DIA

DIGITAL DEMOCRACY
INSTITUTE OF THE AMERICAS

Best Practices for Producing Prebunking Content for U.S. Latino Communities

Recommendations are based on findings from a DDIA survey and focus groups

◆ What is Inoculation?

- **Inoculation:** proactive approach to combating misinformation

  - Expose people to weakened forms of misinformation and its characteristics as a way of building resistance to future manipulation attempts

- **Analogy:** a "mental vaccine" against harmful content

- Fact-checks address false beliefs AFTER exposure; Inoculation aims to build defenses BEFORE misinformation is encountered.

- Inoculation can be done against **narratives** and **tactics**

◆ The Inoculation Recipe

1. "Forewarning,"

2. "Microdosing"

3. "Refuting"

◆ **What Gaps Did We Set out to Address?**

Despite the promise of inoculation, we know very little about its effectiveness within Latino communities

- Majority of studies conducted using general population (i.e., non-Hispanic white) samples in the U.S. and UK
- Zero research focusing on U.S. Latinos; very little in Latin America

**DDIA conducted the first randomized controlled trial of inoculation on U.S. Latino audiences**

- 3,031 participants recruited by YouGov
- Placebo-controlled experimental design
- 6 Focus Groups of Latinos across states

◆ Our Approach

Three Latino content producers applied their own spin on cultural competence:

- **MediaPlus:** Latino cartoon characters, with cross-generational cultural references (e.g., The Simpsons) used to illustrate concepts. Fully animated.

- **Cabezahueca Films:** Live actor speaking in English with light accent, combined with animations and popular movie references (e.g., Star Wars). Partly animated.

- **Factchequeado:** Vertical TikTok / IG explainers with Latino commentators and references to real-world, political content. Not animated.
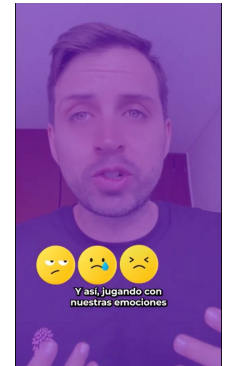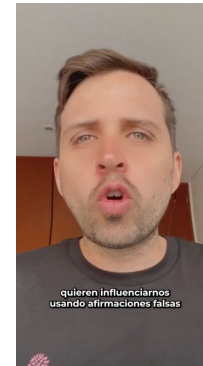
Our Approach

Three Tactics: False Dichotomies, Emotional Language, Ad-Hominem Attacks

Iterative Approach:

- Representative focus groups across key states
- Content creators implemented focus group feedback throughout production

FALSE DICHOTOMIES

When things are too black and white,
DARE TO BE GRAY.

EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE

Before sharing something online,
ask yourself '**DOES THIS SEEM TRUE?**

AD-HOMINEM ATTACKS

Just because they get personal
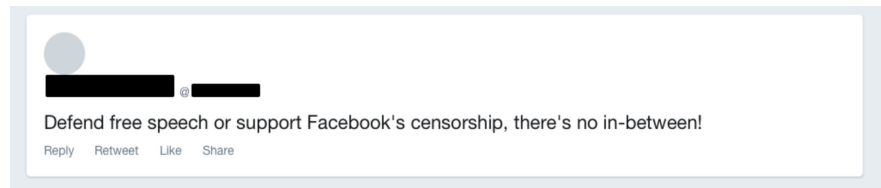**DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO**

What We Measured

- After watching the assigned video for the trial, participants were asked to rate 6 social media posts that varied in the use of manipulation tactics on three criteria:

  - **Trustworthiness**

    (whether the social media post

    was trustworthy)

  - **Sharing Intention**

    (whether they would share

    the posts)

  - **Detection of Manipulation**

    (whether they perceived the posts

    as manipulative)

Heartbreaking and infuriating! Innocent children are being targeted and groomed by the LGBTQ agenda. We must protect our kids from this threat at all costs!

Reply   Retweet   Like   Share

Defend free speech or support Facebook's censorship, there's no in-between!

Reply   Retweet   Like   Share

Key Findings

◆ Key Findings

- **Inoculation works among Latinos**

  - All inoculation videos improved people's ability to detect manipulation and reduced their intent to share manipulative content

  - Inoculating Latinos against manipulative tactics like emotional language and false dichotomies was easier than addressing ad-hominem attacks.

- **Political, real-world content was effective in moving misinformation-related outcomes, but people rated these videos lower in accuracy, entertainment value, and shareability**

◆ Key Findings

- **Inoculation effectiveness varies across Latino subgroups**

  - More effective for: women, millennial/Gen X, English speakers, immigrant citizens, less educated, Puerto Rican ancestry, low political interest

  - Less effective for: men, Spanish speakers, adults over 60, those under 30

  - No evidence of backlash effects for any group

- **Targeting "uncertain" Latinos may be most effective, but more work needs to be done to strengthen interventions**

  - Uncertain Latinos (e.g., Latinas, Facebook users, those close to immigration experience) are better targets than those already believing misinformation

  - Effect sizes generally small: most interventions moved outcomes by 2-3 percentage points, largest effect 6 points among immigrant citizens)

  - Investigate reasons for weaker effects in some subgroups (e.g., resistance to correction, lack of cultural resonance)

  - Consider pairing inoculation with other interventions like digital literacy tips and accuracy nudges

Best Practices

◆ Best Practices - Content Approach and Tone

1. **Respect the intelligence of your audience**

    - "Lead people to water, don't force them to drink"
    - Employ subtle warnings, not direct call-outs
    - Avoid phrases like "don't let yourself be fooled," or "don't be an idiot"
    - Rely on subtle questions in the spirit of: *"Before sharing something online, ask yourself, 'does this seem true?'"*
    - Rely on subtle calls to action in the spirit of: *"When things are too black and white, dare to be gray."*

2. **Back assertions with evidence and examples**

    - Show AND tell; back up your points with relevant numbers, quotes from experts, etc.

◆ Best Practices - Messenger and Credibility

3. **Keep your messengers somewhat neutral**

    - Prebunking and political persuasion are not one and the same

    - Messengers that are seen as more neutral or well-balanced can make inoculation more effective

    - If your messenger signals strong partisanship, you may be seen as "having an agenda"

4. **Introduce your messenger**

    - A simple label with the name of the messenger, a reference to the messenger's organization, or to other indicators that demystify the messenger, can assuage skepticism

5. Harness entertainment, pop culture, humor

- **Pop culture vs. politics -**
  - People found references to music, movies, and comedy to be both entertaining and engaging.
  - When pop cultural content depicted political settings, that still seemed subtle enough for audiences to find effective.
  - Real-world political or overt references to election fraud or immigration policies were cited as having inserted "bias" into the explanations.

- **Intergenerational references** - Incorporate everyday scenarios

- **Humor** - Funny content is more likely to be watched and shared by viewers. It can also make a subject that is complex more accessible

6. Harness Shared Values and "Latino" Cultural Cues

- Stories that evoke shared values and empathy can be particularly compelling for viewers.
  - Embrace values of **family, personal responsibility, and hard work.**

  - When asked an open-ended question about values, **a plurality of Latinos (41%) reported family as the value that is most important to them.**

- Recent Equis research afound that "using visual cultural 'cues' in English-language videos can be an effective way to signal that content was made specifically for Latino audiences, without any backlash among non-Latinos."

  - Subtly harness **visuals of Latino workers, foods, household items, family gatherings, or even Spanish writing**

◆ Best Practices - Cultural Competence

7. Partner with Latino Voices

- Involving Latino creators, journalists, and subject-matter experts in creating prebunking messaging content can enhance its credibility and relevance.

- Keep in mind your messengers should lean "neutral"

  - Local journalists may be a good place to start.
  - Feature diverse Latino voices to represent the community's varied perspectives and experiences.

◆ Best Practices - Language and Communication

8. Produce content in English AND Spanish

9. Shy Away from Spanglish

- Bilingual content that employs both languages in one single output doesn't perform better than other language approaches, and can have volatile effects.

10. Don't Exaggerate Accents

- Evaluate the use of messengers with accents from a perspective of authenticity and audience engagement.
- Very strong accents can signal that you are trying too hard.
- Be mindful of accents from different countries.

◆ Best Practices - Visual and Media Elements

11. **Tailor content to the medium**

   ● Keep in mind production quality and audience expectations. Consider video length, aspect ratio, caption requirements, and audience's expectations (entertainment, learning).

12. **Mix visual effects**

   ● Incorporate visuals that help break down complex ideas or illustrate key points that reinforce the message.

   ● Use a mix of animation and real-world imagery to maintain a balance between engaging visuals and more serious content.

13. Gather and Incorporate Audience Feedback into Your Content

- Measure whether interventions move outcomes of interest (e.g., misinformation sharing) or closely related proxies (e.g., sharing intention) using rigorous methodologies like randomized controlled trials (RCTs).

- Identification of manipulation and reduced sharing of manipulative content are a good sign that the intervention is working.

- Regularly review engagement metrics and comments on prebunk content.

- Test different approaches and formats with Latino audiences.

- Be willing to adapt content.

Best Practices - Accessibility

14. Employ Visual, Hearing, and Language Accessibility

- Include closed captions for video content, and also ensure that sufficient color contrast and readable fonts exist in visual materials.

- Use language that is clear and straightforward, avoiding the use of jargon, to make content accessible to many audiences.

◆ Conclusion

- **<u>Inoculation is effective</u>** in combating misinformation among Latinos

- Cultural competence can boost the effectiveness of interventions, but **<u>not all culturally competent treatments are created equal</u>**

- Things to keep in mind when creating culturally competent interventions
  - Respect the intelligence of the audience
  - Offer subtle warnings versus explicit call-outs
  - Avoid preaching or leveraging overtly political content
  - Use references that resonate with the broader community (family, connection)
  - Clarify concepts
  - Respect the logic of inoculation - "Weakened form" of misinformation

◆ Areas for Future Research

- **Optimizing inoculation strategies for different misinformation techniques**
  - Teaching people about ad hominem attacks was difficult for all of the interventions
  - May need to identify new ways of communicating these concepts to Latinos (and potentially the broader public)

- **Long-term effects of inoculation treatments**
  - Effects were generally small; unclear if they dissipate over time
  - "Boosters"

- **Improving engagement and real-world applicability without compromising effectiveness**
  - It makes sense to include political content because it may be more engaging and mirror content people actually see online, but runs risk of backfire on outcomes such as sharing, producing fewer eyes on the content.
  - More research needs to be done varying a large number of messengers and references to see what sticks.

◆ Resources - DDIA (2024)

Polling on Familiarity and Belief in Misinformation, Trust in Electoral Stakeholders, and Perceptions About AI Among Latinos

- [March/April 2024 Poll Takeaways - Latinos & Misinformation](#)
- [March/April 2024 Poll Takeaways - Latinos & Trust](#)
- [March/April Poll Takeaways - Latinos & AI](#)
- [Full Poll Report (PDF)](#)
- [Full Poll Deck (PDF)](#)

◆ Resources - DDIA (2024)

Narrative Analysis of Latino Spaces Online

- Ongoing coverage of [issues and narratives](#) in Latino spaces online (also available in Spanish and Portuguese)

- Summaries of Latino usage of key [platforms and apps](#) (also available in Spanish and Portuguese)

- A [review of academic literature](#) on U.S. Latinos and disinformation

◆ Resources - DDIA (2023)

Polling On Familiarity and Belief in Misinformation Among Latinos and Effective Counter-Measures

- **(Memo 1):** [In and Out of the Rabbit Hole: Exploring Misinformation Adoption among Subgroups of Latinos in the United States](#)

- **(Memo 2):** [Unpacking Misinformation Adoption Among U.S. Latinos: Toward a Typology](#)

- **(Memo 3):** [Seeking Antidotes to Misinformation: An Analysis of Effective Counter-Strategies among U.S. Latinos](#)

Resources - Equis (2022-2024)

- **Polling On Familiarity and Belief in Misinformation Among Latinos**
  - Equis Misinformation Poll Summary
  - Equis Misinformation Poll Full Results

- **Trusted Messengers**
  - Equis Experiment: The Role of Trusted Messengers in Countering Disinformation

- **Latino Media Consumption Research**
  - Equis Playbook: Media Consumption Among Latinos
  - Equis and Harmony Labs YouTube Research

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