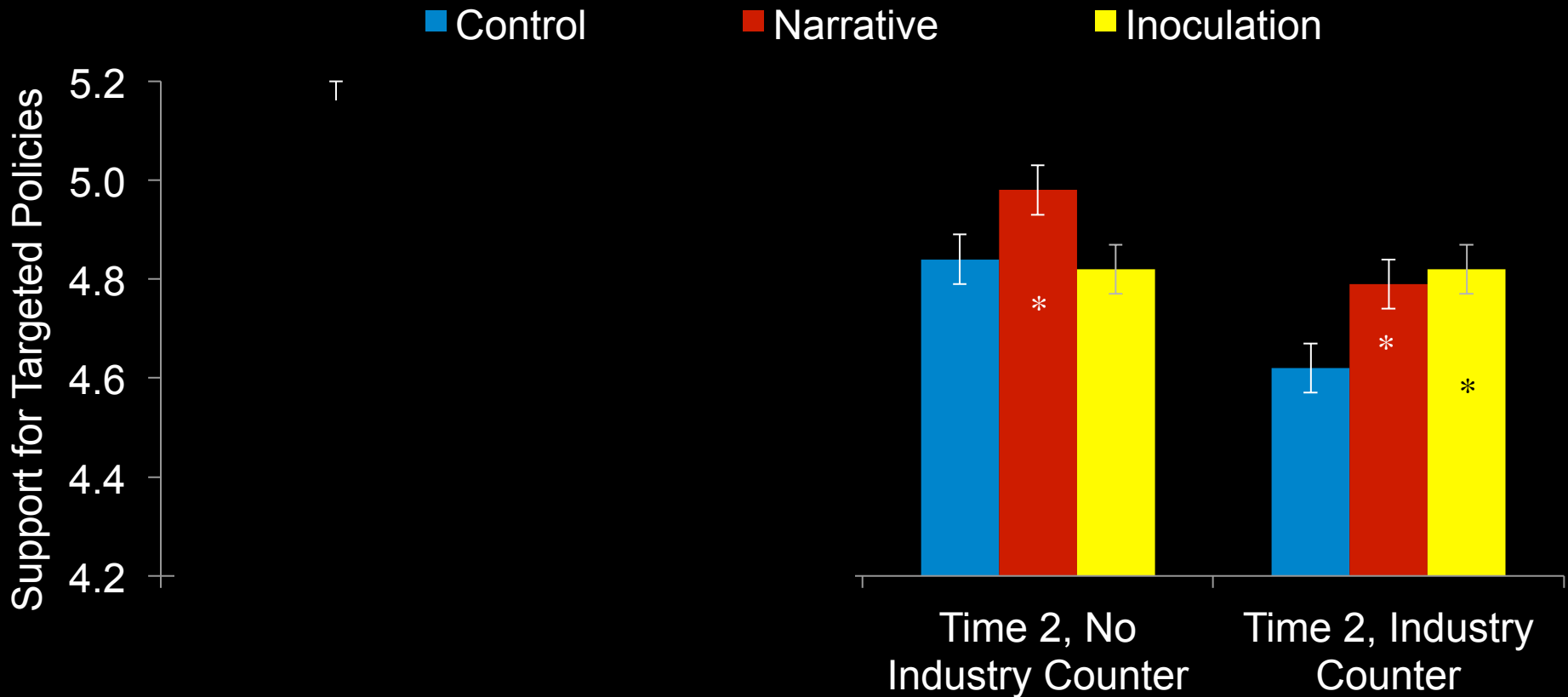


Condition Effects on Support for Message-Targeted Health Policies Over Time





Condition Effects on Support for Message-Targeted Health Policies Over Time





Closing Thoughts

- Need much more emphasis in theory and research on effective health communication about social / community factors and policy solutions
- Inoculation and narrative strategies can help to re-frame these issues and move audiences toward support for collective, community-level solutions
- These strategies can backfire if done carelessly



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When Does Public Opinion Matter?



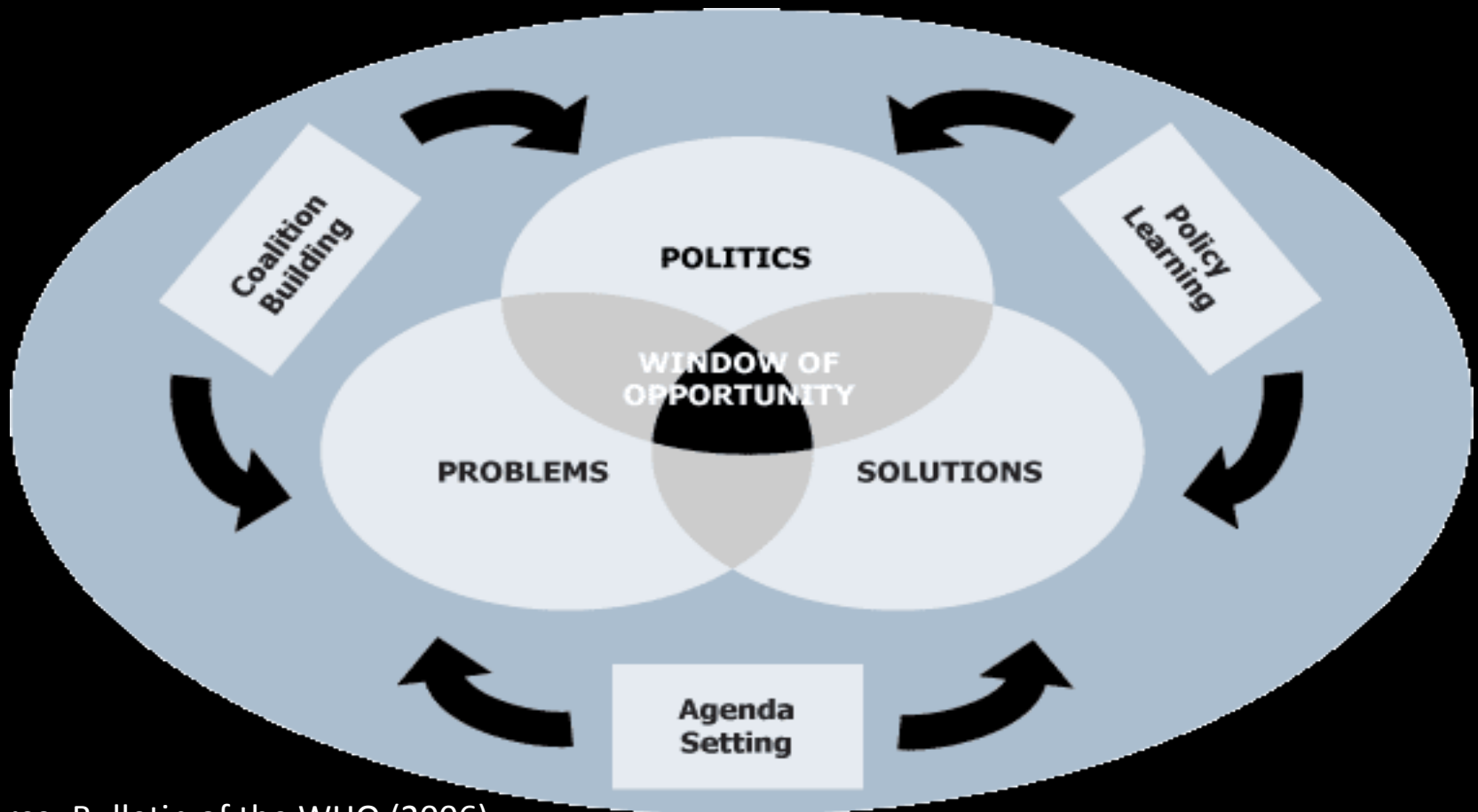
When Does Public Opinion Matter?

- In direct democracy states





But the Policy Process is Often Complex...





When Does Public Opinion Matter?

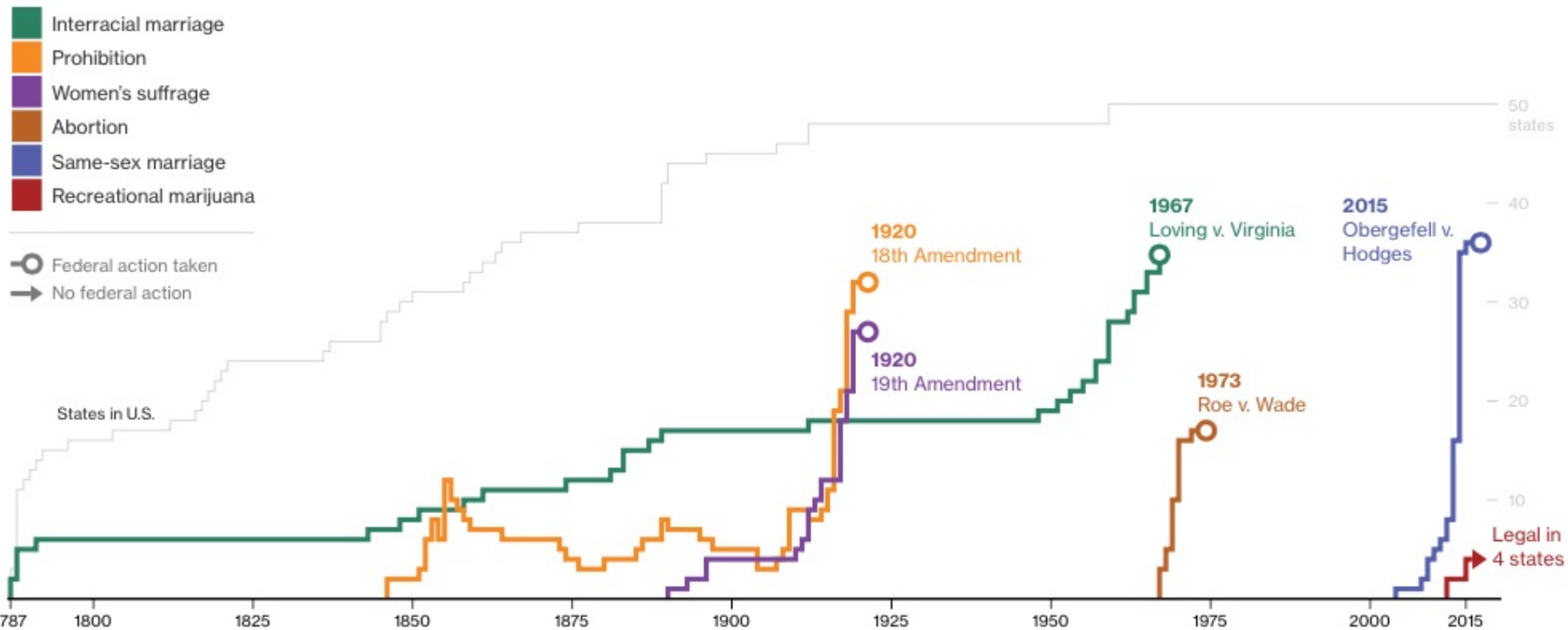
- In direct democracy states
- To move toward a tipping point?



Social Change Can Happen Quickly

Tracking the Pace of Social Change

Number of states that have removed a ban, by year
(Prohibition shows the number of states that enacted)



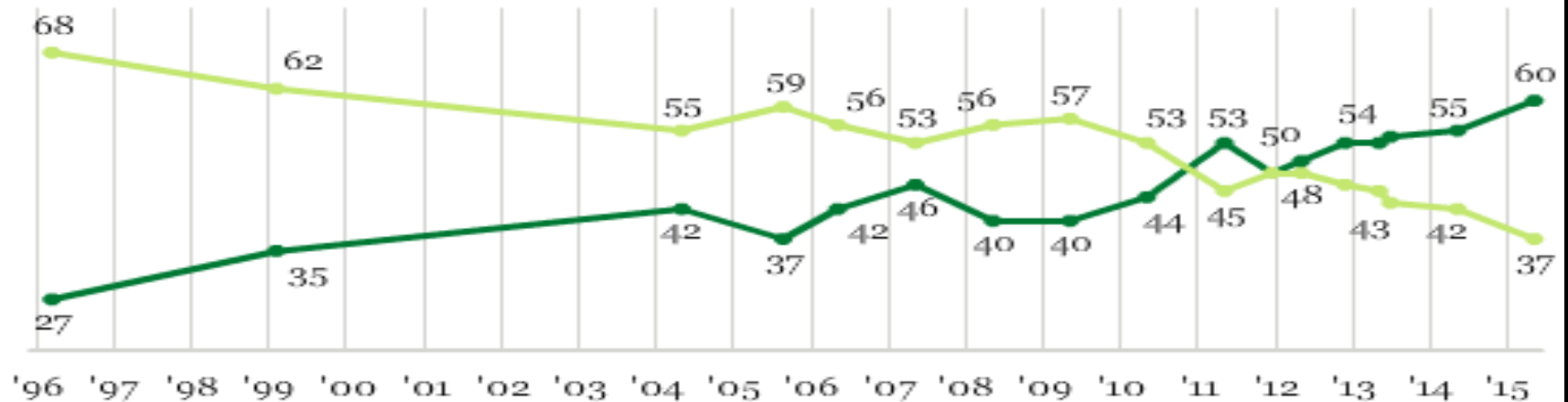


Changes in Public Sentiment can Set the Stage for Changes in Policy

Do you think marriages between same-sex couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?

■ % Should be valid

■ % Should not be valid



Note: Trend shown for polls in which same-sex marriage question followed questions on gay/lesbian rights and relations

1996-2005 wording: "Do you think marriages between homosexuals ..."



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Questions? Comments? Thank you!

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For full references and links to
papers cited, please visit:

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