

The Setting: Daily Life

HS 420: SCENARIO

The Setting: Daily Life

“Any in-depth discussion of health behavior is, of necessity, going to involve a certain amount of **wrestling with abstractions about motives, causal and contributing factors, contexts, cues, and other issues related to why people do what they do.**”

Health Behavior, Mark Edberg

SCENARIO:



Suppose your roommate—Chuck—was brushing his teeth and doing so very vigorously.

If you asked him why he was doing this, your conversation might go as follows:

YOU: Hey Chuck, why are you brushing your teeth like that?

CHUCK: What do you mean, why am I brushing my teeth? Don't you brush yours? I don't wanna get cavities or have my teeth fall out, okay? What kind of question is that?

SCENARIO:

Well that's that, then, right? End of story?

Chuck is brushing his teeth
(*and doing it quite well*) to
maintain healthy teeth.

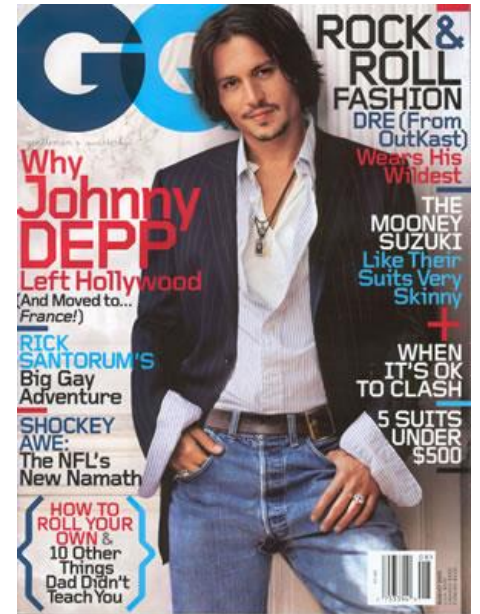
Makes perfect sense.

Right?



SCENARIO:

But... now suppose, as you continue watching Chuck perform his tooth-brushing ritual, you see, lying conveniently on the sink, a copy of GQ magazine with a cover photo showing what appears to be a **model of hip maleness**—a chiseled figure leaning nonchalantly against the wall, comfortably worn blazer open and loose, hair just right even while a few strands display a defiant anarchy, and a carefully casual unshaven jaw and chin. Punctuating this icon's studied hip gestalt is a set of perfect, strong, gleaming white teeth.



SCENARIO:

Hmm... The plot thickens. So maybe he is also trying to look like *Mr. Ultimate Male* in his own way...

BY BRUSHING HIS TEETH? Whatevva!!!!

Now suppose, after completing the tooth brushing scene, Chuck looking intense and preoccupied, digs through his closet for some clothes to wear.

By this time, your curiosity can no longer be contained.



SCENARIO:

YOU: Okay Chuck, out with it. You going somewhere (heh, heh)?

CHUCK (*trying to pretend that nothing out of the ordinary is going on*): Uh, whaddya mean?

YOU: C'mon, Chuck. What am I, an Idiot? Going out? To dinner? A movie? Whatever it is, it looks to me like it's no ordinary place?

CHUCK (*letting down his guard*): Okay, Okay. I was invited out, alright? And it's actually to her apartment.

YOU (*interrupting*): Wait a minute. Whose apartment?

SCENARIO:

CHUCK: Well, you remember a few weeks ago I mentioned that I met someone I think is ... kinda special.

YOU: Okay, now I understand. The tooth brushing, all of it.

CHUCK: Here's the thing. I'm not exactly going to be the only person there, ya know what I mean? She didn't just invite me.

YOU: So you want to... stand out.

CHUCK: Yeah

YOU: Got it, Lookin' sharp, Good Luck!

SCENARIO:

After this, the plot is now more complete.

If you were asked to explain the motivations behind Chuck brushing his teeth (*vigorously*), you now have at least three possibilities in this scenario:

- 1. For health reasons**
- 2. To look as much as possible like the male icon in the magazine (*a cultural factor*)**
- 3. (*Related to # 2*) To stand out from the crowd and be as attractive as possible to a person of the opposite sex, and a special person at that.**

Which of these three motivations do you think was most dominant?

**But what if you were to ask Chuck the same question tomorrow, when, for example, he is barely awake and perhaps on his way to class?
What might you find?**



SCENARIO:

Or, suppose Chuck was the first person to go to college from his small rural town, and his family had little income and no health insurance.

Or Chuck's mother instructed him, when he was very young, to brush his teeth religiously after every meal. Every day, she drilled into Chuck's head he was just not clean or presentable to the world without doing so. Maybe her reasoning was due to her herself losing most of her teeth at an early age because, as a child, neither she nor her parents knew much about teeth or the role of brushing.

The Questions?

The Moral of the Story:

There is an entire field of study and practice concerned with the complex nature of health behavior, with a goal of implementing *programs* and *interventions* that seek to **promote change in behavior in order to improve the health of the public or a segment of the public.**