

# A Mob To Fill The Gap

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Persuasion Capabilities of Carrotmob Campaigns Aimed At Increasing Healthy Food in Low-Income  
D.C. Wards

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### **Identification of Social Problem**

The availability of fresh, healthy foods in low-income D.C. wards is few and far between. This problem is due in large part to the prevalence of “grocery gaps” and “food deserts” in low-income D.C. wards. Both “grocery gaps” and “food deserts” are terms used to describe the lack of supermarkets and fresh, healthy food options in low-income areas around the country. “A large-scale study of 21 U.S. cities documented that ZIP codes with larger numbers of people on public assistance had fewer large grocery stores that offer a greater variety of foods than middle-income neighborhoods” (Algert, Agrawal, & Lewis, 2006). Like other major cities in the U.S., Washington D.C. has its own share of this problem.

In 2010, DC Hunger Solutions, an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center, in partnership with Social Compact, a non-profit organization dedicated to facilitating sustainable private investment in undervalued communities, published a report titled “When Healthy Food Is Out of Reach” that analyzed the grocery gap problem in the District of Columbia (*When*, 2010). The report’s findings confirmed the existence of a grocery gap in D.C., primarily in wards 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (*When*, 2010). The report found Ward 3 to be the most affluent D.C. ward. The report’s data showed that Ward 3 has 80,775 residents, 86.3% of which are non-Hispanic Caucasian and has an average household income of \$128,000. The data also showed that Ward 3 has 11 full-service grocery stores, 1 for every 7,343 residents, the average resident traveling .44 miles to reach a full-service grocer. An analysis on the health of Ward 3 showed that 42.2% of residents suffer from being overweight or obese and 3.5% of residents suffer from diabetes.

In contrast, the report’s data showed that Ward 8 was the poorest D.C. ward. The report’s data showed that Ward 8 has 69,047 residents, 93.3% of which are African-American or Hispanic and has an average household income of \$29,000. The data reported that Ward 8 has 3 full-

service grocery stores, 1 for every 23,016 residents, the average resident traveling .50 miles to reach a full-service grocer. An analysis on the health of Ward 8 showed that 71.5% of residents suffer from being overweight or obese and 18.3% of residents suffer from diabetes. The low-incomes, high rates in minority populations, low grocer-to-resident ratio, large distance between resident and grocer, and high percentage of obese and diabetic residents is consistent in wards 4, 5, 6 and 7 (*When*, 2010). As evident in the data, the unavailability of affordable grocery stores nearby contributes to the health problems that exist among the residents of low-income D.C. wards. These health problems cause issues such as diabetes and obesity and mostly affect residents of inner-city, low-income areas who are also mostly African-American (Algert et al., 2006; Giang et al., 2008; Kaufman, 1998; Pothukuchi, 2005; Powell et al., 2007; Shaffer, 2002). As can be seen from the “When Healthy Food Is Out of Reach” (2010) report, such is the case in the District of Columbia.

The goal of this campaign is to educate the broader D.C. community about the pervasive problem of “grocery gaps” and the resulting “food deserts” in low-income D.C. wards and to reward an already established corner store in a low-income D.C. ward that has committed itself to offering fresh and healthy food to its customers. We have chosen a “Carrotmob” campaign. Carrotmobs are a grassroots movement that uses the “carrot” from the famous “carrot or stick” dilemma, to implement change. A Carrotmob is a reverse boycott, the underlying power of a Carrotmob being coordinated consumer purchasing to financially reward businesses that engage in responsible business practices. We believe that a Carrotmob will leverage the well-connected, social media-savvy, D.C. food justice community and connected local communities. These communities are dedicated to social justice issues and have powerful organizing capabilities around such issues.

## **Target Audience**

In order to come up with the characteristics of the target audience, some secondary research has been conducted. This research consisted of looking into the population segments that already belong to the local food justice community in the D.C. area by examining the web pages of the Local Healthy Affordable Food For All coalition and the many organizations that make up the coalition. The values and the demographics of the directors and members of these organizations, as well as the values promoted by the organizations, have been analyzed in order to come up with the set of demographic characteristics and values that the members of the target audience of this campaign share. Because people involved in these types of organizations are presumed to care about nutrition and health, the statistics provided by the American Dietetic Organization have also been examined.

According to Wells and Burnett (2003), because of the clutter of stimuli that surrounds people nowadays, they are not able to perceive every message in their environment. People interpret messages under their frame of references and realities (set of experiences, values, beliefs, biases, and attitudes), they tend to seek out messages that coincide with how they already feel and what they already believe. This is referred to as selective exposure. In addition, as Leslie B. Snyder argues in “Health Communication Campaigns and their Impact,” with the rise of interactive media, campaigns are now more able to tailor their messages to their specific audiences and people appear to have a higher appreciation for “messages that provide feedback on their current practices, as well as behavioral recommendations that are tailored to their case” (Snyder, 2007, S35). It is for this reason that this secondary research among organizations that promote similar causes has been conducted. It allows for the selection of a target audience whose behaviors, values and needs correspond to those promoted in our campaign.

The main thing that unites the members of the D.C. food justice community is their knowledge about and concern for health and nutrition. According to the American Dietetic Organization, 71% of college graduates and 73% of graduate-school graduates consider diet and nutrition to be very important, while only 61% of people who have received only some high school education give it the same importance (*Nutrition*, 2001). In addition, the topic that this campaign will deal with is a topic that requires the audience to already be informed, because some of the terms and concepts that it introduces might be new to the general audience. Therefore, the campaign is more suitable for people who have a high need for cognition. For this reason, education is an important part of the audience's demographics. In accordance with our findings, this campaign seeks to target people who are at least in the process of completing their college degree, as well as college graduates, graduate school students and graduates. Therefore, our immediate target audience is college or higher degree educated people that belong to groups concerned with food security and nutrition, such as the HAFB, DC Hunger Solutions, and the Capital Area Food Bank, as well as people who work in careers related to health, nutrition or health education. Among the partners and members of these organizations are several people who belong to institutions like the John Hopkins Medical School and Pfizer.

However, by examining the values and missions of organizations like the Capital Area Food Bank it is possible to broaden this target audience. This organization values human rights and classifies nutritious food as a basic human right. It also values social justice, diversity and advocacy. Similar D.C. organizations like Bread For the City place a special value on education. These values are not only compatible with people who are involved in health and nutrition organizations and groups, but also with people who belong to other occupation sectors and reference groups such as the District of Columbia's Office of Human Rights, The Quijote Center

for social justice, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, as well as many of the non-profit organizations that exist in D.C. By appealing to these other values as well, it is more likely that this larger target population will positively perceive our messages and reflect this through their actions.

It can thus be said that our main target audience will be composed of young professionals and students who value health and nutrition, public health, human rights, social justice and education. Because the main medium of this campaign will be social media and interactive online technologies, the target audience will be restricted to those who, according to the PEW Research Center, are most engaged with these technologies. The age group which has the highest usage of social media, which still has the characteristics of the previously outlined target audience, are young adults ages 18 to 30. 72% of the people within this population segment use social networking sites (Lenhart, Purcell, & Smith, 2010). However, because according to Pingdom, a great percentage of the people in social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter are between the ages of 25 and 44, the campaign can also potentially access individuals who are into their early forties (*Study*, 2010).

Finally, it is possible to assume that people who have the time and resources to engage in this campaign can already meet their basic needs. The needs that this campaign can offer to cover for the target audience in exchange for their participation actually appear to be at the very top of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, at the level of Self Actualization (self-development and realization) (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 2003). Based on the speculated income that people need in order to cover those needs at the lower end of the hierarchy, it can thus be argued that this target population belongs to a middle to high social class.

Therefore, although our target audience is broad enough for the campaign to be able to achieve positive results, it is still a fairly homogeneous audience in regards to their nutritional attitudes, their values and beliefs, their education level, their age and their social class. This homogeneous characteristic of an audience is one of the basic tenets that a health campaign should follow (Snyder, 2007, S35). Following that, a successful health campaign must create messages that are specifically designed for the group (Snyder, 2007, S35).

### **Theory and Research Basis for Message**

Our campaign will use both images and text media, displayed on an interactive social media platform. This combination of media is important to utilize all of the capabilities of our medium as well as tap into the social networking tendencies of our audience. Our messages will in part rely on a rational appeal and in part rely on an emotional appeal. Because our target audience is knowledgeable about the issue and will be likely to process our message centrally, if we present people with strong logical evidence about the problem of food insecurity in D.C. and why a Carrotmob campaign can help to deal with this issue, they should respond. However, although we predict that our target audience will be more likely to perceive our message centrally because it coincides with their values and interests, we want to incite people to not just care about it but to participate in our Carrotmob campaign. As both Stiff and Mongeau (2003) and Monahan (1995) argue, the assumption that there is a dichotomy between rational and emotional appeals is false, and a persuasive message in fact often relies on both of these components. Because “the primary function of emotion is to guide behavior” (Stiff and Mongeau, 2003, p. 146) and what we ultimately want is to elicit behavior it is important for us to create an emotional appeal as well.

Our rational appeal will use our multiple social media sites as well as our website as channels for our logical arguments. Here we have inserted videos and information that illustrate the issues of food insecurity, food deserts, and grocery gaps, as well as the negative effects that such issues have on the populations of non-privileged neighborhoods in D.C. Although we are assuming that our audience is educated and fairly informed on this issue, it is a complex dilemma that requires some sort of background. To that end, we link a report published in 2010 by DC Hunger Solutions and Social Compact titled “When Healthy Food Is Out Of Reach.” Below the link we have a slide show of the maps and tables that are printed in the report that provide proof of the D.C. grocery gap problem, as well as videos that document this problem in a number of different ways.

For the emotional appeal of our campaign we have also extensively relied on imagery, specifically on the iconic properties of photographs and video. According to Messaris (1997) the visual features of real life objects and people elicit a set of emotional associations that are particular to each person due to the unique experiences that they might have had with that object or individual in real life. Because photographs or videos replicate those physical characteristics (they are copies of the reality) they help to elicit these same set of “‘preprogrammed’ emotional responses” (Messaris, 1997, p. xiii) that the individual feels when he sees that object or person in real life.

In the case of our video for instance, the fact that we are not only providing them with the story of a kid who is at risk because of food injustice in D.C., but also with a set of photographs of this kid and of the effects that limited access to healthy food can have for him, helps to further the emotional response that people will experience as a result of the message. According to Messaris’ theory, our health-concerned audience will presumably experience some of the same

set of emotional responses that they would experience upon seeing a small kid in real life who only has access to junk food, or that they would experience when they see kids as young as the kids we portrayed in the pictures who already suffer from extreme obesity or type two diabetes. Thus, because of our use of imagery, our video component will simultaneously provide the audience with the rational evidence which is so vital to achieve message clarity in the first place and with an emotional appeal which will aim to mobilize our audience. Images, as an element of visual persuasion, are also used in our campaign in order to provide proof of the claims we make in our text arguments and support our message (Messaris, 1997).

The message structure of our video also helps to further this emotional appeal. According to Chip and Dan Heath, research on charity campaigns has concluded that “we are wired to feel things for people not abstractions” (Heath, & Heath, 2008, P. 18). For this reason other pro-social campaigns have found that providing people with tangible examples rather than just statistics helps to create an emotional response amongst the audience and makes them more likely to contribute to their cause. By making messages emotional, it will be more likely that the audience will care about the issue, and moreover, more likely that they will be inspired to act (Heath, Heath, 2008, P. 18). Like Stiff and Mongeau (2003) argue, one of the components of emotional responses with which advertisers are most concerned with is precisely the fact that they elicit an emotional response. For this reason, one of the means that we have sought in order to increase the emotional impact of our message is to provide people with the story of a particular individual, who is affected by our social issue.

The narrative of our video component revolves around a child named Michael, who is affected by the lack of healthy food available in his neighborhood. Because, as the Heaths argue, it is “the tangibility, rather than the magnitude, of the benefits that make people care” (Heath, &

Heath, 2008, p. 182), providing them with the particular story of one child that would benefit from their participation in the Carrotmob will make the issue more tangible for them and hence increase their emotional investment. As previously mentioned, based on the theories of Stiff and Mongeau (2003) and Chip and Dan Heath (2008), we believe that this will make people more likely to act and become involved in our Carrotmob campaign.

Although in our various messages there are pictures that have both negative and positive valences, meaning that they elicit both positive and negative emotional responses, we have made sure that there is a congruency between the framing of the message presented and the image valence. The message framing in this occasion refers to whether the message is presented in positive or negative terms. According to a set of studies on charity advertisements conducted by Chun-Tuan Chang and Yu-Kang Lee at Stanford University, congruency between message framing and image valence leads to a higher behavioral intention. They argue that this is because images enhance the vividness effects of charitable appeal and so to the extent to which these vivid images are congruent with the message frame they will increase the amount of attention elicited from the audience (Chang & Lee, 2009, P. 2915). Moreover, they argue that when these conditions are met “a vivid picture could create mental images that are easily retrieved and interact with message content to facilitate information processing and retention of both the images and the message arguments” (Chang & Lee, 2009, p. 2915). Hence a vivid picture can further the impact that the message has: “a pictorial image corresponding to the message was shown to increase the impact of the message framing, especially when both presented negatively” (Chang & Lee, 2009, p. 2928).

With our video component we wanted to elicit a strong emotional response, so we have primarily used a negative message frame. This also coincides with Chang and Lee’s idea that

negative messages have a greater effect in arousing and emotionally activating consumers (Chang & Lee, 2009, p. 2913), and that “a charitable message that is framed negatively leads to higher advertising effectiveness than one that is framed positively” (Chang & Lee, 2009, p. 2913). Thus, in order to conserve the congruency between the message and images and maximize the effects of our appeal, we have also used vivid images that should have a negative valence to our audience: the previously mentioned pictures of the kids surrounded by junk food, the obese young children, the pictures of the sick children and the aisles in the local corner and grocery stores filled with junk food. Towards the end of our video, however, we want to highlight that our event could improve the conditions that kids like Michael face and use positive images of a corner store that has pledged to stock fresh fruits and vegetables and a kid eating a fruit to reinforce this message. In our other message mediums, whenever we are trying to explain the positive effects that our Carrotmob could have in the communities that don’t have access to healthy available food, and how they can help the local corner stores supply their aisles with healthier options, we offer images that should have a positive valence.

Due to the way in which we have used emotional appeals in the different messages of our campaign, we expect our images and video elements to elicit the four components of emotional appeals laid out by Stiff and Mongeau (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003, p. 146-147). Our visuals should first produce a cognitive response from our audience, leading them to a better understanding of the issue. Then our audience should respond with a negative or positive feeling. Some of our photography, in this context meaning both images and video, will elicit negative feelings. These include images of charts and maps that illustrate the problem of the D.C. grocery gap, as well as videos which document this problem. Some of our photography will elicit positive emotions. These include images of happy and excited participants of past Carrotmobs and videos

explaining the power of Carrotmobs. Next, our audience should experience a physiological response from the positive and negative emotional response. This physiological response is what should function as incentive to take the important step of the behavioral response, in which emotional reactions turn to physical action.

### Preliminary Testing and Initial Message

Our initial message was focused around raising awareness about our issue and introducing people to the idea of Carrotmobs. We did some preliminary website design, creating a site with multiple pages to address our different messages. Our initial site had a homepage (see Appendix A), a page dedicated to explaining Carrotmobs (see Appendix B), a page dedicated to explaining our social issue (see Appendix C), and a blog (see Appendix D). We incorporated text, videos, and still images into our website.

In order to test our persuasive messages, our testing method was interviews with our test group. There were several reasons for this choice. Firstly, the small number of participants makes it ideal to engage in interviews rather than surveying or experimenting. Experimental or non-experimental research designs require, at the very basic level, a rather large amount of participants and random participant selection. Since our test group only had four participants, and since they were not recruited randomly, survey or experimental research is deemed impossible. Secondly, our participants fit into our target audience because they had high need for cognition, which is correlated with their graduate level of education and interest in the subject matter. Both Hart and Daughton (2004), Stiff and Mongeau (Stiff, 1994; Stiff & Mongeau, 2003), support that a receiver's possibility of acceptance of a persuasive message, and his or her assimilation of this message, increases to a great extent when the message is in the receiver's

latitude of acceptance. Therefore, surveying or experimenting would not take full advantage of what the test audience could bring in terms of their critiques, suggestions, and improvements to the message.

Interviewee 1 (see Appendix E) is an appropriate candidate because she says that she cares about pro-social issues, social advocacy and poverty. She is a married young professional, part of a medium income family living in D.C. and shops regularly at her local grocery store.

Interviewee 2 (see Appendix F) is a doctoral student at American University. He studies political communication and is very interested in pro-social issues and the voice of the disadvantaged.

Interviewee 3 (see Appendix G) is a doctoral student at Howard University. Social injustices and disparities drove her to study film. Due to her interest in social justice, she cares very much about structural disadvantages of low-income areas and poverty. Interviewee 4 (see Appendix H) is also a doctoral student at Howard University. Her interests in feminism and gender studies inspire her to care for social justice issues and poverty. All of the interviewees live or work in D.C., they are interested in social issues, and care about poverty and systematic oppression in low-income areas. In other words, they have high cognition, self and social awareness and would be affected by central processing, as our message entails. As a result, they constitute the core of our target audience.

### Interview Protocol and Sample Questions

Our interview protocol will consist of a single interview divided into two parts. Since no person can be separated from their cultural, social, and historical context (Burr, 2003), the first section of our interview will consist of questions that help participants reflect on how they relate to the messages. The purpose of this section is to “put the participant’s experience in context by

asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time.” (Seidman, 2006). This part of the interview will also consist of asking the details of the experience around the subject, and will be followed by a second part, which will aim to incite reflection on the meaning of their experience as far as the topic is concerned. The second section of the interview aims to understand the participant’s experience and how they make sense of their experience as far as our persuasive message is concerned. It is essential to take these factors into consideration in order to get a grasp of the boundaries of the latitude of acceptance of our target audience.

### Questions

Q1: Have you noticed the existence of grocery gaps or food deserts in low-income areas prior to seeing our message?

Q2: Did our message inform you about grocery gaps, food deserts and Carrotmobs?

Q3: Did our message change or increase your interest in pursuing further knowledge about food deserts and grocery gaps in low-income areas?

Q4: What was the extent of your interest, if any, in Carrotmobs or in social activism up until now?

Q5: What does it mean to you to get involved in a Carrotmob?

Q6: Why is it important for you to show support for this particular cause?

Q7: How did our message increase your interest in participating in Carrotmob DC?

Q8: How do you believe our message could be improved to increase your interest?

### Findings and Message Re-Creation

Our aim was to receive several answers that would help us guide our research from these interviews. First and foremost, we expected these and other questions to reveal the receiver characteristics. We anticipated that this would help us to re-create and tailor our message for our target audience with greater accuracy. Based on the answers obtained we would thus be able to associate the story, themes, and characteristics of our message with the important life themes, characteristics, and stories of our audience. This would ensure that our message would fall within the latitude of acceptance of our audience and would have a higher chance of assimilation. We also expected these questions to further motivate our audience to give us their inputs and suggestions as to how we can improve the persuasiveness of our messages. Based on the answers obtained, we planned to re-create and re-constructed the message so that it would seem more persuasive to our audience.

Our test revealed important findings about our messages as well as about our audience. 75% of our audience had previous knowledge about the problem while the remaining 25% learned about the problem for the first time. Our message increased the awareness of the participant who did not have any awareness of the issue before. It did not, however, increase the interest of the participants who had previous knowledge on this issue. On the other hand, it increased the knowledge of all the participants regarding food deserts, grocery gaps and Carrotmobs.

Our test also uncovered important information about our target audience. This can be summarized in five points with their corresponding percentages. Our audience:

1. Is generally informed about our issues (75%)

2. Had little interest in social activism until now (75%)
3. 75% of our test audience would rather get involved because they believe in their capacity to change or alter social injustice.
4. 25% of our test audience would rather get involved because they care about the health of others.
5. 100% of our audience believes that they will be more persuaded with messages that have even more information about Carrotmob DC, have more personal touches and include the voices of the victims.

Our findings show that our messages need more content explaining how people could get involved in Carrotmob DC. It is important to note that these findings also indicate that we were not able to increase the interest of the segment or our audience that already had an interest in the issue (which consisted of 75% of our test group). That is why we need to change the message so that it further increases the interest of the audience who has prior knowledge and interest on the issue. All of our participants suggested that Carrotmob DC needed to have more presence in the video. Our message also needs to show people how easy and accessible Carrotmob activism is. It needs to provide justifications for why they would want to be involved. Our questions revealed what sort of appeal our messages should use for providing justifications. 75% of our participants suggested that they would be interested in joining this cause because they see themselves as agent of change. Therefore, our messages need to include slogans that appeal to their ego as agents of change. Moreover, our participants suggested that it's important to add personal interviews of people who suffer from these issues. Interviewees said that the video could be more "personal" and it needed to have voices of those we are trying to help.

## Final Campaign Structure: Source, Channels and Messages

As we outlined in the first component of our project, this campaign will try to appeal to people who have a high ego involvement in our message, who are concerned with food justice, human rights and social justice and tend to be associated with reference groups that promote these causes. These people will have a motivation to cognitively process the messages, and thus the most important decisions our campaign will make will be the media we choose to deliver our messages on, the source we choose to deliver our messages through and the medium we choose to deliver our messages with. We built a website (see Appendix I - Appendix O) to display our messages, as well as created a Twitter page (see Appendix P) and a Facebook page (see Appendix Q).

In order to incorporate our testing feedback and make our messages more personal, we added a number of components to our website. We added emotionally charged slogans on a number of pages to help our audience understand that their participation is incredibly valuable and easy. This is meant to help them justify their involvement and appeal to their egos as agents of change. We also added more images. We added additional pictures and slideshows to several pages that show people involved in past Carrotmobs interacting with each other and having fun. This allows our target audience to better understand how their own involvement in the campaign would work and what it would look like, and hopefully increase their excitement about their involvement. Lastly, we added a designated Twitter hashtag to the homepage so that all of the information that people tweet about the campaign and event can be aggregated under one common tag. This allows our target audience to go on Twitter and see who else is talking about our campaign and more importantly it allows them to join the Carrotmob DC Twitter community. As recommended, we also made our YouTube video more personal by including clips from

children, or the parents of children, who are victims of food injustice and don't have access to healthy foods in their neighborhoods.

### Messages

Our website homepage (see Appendix I) opens with the Carrotmob DC logo, which we have kept in line with the original Carrotmob's logo, so as to keep the marketing streamlined and to be able to leverage the Carrotmob brand, popularity and credibility. Right below the logo we have buttons to our Twitter, YouTube and Facebook pages, as well as our designated Twitter hashtag "#CarrotMobDC." The homepage combines a number of our messages. With the homepage we are aiming to give our audience a quick understanding of our issue as well as of Carrotmobs, both things that the following website pages go into more detail about. We start off with the universal Carrotmob slogan "In a boycott, everyone loses. In a Carrotmob, everyone wins." Which is followed by a fun picture of a Carrotmob participant and the slogan "You can make a difference by getting involved with Carrotmob DC Today!" Below that we have a paragraph introducing our audience to our social issue, with links to our "Our Social Issue" and "Get Involved" pages. Following that we have specific information about our upcoming Carrotmob, giving our audience the date, time, location and means of public transportation that they can use. Beside this information we have a slideshow of Liff's Market's healthy food section, in order to give proof to our audience of its existence. Lastly, we have our Carrotmob DC video (see Appendix S).

### Message 1: Carrotmobs are cool

We first need to explain what a Carrotmob is and why it is such a powerful social tool. The next page on our website is called “What Is A Carrotmob?” (see Appendix J). The first thing our viewer sees is the slogan “Carrotmob DC wants you!” followed by a slideshow of past Carrotmob participants having fun and engaging with each other. Again, this adds the personal element that was lacking in our initial website. On this page we have a written explanation as well as an animated video created by the founding Carrotmob organization to explain exactly how and why Carrotmobs work.

Our written explanation states: “A Carrotmob uses coordinated consumer purchasing to financially reward socially-responsible businesses. It allows you, the consumer, to positively affect change in business practices that matter to you.” We then break down the steps of a Carrotmob: 1. Define a social Issue. 2. Identify a store that is willing to help correct this social issue. 3. Pick a date and time to "mob" this store with consumers. 4. Organized consumer purchasing make the most socially-responsible business practices also the most profitable choices. Finally, we let our audience know how popular Carrotmobs have become and how they are going global, and we ask our audience to help put D.C. on the Carrotmob map, “There are approximately 150 Carrotmob groups in 90 countries. Carrotmobs are taking off across the globe. Let's put DC on the Carrotmob map!”

### Messages 2: Low-income D.C. wards do not have access to fresh and healthy foods, and it is important that they have this access

The next page on our website is called “Our Social Issue” (see Appendix K). On this page we use text, images and video to make the argument that D.C.’s low-income wards do not have

proper access to fresh and healthy foods. The text on our webpage reads: “Have you heard of the term 'food desert?' How about 'grocery gap?' These terms refer to the lack of healthy, fresh food options available in low-income areas. Not only do fast food chains abound in low-income neighborhoods, but grocery stores are hard to find. Meaning that if you do want to buy unpackaged, unprepared, fresh food for you and your family, you might have to travel many miles. In D.C., many people have to go into another state to get fresh produce because the closest grocery stores are in Maryland or Virginia.” We have also posted a video on this page produced by DC Hunger Solutions called “When Healthy Food Is Out Of Reach.” Additionally, we link a report published in 2010 by DC Hunger Solutions and Social Compact also titled “When Healthy Food Is Out Of Reach.” Below the link we have a slideshow of the maps and tables that are printed in the report that show the prevalence of grocery gaps in D.C. These maps and tables provide proof of our claims.

Message 3: Liff's Market is an important community establishment that is trying to correct this problem

The next page on our website is called “Liff’s Market” (see Appendix L). Liff’s Market in Congress Heights is the business that we have chosen to Carrotmob. On this page we explain why we have chosen Liff’s Market and try to make a personal connection with our audience and Liff’s Market. We explain that Liff’s Market is in D.C.’s poorest ward, Ward 8, in a high crime neighborhood called Congress Heights. We describe the history of Liff’s Market and how it has been in this exact location since its founding in 1911 and how the current owner is the grandson of the original owner. We tell our audience that in 2010, Liff’s Market signed up with the DC Healthy Corner Store Program, pledging to offer a certain amount of fresh fruits and vegetables

to their local community. We show images of Liff's Market's sign and well as its healthy food section. We combine these images with text explaining why Liff's Market is such an important community establishment. This text goes into the founding of the store and profiles the current owners of the store, Hazel and Sam Liff. We describe how Liff's Market has endured the change of the Congress Heights neighborhood from good to bad to very bad and how Sam and Hazel have stayed to keep Liff's Market open even as violence in the ward rose and many people who could, moved away. The text in this section focuses on how Sam and Hazel are important members of the Congress Heights community who look out for neighbors and repeat customers, and who want to see their community improve. This personal information aims to increase our audience's involvement in our campaign by familiarizing them with the actual people who own the store we are trying to support.

Messages 4 and 5: If you come out and support Liff's Market by participating in this Carrotmob, you will be participating in an extremely cool movement for a very important issue. This issue is so important and Carrotmobs are so cool that you have to get involved and spread the word.

Our remaining website pages are "Blog," (see Appendix M) "Get Involved" (see Appendix N) and "Contact Us" (see Appendix O). These pages serve the function of displaying our positive press, building the hype around our Carrotmob and showing how people can get involved and spread the word. Our "Get Involved" page opens with a funny picture of past Carrotmob participants dressed as carrots and dancing around, followed by the slogans "Get involved today! Your conscientious consumerism will make the difference." We then have links to our Facebook page, our Twitter account, our press and a PDF of a flyer that our audience can use to pass out in their neighborhoods (see Appendix R). Following that, we have started a forum

so that our audience has an easily accessible place to communicate with each other and with us. These elements should help our digital word of mouth buzz by allowing our audience quick and easy ways to follow and like our social media pages and share our content with others who might want to get involved. Every blog post will have its own social media buttons so that with one click, people can post our blogs to their social media pages.

### Source

The main source of our message will be the organization Carrotmob. Carrotmob is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to spreading the idea of Carrotmobs throughout the world. While it is headquartered in San Francisco, it now has branches all over the world. Its Facebook page has 13,292 likes and its Twitter account is followed by 3,839 people. There are at least 96 Facebook pages for Carrotmob groups throughout the world. According to Carrotmob.org, there have been nearly 200 campaigns, in about 80 cities, in 25 countries (Email, Sarah, personal communication, November 8, 2011). Carrotmobs have been highlighted in well-known press outlets such as the Philadelphia Inquirer (Marder, 2011), NPR.org (Barclay, 2011) and Time Magazine (Caplan, 2009). All of this is to say that the Carrotmob organization enjoys high credibility in the social issue community.

We would also expect to partner with certain organizations that have high-credibility in the local food justice community, such as DC Hunger Solutions, which heads up the DC Healthy Corner Store Program, Social Compact, which works to increase healthy food access in low-income wards in D.C., Bread for the City and DC Food For All, which both are very dug into the the D.C. food justice community and are very involved in this community's social media scene. Partnering with these organizations will add credibility and trust to our message source.

Lastly, as a large part of our campaign is based on our audience sharing our message with their circle of social media friends, our audience members will be sources in and of themselves. As friends of the people they will be disseminating information to, they will likely be viewed as high-credibility sources. This also allows us to utilize the strong-tie phenomena, increasing people's personal investment and likelihood to take action by showing that others who they have strong ties with are involved in the campaign (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007).

### Channels

We have chosen a social media platform for our campaign because it allows us to combine the power of visual images and videos alongside the text necessary for our more complex arguments. Additionally, disseminating our campaign through social media channels gives our audience the ability to interact with our campaign in many different ways, which will increase their personal investment in the issue. We chose an integrated online social media medium rather than a print medium because an online social media medium is more geared towards our younger, socially connect audience, that many print-only mediums would not reach. These channels also allow us to combine both text and visual images. Another key aspect of a successful persuasion campaign geared towards our audience is the creation of an interactive dialogue, which is facilitated best through social media. Online-oriented groups are used to being able to instantly participate in social issue campaigns in ways that offline-oriented groups are not. Social media allows for this participation through instant feedback and comments from our audience. Social media allows our audience to interact with us, the message source, and each other as they discuss the issue. Through this interactive online dialogue they will discuss the issue and share information with each other, increasing their investment in the issue, our

campaign and its outcome, as well as increasing their familiarity with the subject matter.

Familiarity leads to liking which will further their investment in the issue and lead them to spread the word with more enthusiasm.

### Conclusions and Implications

Persuasive effectiveness of pro-social campaigns, or any persuasive campaign, rests on many factors relevant to the rhetoric, semantic and syntactic properties of the message, how well it can identify with audience characteristics and how it works with its cultural and social context. Our campaign attempted to tackle a very complex social problem that has many variables from the governmental policy level to the individual agency and self-efficacy level. We took an approach that aimed at grassroots mobilization and, therefore, appealed to personal agency.

A major question that will arise is whether a Carrotmob will lead to a sustainable and lasting change in diets in the neighborhoods surrounding Liff's Market. Based on the research done by DC Hunger Solutions, it is the supply that is lacking rather than the demand, because when access increased so did the consumption of fruits and vegetables (*When*, 2010, p. 1). Also, there are a number of local D.C. organizations that are working at the community level to educate residents in low-income D.C. wards about nutrition and health. These organizations play an important role in creating lasting behavioral changes among the residents in low-income D.C. wards regarding food and nutrition. Since Carrotmob DC would be partnering with many of these organizations in our campaign, we would help to promote these organizations and their ongoing educational campaigns in these low-income communities.

However, future research needs to seek additional ways in which this particular issue can be addressed in a sustainable and periodic manner. Can grassroots movements, Carrotmobs in

particular, be organized over and over again in a targeted neighborhood? Further research needs to make a comparative analysis between Carrotmobs, and find solutions to the problem of sustainability in order to create a demand, which, in turn, can be satisfied by opening grocery stores. In light of our research, we hope no one has to live a life of illness and malnourishment simply due to the demands of the market.

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