

# Public Health Messaging for Ethnic Minority Communities

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# Background

- Behavioural scientist: Cambridge-Kampala health partnership, promoting antimicrobial stewardship
- Research: The role of culture in health – dementia, PCOS, motivation
- HPX volunteer: Engagement work with local authorities on public health messaging

# Context

- COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on people from ethnic minority communities due to increased risk of infection and disproportionately higher mortality.
- Factors that *may* contribute to this increased risk include:
  - Employment in frontline roles
  - Higher rates of comorbidities
  - Accessibility of information required to mitigate risk

# Health Communication

- The aim of health risk communication is similar for all communities
  - it is a strategy to help people understand their level of risk and behaviours required to respond to this risk
- For health messages to be effective, they should target how people think about the target behaviour.
- Health messages tailored to match personal characteristics are more likely to be effective in changing beliefs, attitudes and behaviour.

# Tailored Health Communication

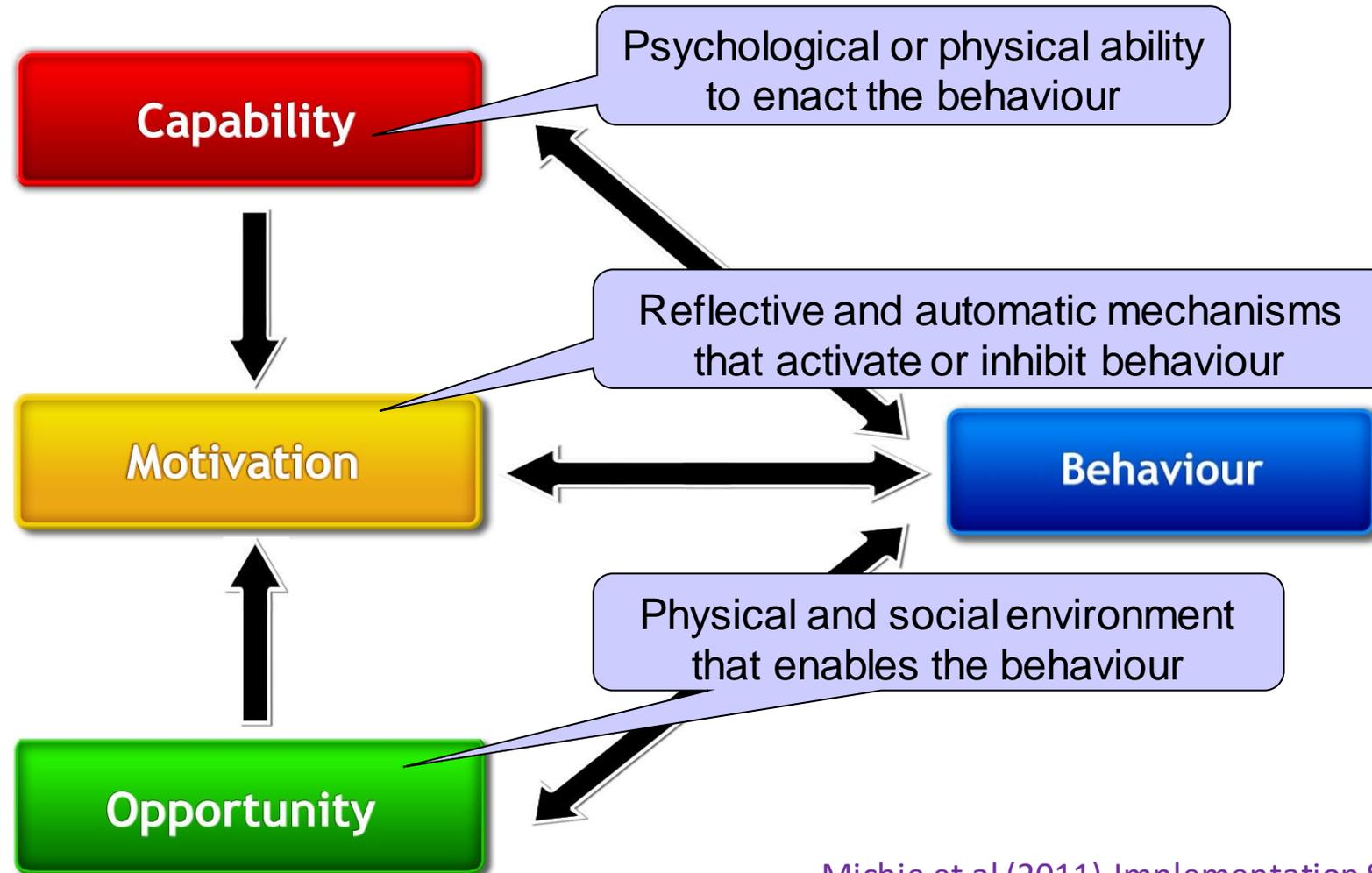
- Health messages for ethnic minority communities should be tailored to reflect socio-cultural influences and drivers of behaviour which, at times, may differ from White British communities.
- Risk communication that is culturally appropriate is:
  - More likely to reach the intended community
  - May promote health protective behaviours which can minimise the risk of COVID-19.
- Tailored health messages will not resolve the structural disadvantages and wider inequalities that contribute to poorer health outcomes in ethnic minority communities.

# Exploration of cultural factors

- Team:
  - Nicola Knowles, Bradford Metropolitan District Council
  - Emma Gibson, Birmingham City University
  - Hashum Mahmood, Public Health England
- Facilitated an engagement session:
  - representatives from health, community, faith, academic, local authority and communication teams (N=23)
- Discussed cultural factors that could be considered as part of public health messages

# The COM-B model

Behaviour occurs as an interaction between three necessary conditions



A poster for the NHS Test and Trace campaign. The top half shows a young woman with long dark hair sitting on a dark sofa, looking down at her smartphone. In the top left corner, there is the HM Government logo. In the top right corner, there is the NHS logo with the text 'Test and Trace' below it. The bottom half of the poster has a solid blue background. The main text is in large, bold, white and yellow letters: 'CORONAVIRUS SELF-ISOLATE WHEN ALERTED'. Below this, in smaller white text, it says: 'If you're told you have been exposed to an infected person you must self-isolate for 14 days. PLAY YOUR PART. PROTECT YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY. nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119'. At the very bottom, there is a yellow banner with a black and white chevron pattern containing the text 'STAY ALERT > CONTROL THE VIRUS > SAVE LIVES' in black capital letters.

HM Government

NHS  
Test and Trace

**CORONAVIRUS  
SELF-ISOLATE  
WHEN ALERTED**

If you're told you have been exposed to an infected person you must self-isolate for 14 days.  
**PLAY YOUR PART.  
PROTECT YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY.**  
nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119

**STAY ALERT > CONTROL THE VIRUS > SAVE LIVES**

- *What cultural factors, if any, could influence whether or not someone will engage in this behaviour?*

# Capability

- To increase capability, health messages should increase knowledge of risks and benefits of behaviours.
- Barriers to increasing knowledge included:
  - Use of words that do not translate well into a different language. Words such as *shielding* and *self-isolation* do not retain the same meaning and cultural context when translated.
  - Cultural aspects of what 'Track and Trace' could mean for different communities
  - More information about the process '*It may be important to tell me not just the why but also the how*'.
  - Inaccessible language – requires translation
- *Strategies include:*
  - Co-produce and pre-test health messages with the target community to identify language that retains meaning of the core message and cultural context for the target audience.
  - Translate health messages into languages that are accessible for the target community.

# Opportunity

- Messages should be tailored to reflect cultural norms.
- Localise health messages to consider local people, services and resources.
- Ethnic minority communities may be less willing to trust government communications on pandemic measures due to historical issues and contemporary perceptions of institutional racism.
  
- *Strategies include:*
- Explicitly consider cultural norms such as events such as Eid and weddings, which traditionally involve large gatherings, to make the health message more relevant to some communities.
- Ensure the health message promotes services that are accessible e.g., include multilingual contact tracers within the NHS Test and Trace service.
- Ensure compliance with health message does not disadvantage the target community, e.g. loss of income due to self-isolation.
- Multiple credible sources should be identified as not all members of ethnic minority communities are responsive to faith leaders.
- Understand and define differences within and between minority groups.

# Motivation

- Racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to perceive health promotion behaviour as a White British characteristic. This can result in fatalistic attitudes that question the relevance and efficacy of health promotion behaviours.
- *Strategies include:*
- Link health messages with social identities other than White and middle class to increase impact.
- Include evidence to highlight risks to specific groups. This will create the perception that the health problem affects people in their group and may increase their willingness to take action.
- Include stories from within the local community which provide real-world examples of the consequences of following and not following health guidelines.

# Summary

- A communication strategy that targets capability, opportunity and motivation for communities from different cultural backgrounds is more likely to:
  - reach the intended audience
- Which will subsequently increase likelihood of
  - increase knowledge, intention and motivation
  - Important determinants of behaviour change