Boomerang Effects in Science Communication

Sol Hart
Assistant Professor
School of Communication
American University
hart@american.edu

April 28th, 2011
Sustainable Water Resource Roundtable
Two Models of Communication
A Quick Movie Intermission
Boomerang Effect

When a strategic message generates the opposite attitude or behavior from what was intended

It is possible to do harm with pro-social messages
Examples of the Boomerang Effect
Examples of the Boomerang Effect
Example of the Boomerang Effect: School Program on Eating Disorders

Nothin's as good as skinny feels.
My life with an eating disorder

Girls with eating disorders are especially in control of their lives.
So What’s Happening Here?
Implications for Science Communication?